#### **Sydney Study Week 2000**

# THE SEVEN ECCLESIAS OF REVELATION



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The notes have been specifically written for discussion groups. A side column is incorporated into the notes to encourage us to do our own personal study. There are also questions for us to think about during study group preparation.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

These notes draw heavily upon the following Christadelphian writings and studies. Various references are made throughout to these writings. One of the most valuable contributions to these notes however has been the contribution of many by way of personal discussion and encouragement. Eureka Volume 1 by Brother John Thomas is the earliest and by far the most comprehensive study in the list below. The sheer weight of emphasis given by Brother Thomas to Revelation chapters 1-3 indicates how important these chapters are in providing a basis for Revelation as a whole.

Young people are encouraged to always read as widely as possible to gain a much broader and detailed consideration of the subject.

• John Thomas - Eureka Volume 1

HP Mansfield - Apocalpyse Epitomised - Verse by verse notes

John Knowles - Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias

Brian Luke - Study notes for Sydney Youth Conference 1987

• Robert Roberts - Thirteen lectures on the Apocalypse

• W.L. Bedwell - The letters to the 7 churches of Asia

• Graham Pearce - The Revelation - Which interpretation?

Houlton & Pearce - The dragon and the Lamb

Paul Billington - The Revelation for Christ's servants today

• Paul Billington - Revelation - A plea for right understanding

Paul Billington - Holy War in the Balkans & Bible Magazine

Alan Eyre - The Protestors & Brethren in Christ

Roger Stokes - The Jews, Rome and Armageddon

• Logos magazine - Revelation study series 1989

• The Lampstand - Articles on God Manifestation and Revelation

John Knowles - Revelation studies at Enfield Bible Class 1975

James Mansfield - Tea Tree Gully special effort 1996

• Brian Luke - Dooralong studies, January 1996

Matthew Norton - Personal discussion & Bible Classes, Lismore 1997

Acknowledgment is particularly given to the valuable contribution of artwork provided by Brother Simon Sawell. Many of these paintings were originally undertaken for the Youth Conference held in Sydney in 1987 for the study of Revelation 1-3. Also included in the notes are various overhead transparencies used in Seminar notes on Bible prophecy by Brother Paul Billington, editor of the Bible Magazine.

#### STUDY TIPS

- . Always pray to God, asking Him to help us understand
- Make TIME. The Bible is written for those willing to put time and effort into reading it - remember that this is our Heavenly Father speaking to us!
- Remove distractions. This can be one of the most difficult but most important things to do. Careful meditation is so important.
- Speak to friends about the study as much as possible we all need *help*, *encouragement* and *motivation* to continue.
- We must learn to *develop a need* for our Heavenly Father's Words. If we really love our Father, we will want to listen to what He has to say. Approach the Bible like a child seeking to listen to his Father.
- One of the greatest *motivations* to do study is being able to *help others*. No matter what our abilities may be, all of us can have a positive influence. Jesus gave his whole life to help others rather than serve himself.
- Aim to develop a greater personal relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ - this should be a major motivating factor in our study.
- Learn to be *thankful* for the opportunities we have. Many brethren and sisters in the dark ages were killed because they loved reading their Bibles.
- Read carefully don't rush! (good Bible reading is good Bible study)
- · Read and re-read the chapter become well acquainted with the record
- Use different Bible versions to help you understand what it is saying
- Look for repeating words or phrases & highlight them (eg "to him that overcometh"). Also highlight key verses that particularly stand out.
- · Always ask questions and write them down for future reference
- Ask others for answers (parents, friends, older brothers & sisters)
- Use study tools when your 'reading' is exhausted. Always use more than one study tool. Don't just copy out notes but think carefully about it!
- If using a Concordance, look at how the Scriptures use a certain word or phrase rather than just looking up the meaning of it.
- Think about your study continually whenever you have an opportunity! Keep asking yourself questions. Turn it over and over in your mind.
- Always summarise what we have learnt from a section of Scripture. Always ask "How does this practically apply to me?"
- Mark the cross references in your Bible as much as possible. Make summary notes next to other quotes, linking them to the section you are studying.
- Pray to God thanking Him for the opportunities we have to read His Word many others have not had the opportunities we have!

#### INTRODUCTION

"If a man love me, he will keep my words..."

(John 14v23)

The Lord Jesus Christ specifically names 2 books in the Bible as being especially valuable for study. These are the books of Daniel and Revelation. In response to the enquiring minds of his disciples, Jesus quotes Daniel's prophecy in the context of coming judgement in AD70. In doing so, he declared, "Whoso readeth, let him understand" (Matt 24v15). He emphasised the need for them to have a clear understanding of Daniel as the end of the Jewish age approached. For Jesus's disciples, this was a life and death issue. Only a proper understanding of the book of Daniel could have ensured deliverance. We are now living at the end of Gentile times, and it is the book of Revelation that has been given by our Lord for our deliverance. Revelation is specifically singled out by Christ as a book to be read, studied and put into practice in daily life: "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." (Rev 1v3) In fact, 7 blessings are promised to those who study and practically apply the words of Christ in this book.

**Revelation is unique** in that it is specifically given by Jesus Christ himself (**Rev 1v1**). He gave it for his bride that they might be one with him. This alone should give us the motivation to study the book. If we really love our Lord, we will surely want to hear his words. The book is written for the purpose of developing a family: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." (**1 John 3v1**) God therefore wants to have a family. He wants to reveal His character in a multitude. Jesus Christ is the head of that family. The world today is trying to break down our efforts to develop this Christ-like character. It is trying to destroy our vision of the glorious future which awaits us. Never before in history has the world's media led such a devastating assault upon the minds of believers. As in AD70, this is a life and death issue. As such, there has never been a better time to commit ourselves to a study of **Revelation 1-3**. Never before has a vision of the Kingdom been so vital for our survival. Let us seize the moment.

These notes on **Revelation 1-3** have been prepared primarily for discussion sessions to be held during the Sydney Young People's Study Week 2000 (God willing). There are many notes already available on Revelation which provide valuable exposition. These Study Week notes aim to draw together many of these expositions into one condensed form. Various questions and exercises have also been inserted throughout to help us think deeply about the issues presented. An attempt has also been made to draw out the many practical issues relevant to our days. Particular attention has also been given to the *introduction and overview* of **Revelation 1-3**. It is so important that we see "the big picture" before studying the detail. The introduction aims to provide this overall view. We will see that the 7 Ecclesias are so practical and vital for us today. The notes on **Revelation 1** are included because this chapter provides an important basis for **Revelation 2 & 3**.

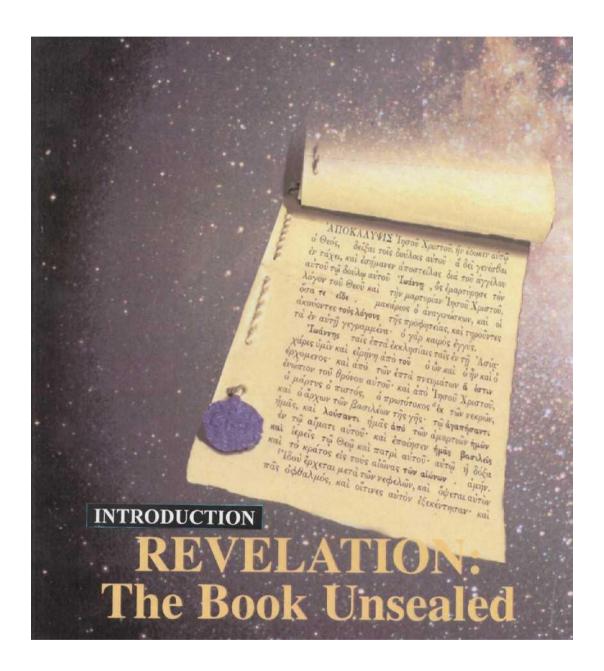
Our dear young people, think about who gave us these first 3 chapters of **Revelation**. This is the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has the most beautiful character of any man who has ever lived. He is the meekest and gentlest of all men (**2 Cor 10v1**; **Isaiah 53**). He has a real love and concern us. He has written us a letter of love and encouragement in the book of Revelation.

So how do we develop the love of Christ in our own characters? Only through *knowing* him and the Father who sent him (**John 17v3**). The *only* way we can know him is if we diligently apply ourselves daily to the *prayerful reading and study of the Scriptures*. May the study of **Revelation 1-3** help us develop a love for Yahweh and His Son. Young people, the time and effort will be worth it. Let's prayerfully make the most of the opportunities we have. In doing so we may even help one or more of our friends into the Kingdom to sit with Christ in his throne (**Rev 3v21**).

It is he who stands at the door and knocks (Rev 3v20). Let us open the door by *hearing* his voice and *keeping* his commandments: "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev 22v17)

- This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- oxdots This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

## The Book of Revelation INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW



"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

(Daniel 12v10)

"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."

(Revelation 1v3)



### INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

- **O** THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION
- ② READING AND HEARING THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY
- **6 CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO ECCLESIAS**IN A GENTILE WORLD

## Introduction - Part 1 THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION

#### Why should we study Revelation?

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14v23)

When commencing a study of God's Word, recognising the importance of our study is vital. When one comes to grasp the vital significance of a section of Scripture, it becomes easier to be *motivated*. *Bible study requires time, application and prayer to God*. If we can really come to grips with how important Revelation is to us in these last days, we will be more likely to dedicate time towards study. The Lord Jesus Christ guarantees us that our time will be well rewarded.

The introduction to these notes aims to establish how vital and practical the letters to the Seven Ecclesias is to us **TODAY**. Our Lord is pleading with us for a response (**Rev 16v15**). He deeply loves us and wants us to be in his Kingdom. What more could we want in life than to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and our God, and to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom? That relationship and vision is given in the book of Revelation.

If we develop an understanding of **Chapters 1-3**, we have already understood the basic meaning of **the whole book**. This is why our study of the 7 ecclesias is so important. There has been much written already in the Brotherhood on these vital issues. In this introduction, we have included helpful comments from a variety of brethren. The aim is to help **motivate** and **enthuse** us to apply time in preparing for this study. The introduction also outlines the "big picture" of Revelation.

#### THE VALUE OF STUDYING REVELATION

The value and importance of the Apocalypse lie in its stimulating power to the believers, particularly those who suffered persecution when Rome made war and prevailed against the saints; it mercifully provided every victim with a close-up view of the Kingdom of God by interjecting visions of glory at the culmination of each epoch. What loving care and tender solitude the Heavenly Bridegroom has thus manifested toward his waiting bride who through the Apocalypse has been encouraged to endure much suffering with the reward of faith gloriously revealed before her eyes! The faithful remnant of **Rev 2 and 3** saw quick release from their trials in **Rev 4** when a door was opened for them in the political heaven; the "souls under the altar" of **Rev 6** went to their doom with the glory of a white-robed multitude of **Rev 7** to sustain them, and those overcome by the beast of **Rev 13** resisted his deadly mark in the hope of soon joining the 144,000 on Mount Zion as depicted in **Rev 14**. And so the great High Priest of our profession has responded to the prayers of his saints down the centuries, he has not been unmoved by their cries, but has provided the means of succour in the pages of the Apocalypse.

John says, "I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." The Lord takes pleasure in men and women who wait upon His word and watch for His favour on Zion. David declared, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning"; and when Daniel studied the times and seasons in relation to Israel's deliverance, he received that delightful commendation "Thou art greatly beloved."

The meaning of the Apocalypse was paramount in the apostle John's mind and his grief could not be assuaged until someone was found worthy to open the scroll which contained the mystery of Divine operations during Gentile times. The "book" had been shut up and sealed some 600 years earlier in the days of Daniel (**Dan 12v4**), so that neither the prophets nor disciples could comprehend the "time, times and a half" allocated for the downtreading of the power of the holy people. After the resurrection of Jesus, the times and seasons were still "reserved in the Father's own power" but the answer to this enigma lay in the scroll "written within and on the backside, sealed with 7 seals".

(W.G. Houlton and Graham Pearce, The dragon and the Lamb, pgs. 13,16)

#### Revelation gives us vision

Revelation is the only book in the Bible given *personally* by the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1v1). There is something *very unique* in this, and worthy of our particular attention. It also comprises the conclusion to the entire Scriptures, with his final plea to us that "surely I come quickly" (Rev 22v7,12,20). This is a *personal exhortation* from our Lord specifically for our generation. While providing a guiding light for brethren throughout the whole of the last 1900 years, there are specific exhortations for those who live at particular points in time. Throughout there are visions of glory given to encourage believers who are suffering. This is summarised in the following chart:



Source: Bro Paul Billington, The message of the Revelation for Christ's servants today, p.24

While portions of the book are devoted to history (only 25-30%), these sections help us to view the world from the mind of God. We come to understand the environment in which our brethren have lived, and how God responded to the prayers of those suffering under these systems. These historical sections reveal how Yahweh has manifested himself in judgement upon the various phases of Rome, whose religion was a corrupted form of Christianity. As in Daniel's prophecy, our understanding of present day events is enhanced and we begin to see a great contrast between the Kingdom of Men and the Kingdom of God. In doing so, our vision of the future will be clearer and will have greater meaning. Consider the words: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev 11v15). These words have added power and meaning if we understand the effect that these systems have had on the Truth through history. Revelation provides us with that understanding.

#### REVELATION WAS GIVEN BY JESUS CHRIST

Jesus has said "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10v27), and they will surely hear his testimony in the book of Revelation. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias" - this we read many times. So we should ask ourselves whether we really do have an ear for the voice of Christ in the Apocalypse? Are we interested in what he has to say to us?

Jesus links hearing with doing: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," And so in the Apocalypse he says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein...." (Rev 1v3).

The commands of Christ, as they appear in the Apocalypse, bear a significant relationship to one another. The message always concerns the maintenance of doctrines and values. Let us remember that these commands are as much directed to Christ's servants today as they were to the seven original ecclesias; they are prophetic:

- "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ..."
- "Be thou faithful (unto death)...."
- To those tolerating the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes: "Repent".
- "...that which ye have already hold fast till I come"
- "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain..."
- "Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent...."
- "hold that fast which thou hast...."

These are commands of Christ - and they are just as much commands as those which we find in the Sermon on the Mount.

(Bro Paul Billington, The Book of Revelation - An appeal for Right Understanding, p. 4)

#### **Genesis and Revelation are vital**

**Genesis** and **Revelation** are the 2 vital books that hold the rest of the Bible together. They are like 2 end posts or brackets holding together God's revelation to mankind of His character and ways. Genesis shows us how it all began, while Revelation shows the Divine purpose finally fulfilled. The following comparisons are identified in the *Learn to Read the Bible Effectively* notes (pgs 18-19):

- Genesis speaks of a natural creation (Gen 1); Revelation of a spiritual creation (Rev 3v14)
- In Genesis, the serpent speaks (Gen 3v1-5); in Revelation it is restrained (Rev 20v2)
- In Genesis, the curse is imposed (Gen 3v17); in Revelation it is removed (Rev 22v3)
- In Genesis, sorrow & death appear (Gen 3v16-19); in Revelation they are taken away (Rev 21v4)
- In *Genesis*, access to the tree of life is denied (**Gen 3v24**); in *Revelation*, access to it is opened (**Rev 2v7**; **22v2**)
- In Genesis, the first paradise is closed to man (Gen 3v23); in Revelation it is opened to him (Rev 21v25)

#### Blessed is he that reads, hears & keeps Christ's words

In **Revelation 1v3** we are introduced to the fact that there is a blessing upon those who read, hear, and keep those things written in the Apocalypse. What is this blessing? Is it something that we can afford to be without?

The blessing is in-built into the true interpretation of the book of Revelation so that only those who "know accurately" (Greek: ana-ginosko) and keep (or watch) can receive it. As in **Chapter 16:15** where we find it written "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments..." Only those who understand correctly, or accurately, can watch; the blessing is limited to them.

The blessing of Chapter 1v3 is repeated in Chapter 22v7.

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

We have already seen what some of the "sayings" or commandments are in the prophecy. What is the blessing that results from keeping them?

The blessing that results from being able to identify "Babylon", the beast, his image, and his mark, is clear enough. There is a blessing now, as well as when the Lord returns. The brother or sister who knows accurately what is revealed in the Apocalypse and who "keeps" the sayings of the prophecy, is protected from the deceptive influence of the terrible systems revealed therein. What a blessing!

Such was Brother John Thomas' understanding of this blessing. In *Eureka* Vol.1, page 116, under section entitled "The Blessed" he writes:

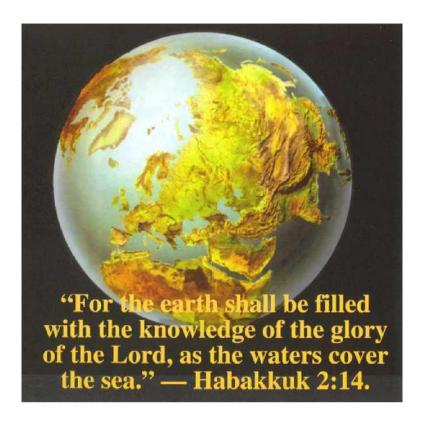
"The Apocalypse was given to this end - that the servants of the Deity, who are keeping their garments, might be able to discern the signs of the times preceding the Apocalypse of Christ; and the real nature of things extant in their several generations. No believer understanding this prophecy could be seduced into fellowship with the clerical institutions of the world; because he would see them all in their native deformity and sin."

Such is the blessing attendant upon those who hear the voice of the Spirit speaking to the ecclesias. They are protected against the deceptive power of the adversary. This is harmony with what Jesus says elsewhere:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10v27,28).

Why is it that no man can pluck these sheep out of their master's hand? It is because "the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

(Bro Paul Billington, The Book of Revelation - An appeal for Right Understanding, pgs. 5-6)



"Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear... He told them, The secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'They may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding...'"

(Mark 4v9,11 - NIV cp. Isaiah 6v8-10)

#### A CONSISTENT INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION THROUGH THE AGES

"There is no question that an *enormous amount of material* is available to demonstrate that a substantial body of Bible scholars and believers held to the *general historical school* of prophetic understanding... I certainly would say that *true witnesses* through the ages right from apostolic times have almost solidly followed this scheme of interpretation. Alternative schemes of interpretation have generally been promoted by those false churches which wished to avoid the teaching of Scripture."

(Bro Alan Eyre, quoted in Bro Pearce's book Revelation, Which Interpretation?, p. 19)

"The identification by **John Thomas** of the slain witnesses of Revelation 11 as being a faithful remnant at the period of the 16th century Reformation *is also shared* - with some variation due to the availability of supporting historical material - **by earlier writers among the Brethren**."

(Bro Alan Eyre, The Protestors, p. 169 - "the Brethren" being the true believers during the dark ages)

"The bitter experiences of the Brethren in Christ inevitably led them to identify Rome as the biblical Antichrist. Their understanding of Bible prophecy, and particularly the Apocalypse, was not new to them. Earlier Bible students such as the Vaudois, and much earlier 'post-apostolic fathers', had bequeathed to them the basic framework for appreciating prophecy and the grand design of the redemptive purpose of God with the earth and mankind. In the 16th Century the need to place their own trials and labours in the context of the divine plan led the Brethren to meditate deeply and prayerfully over the details. The interpretation - both in generality and detail - that emerged was that with which Christadelphians have been familiar since the writings of John Thomas."

(Bro Alan Eyre, Brethren in Christ, pgs. 30,33)

#### Those who study Revelation are blessed

The Book of Revelation is unique in that 7 blessings are promised to those who understand its true message and who practically apply the message in their lives:

- A blessing to those who accurately study and then practically apply the message: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." (Rev 1v3)
- A blessing is pronounced upon those who are resurrected to fulfil the prophecy:

  "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev 14v13)
- A blessing for those who watch and who are ready for Christ's return:

  "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments" (Rev 16v15)
- A blessing for those who partake in the marriage supper of the Lamb: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev 19v9)
- A blessing upon those who inherit eternal life:
  "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." (Rev 20v6)
- **A blessing for those who practically apply the book of Revelation in their lives:**"Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." (Rev 22v7)
- A blessing for those who practically apply Christ's words in the book of Revelation: "Blessed are they that do his commandments." (Rev 22v14)

Do we earnestly desire these blessings? That is the challenge presented to us.

#### A correct understanding is important

It is impossible to practically apply the message of Revelation if we do not understand it. This also means that we have a responsibility to *maintain the correct understanding* of Revelation. If we have a completely wrong interpretation of the book, then there is no way we can practically apply it. While this may sound obvious, there are many today who say we cannot be certain about its interpretation. Some say that there could be many different interpretations. Of course this cannot be true. The fact that Revelation is *Christ's personal message to us* excludes the possibility of many different interpretations. If we wrote a letter to a close friend, would we not care if they understood it or not? How much more then does the Lord Jesus Christ want us to correctly understand this letter?

Jesus spoke in parables to the people of his day to separate the listeners into 2 distinct groups -

- those who wanted to hear, and
- 2 those who didn't want to hear

"And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear... And he said unto them, **Unto you** it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: BUT unto **them that are without**, all these things are done in parables." (Mark 4v9,11 cp. Isaiah 6v8-10)

This is exactly what our Lord does in the Book of Revelation. Jesus is quoting **Isaiah 6** where a vision had just been given of Christ and the Saints in glory - the same vision repeated in **Revelation 4**. A distinction is made between those who believe and those who don't. Revelation is given in parables or *by sign*. Much of the book is *symbolic*. This is why the words of **Mark 4** are quoted to ALL SEVEN ECCLESIAS. The words are also quoted to those who receive the prophecy of **Revelation 13** - about the persecution of the saints by the Roman Catholic Apostasy....

"He that hath an ear, let him hear..."

Do we have ears to hear?

We will now consider one of the most important themes in Revelation, that of God Manifestation,

#### **God Manifestation and Revelation**

Manifestation simply means "to reveal". God Manifestation is therefore all about the way in which God reveals Himself. The only perfect manifestation of God in mankind was the righteous life of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is also seeking for us to manifest (or reveal) His character in our lives. We need to develop a way of thinking in harmony with God's thinking. The purpose of the Word of God is to reveal to us the character of Yahweh, which is then imprinted upon our minds and therefore revealed in our actions. The absolute practical example of this is clearly seen in the character and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. His character was Yahweh's character. By following Christ, we are developing minds in harmony with his Father. When immortality is granted to the saints in the Kingdom age, they will perfectly manifest the character, and nature, of Yahweh.

The book of Revelation is all about God Manifestation. Revelation was given to Gentile ecclesias in a Roman world. The book has been given to God's ecclesia for the duration of the "times of the Gentiles". The aim of the book is to take out of the Gentiles a people for his name (Acts 15v14). The aim is to develop Yahweh's character in faithful men and women. Despite many in God's ecclesia sliding into apostasy, the true believers remain as faithful witnesses for the Truth.

**Yahweh also reveals himself in judgement** to both the faithful and the wicked. Revelation continues this theme of judgement which is found in the book of Daniel. Daniel's name means "the judgement of God". Revelation continues from where Daniel concluded. God vindicates the righteous and brings judgement upon the wicked. This is how he manifests (or reveals) Himself. This is what the book of Revelation shows - the **revealing** of God's **judgements** in the past, present and future:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the **testimony** which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, **dost thou not judge and avenge** our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev 6v9-10)

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (Rev 15v1)

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, **It is done!**" (Rev 16v17)

Israel was dispersed in AD70. However, Yahweh would continue to *reveal Himself* now to the <u>Gentiles</u> (both faithful and unfaithful) *in the same way as He had done to Israel in the past*. Following is an exceptionally good summary of the purpose Yahweh has with the earth. In a nutshell, this is really what the Bible is all about. No wonder Yahweh says that the man is greatly blessed who reads, hears and keeps the words of this prophecy!

#### THE BIBLE REVEALS YAHWEH'S CHARACTER

Nowhere in the Bible is there provided a description of God. On the contrary, He is said to dwell in "unapproachable light whom no man hath seen nor can see" (1 Tim 6v16). But everywhere, on every page of the Bible, there is found the impress of His character and purpose. It is stamped in His labours on behalf of Israel in which he is revealed as a Father, a Master, a Redeemer or an Avenger as the case may be. It is shown in the Divine attributes which were proclaimed to Moses in the declaration of the Name to him (Exod 34v6-7). It is revealed in the history of Israel and the nations as they experience either the mercy, love and forgiveness of Yahweh, or else His wrath.

It is possible for us to overlook this feature of the Divine revelation, and view the Bible as a glorified history book. The Bible is not history, either sacred or profane, but a revelation of the character and purpose of its Author. The incidents recorded therein are selected to reveal both. Whether they show Him as educating and protecting Israel, or giving the nations over to judgement and punishment, they have been set down not merely to record the facts, but as exhibiting facets of the Divine character.

(Bro HP Mansfield, Introduction to Bro Thomas's book Phanerosis, p.8)



The symbol of "many waters" indicates a multitude of people (Dan 10v6; Rev 1v15; 17v15 etc.)

It is essential to have a good understanding of **Revelation chapter 1** before launching straight into **Chapters 2 & 3**. **Chapter 1** immediately introduces us to the main themes of the book. The various titles of our Lord very much form a basis for the language used in **Revelation 2 & 3**. The Son of Man has the **voice of many waters**, indicating that a **faithful multitude** of believers is being developed who are "in Christ". The following summary by Bro John Knowles reveals to us the importance of **Chapter 1** in understanding the book as a whole. It also reveals how God Manifestation is the greatest theme in this phenomenal conclusion to the Bible.

#### GOD MANIFESTATION AND REVELATION

"For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation (Gk. apocalypse) of the sons of God" - Romans 8v19.

The Apocalypse is actually a confidential message from the Lord Jesus Christ explaining to his "friends" how the Father has manifested His Glory in the **past**, is manifesting it at the **present** time, and will assuredly reveal it in a multitude of glorified ones in His **future** Kingdom. It is written in a style which **only the Lord's friends can understand** and expresses "spiritual things in spiritual words". This revelation of God's purpose was never intended for every man to understand, but only those separated ones who understand the Truth and are constituents now of that Christ-Body.

The glorious concept of God-manifestation is beautifully outlined in the various titles of **the first chapter**, and all of them are in harmony with the total message of Scripture. The Apocalypse expands facets of this message to show how Yahweh has provided a "cloud of witnesses" in all ages, following the pattern of His "Faithful Witness" (**Rev 1v5**), and how He will deal with men and nations to bring to pass His desired purpose. **The titles of the first chapter** of the Apocalypse provide the indispensable key to unlock the rest of the book. Whether it be the "Him which is and which was and which is to come", the "faithful witness", the "firstborn of the dead", the "prince of the kings of the earth", the "Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending", one "like unto the Son of Man", or the "clouds" with which the Lord appears, these are all expressions of the manifestation of Deity in one form or another - in His Firstborn Son, or in the many sons begotten by the Spirit Word and who collectively witness to that Word as members of that multitudinous body of Christ.

The Apocalypse opens with the promise of a blessing to those that read, hear and keep the things which are written therein. This blessing does not come so much from being able to interpret all the historical events as it does from understanding and practising the principles of God Manifestation which pervade the whole book. Whilst many of the chapters deal with historical events, we must never lose sight of the fact that the purpose of the book is to show the way in which saints of all ages would witness against error, and how the final triumph of God's righteousness in the earth will only come about with the manifestation of Christ and the saints at the Lord's coming.

(Bro John Knowles, The Lampstand, Dec. '98)

#### **Revelation 1-3 are foundation chapters**

The first 3 chapters of Revelation are vital in preparing us for the rest of the book. The letters to the 7 ecclesias are not given to ecclesias within Israel, but to those in *the Roman Empire*. This indicates *a new phase* in the purpose of God. Previously, for a period of around 2000 years, God worked with the nation of Israel to bring them unto repentance. Tragically, Israel fell away into apostasy, and then killed their Messiah. God therefore sent them into captivity (AD70). It was now time for God to work with a new nation - the Gentiles.

For almost 2000 years, God has worked with Gentile ecclesias to bring them to repentance. During this period of time Israel have been dispersed throughout the world. The last 2000 years are called *"the times of the Gentiles"* in Luke 21v24. This is also stated plainly in the book of Acts:

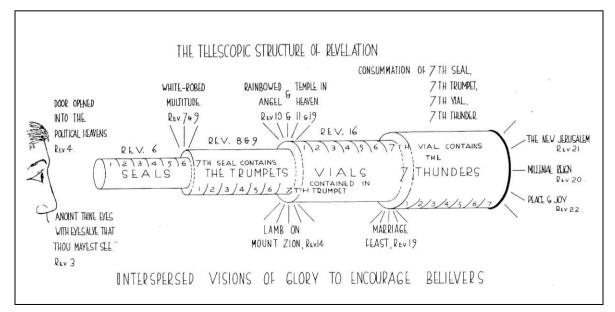
"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said (to the Jews), It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, **LO WE TURN TO THE GENTILES**." (Acts 13v46)

Revelation therefore details this period of time called "the times of the Gentiles". Israel had the Old Testament prophets in their days. Gentile ecclesias after AD96 had the book of Revelation. This prophecy therefore aims to *take out of the Gentiles a people for God's name* (Acts 15v14).

However, just like Israel, mainstream Christianity also fell away into apostasy. Within 280 years, this corrupt form of Christianity actually became the official religion of the Roman Empire - that very power represented in Daniel by the ferocious 4<sup>th</sup> Beast! Ironically, the greatest persecutions faced by the true ecclesia of God over the centuries has come from a power which developed from out of the Truth itself.

In the 7 ecclesias of Asia Minor, we find a mixture of believers. Some were holding fast to the faith delivered to the apostles, while others had drifted away into Judaism and false doctrine. Some of these believers had even separated themselves from the true ecclesia. Many of those who had wrong doctrine were actually trying to seduce the believers away from the Truth. Yahweh promises the faithful that He will not let these false brethren escape judgement. Meanwhile, some of the ecclesias were suffering persecution at the hands of the Roman authorities.

It is this pattern which continued over the centuries. The true believers were persecuted by Rome in its various forms of government. False Christianity actually merged with Rome itself and trod under foot the faithful remnant. Yahweh's promises of judgement upon false Christianity were revealed. These are plainly seen in the judgements of the Seals, Trumpets and Vials. These were judgements against the Apostate Roman Empire for their persecution of the believers. Revelation forms a telescopic type structure where the events of each chapter unfold more and more until finally the Kingdom of God is established.



We therefore see that events detailed in Rev 2 & 3 set the scene for the whole book. In summary:

- Gentile ecclesias become the focus of God's interest now that Israel has been scattered
- True believers are seen to be under increasing pressure from apostasy & persecution by Rome
- Despite their dwindling numbers, they hold fast to the things that remain
- False Christianity meanwhile gains more and more power
- Christ walks in the midst of the ecclesias during their suffering (he is with them)
- Revelation provides encouragement & a vision of the Kingdom for those who are trodden down.

This is what the book of Revelation is all about. Many of the phrases and exhortations given to the ecclesias in **Chapters 1,2&3** are therefore alluded to throughout the whole book. We can therefore see that **Revelation 1-3 forms the vital foundation for the rest of the book**.

#### Many new interpretations fail to see this significance

It is a great tragedy that many recent interpretations of Revelation completely overlook these basic Scriptural facts. The true meaning of Revelation is lost if we fail to see that the book was written as a guiding light for Gentile ecclesias, of which we form a part. Some expositors push most of the book into *the past*, relating it mainly to Israel in AD70. Others push it all into *a mysterious future*, therefore removing any relevance to us today. Not surprisingly, these interpretations place little emphasis upon the first 3 chapters of the book. Significantly, it was the Roman Catholic Church itself which pioneered these interpretations as a weapon against the true believers during the dark ages. The Apostate Church aimed to take the spotlight off themselves as the great Jezebel harlot system, by projecting the book of Revelation into the dim dark past or into an ambiguous future.

A correct understanding of **Revelation 1-3** will therefore lay a wonderful foundation for our understanding of **Chapters 4-22**. We can be confident that true believers throughout the ages have held to the *one correct understanding* of the book. Let us be thankful that Christ has **revealed to us** these wonderful mysteries of the Kingdom of God (**Mark 4v11**). It is not through our own effort or righteousness that we have been shown these things, but through the faithfulness of the Son of God (**Rev 5v1-5**). The book was written to be understood:

"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." (Rev 22v10)

#### Revelation continues on from Daniel's prophecy

The first 'Biblical warrant' for the Roman (continuous-historic) interpretation is found in the book of Daniel. **Daniel** puts on record **the continuous existence of the Roman power** from the time of Christ's first coming to his second coming; also its change of religion, and its blasphemy and opposition to God and God's people. Therefore it is an expected development that when Jesus sent his Final Message, and the fulfilment of history was drawing near, the brethren should be provided with more detail than Daniel had given. **This is what Revelation provides.** 

If Daniel records such prophecies of Roman history and its development of a new religion and its enmity against God, it surely is not strange that **God should later fill in the details**. Here is a Biblical warrant for the interpretation of the Revelation.

Paul strengthens this Biblical warrant in what he writes to the Thessalonians. He warns them of the development Daniel had spoken about (2 Thess 2v3-5). Notice how concerned Paul was that they should understand, and be warned. He fills in Daniel's picture as far as it had developed. "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work…" (RV). Now if Paul should so concern himself to instruct the brethren on the coming of the lawless one and his enmity against God, should we not expect Jesus to show the same care to those who were to come after, and explain to them, in symbol, further developments, so that they were warned, strengthened and guided? This he does in Revelation.

When we come to read the Revelation, it opens with warning and guidance to the **believers in Christ living in the Greek-Roman world**. **This is in the 7 letters**. Should we not expect, as the record continues, that it would provide further guidance to **the same class of people**? If so, then the record will be about situations in the Roman world around the believers.

The Revelation takes Old Testament items concerning the nation of Israel, and makes them symbols for the **believers in Christ, the true Israel in the times of the Gentiles**. The Revelation is about the affairs of the saints, not national Israel.

(Graham Pearce, Revelation - Which Interpretation?, pgs 38-40) \*

<sup>\*</sup> Above is a condensed version of Bro Pearce's comments showing the confidence we can have in the true message of Daniel & Revelation.

#### Revelation 2 & 3: Development of apostasy in Ecclesias

Over a period of hundreds of years, the Gentile ecclesias under rule of the Roman Empire became corrupted by Paganism. It was the evil influence of those such as the **Nicolaitanes** in Ephesus, the **Synagogue of Satan** in Smyrna, those with the **doctrine of Balaam** in Pergamos and that woman **Jezebel** in Thyatira which brought about the Apostasy (ie. "falling away") in Yahweh's Ecclesia. The ultimate result of this was the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. When the evil woman styled BABYLON THE GREAT rides the beast in **Revelation 17**, the Apostate church is in a position of great power, dominance, and - like Jezebel of old - **confidence**. This is the powerful apostasy which reigns in the latter days. This system of false Christianity **came out of what was the true ecclesia**. This will become more evident as we study the different letters.

The apostate church eventually became involved in the political affairs of the Roman Empire. This apostasy eventually became the religion of the empire, and later even became the government itself. It is important that we realise the origins of modern "Christianity". It all began with the merging of true Christianity with the pagan philosophies of Greco-Latin culture. There are various warnings that this would occur, recorded in the New Testament:

1 Tim 4v1 "Some shall depart from the faith"

**2 Tim 4v3-4** "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

**2 Thess 2v3** There must "come a falling away first"

**2 Pet 2v1** "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies"

**1 John 2v18-19** "...antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists... They went out from us..."

Acts 20v28-31 Paul said, "...after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also, from among your own selves shall men arise speaking perversely, to draw away the disciples after them."

In an attempt to gain popularity for their form of Christianity, these false teachers compromised with pagan worshippers, and many years later became a very powerful force. In AD312, Constantine came to power as emperor of the Roman Empire and he made false Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. It may have taken around 280 years to develop (since Christ's ascension to heaven), but this apostasy firstly came from within the true ecclesia itself. How ironic.

#### A GREAT APOSTASY FORETOLD

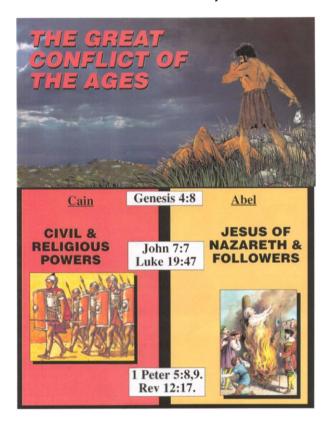
- A departure from the Faith began in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century (1 Tim 4v1-3 cp. 1 John 2v18-19)
- They would forbid to marry the doctrine of a celibate priesthood (1 Tim 4v3)
- They command abstinence from certain meats (1 Tim 4v3)
- They would "make merchandise" out of religion (2 Pet 2v3)
- The leaders of the apostasy would be skilled in the art of deception (2 Thess 2v9-10)
- "They went out from us" says the apostle This is quite definitely a Christian apostasy (1 John 2v18-19)
- They scoff at the Truth (2 Peter 3v3-4)
- They would deny the doctrine of literal resurrection and replace it with an alternative, ie. the immortality of the soul. (1 Cor 15v12; 2 Tim 2v18)
- They would deny the true nature of Christ, ie. that he is come in the flesh (1 John 4v1-4)
- They would turn to idolatry, "the worship of demons" (1 Tim 4v1)
- The apostasy (symbolised as a whore) would ride the 10 horned Roman beast (**Dan 7v7,23,25**; **Rev 17v3**) ie. She would gain spiritual control over the Roman or Latin world.
- The seat of this apostasy would be the city of Rome (Rev 17v18).

(summary by Bro Paul Billington in his booklet, Holy War in the Balkans - the battle to unite Christendom, p.15)

It would be a great struggle for the true believers, under persecution and pressure from the great Christian Apostasy which eventually gained spiritual control over the Roman empire. This struggle is the story of the Book of Revelation - and it all begins in the letters to the 7 ecclesias.

#### The great struggle

This is a continuation of the struggle that all began back in Genesis. It is the Seed of the Serpent versus the Seed of the Woman. This is the very struggle initiated by God right from the beginning (**Gen 3v15**). The promised **seed of the woman** was ultimately fulfilled in Christ – and by extension it is a term which applies to all those who are "in Christ" by faith. The **seed of the serpent**, as Jesus shows in **John 8** (and as John the Baptist shows in **Luke 3v7,8**) was fulfilled in faithless individuals who rejected the words of God – thus manifesting that carnal mind of the flesh which is at enmity with God (**Rom 8v7**). The conflict was clearly seen in the killing of faithful Abel by his brother Cain, and this set the scene for the whole of history:



<u>Nationally</u>, this controversy is seen in the struggle of **Babylon verses Zion**. When Babylon rises, Zion falls. When Zion is elevated, Babylon will fall. We will see that Babylon in Revelation is the Roman Catholic Apostasy. <u>Rome</u> is therefore styled **Babylon the Great** (Rev 14,17,18). <u>Zion</u> of the Apocalypse is represented by true believers, the **Israel of God** (Gal 6v16). The big struggle is therefore **BABYLON THE GREAT vs. THE ISRAEL OF GOD**. A summary of this is shown here:

ZION	ROME
The Lamb	The Beast
The Bride	A drunken harlot
Mount Zion	Seven Hilled City
New Jerusalem	Babylon the Great
The Holy City	City of Sodom & Egypt
God of Heaven	God of the Earth
Seal of the living God	Mark of the Beast
The redeemed 144,000	Number of the Beast = 666
He who is "faithful and true" (The Lord Jesus Christ)	The false prophet (The Papacy)

#### It all began in the first century AD

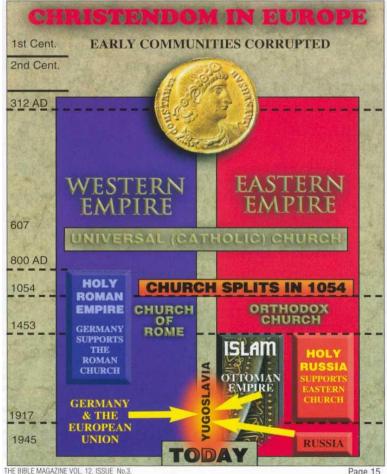
Both Jews and Gentiles were given an opportunity by God. The great apostasy at the time of Christ was the Jewish rulership headed by the Pharisees, Sadducees & Co. Up until the time of Christ, the Jewish people had been given 2000 years to respond to Yahweh. However they rejected their Messiah and crucified him. Judgement was then brought upon Israel in AD70. The Gentile ecclesias from the time of Christ were also given an opportunity. Tragically, they went the same way Israel had gone many years before. The result of this was apostate Christianity. The word "apostasy" means a "falling away" (ie. from the Truth) and is taken from 2 Thess 2v3.

The 2 great apostasies can therefore be summarised as follows:

→ 2000 years probation → developed into apostasy → Result: Pharisees, Jewish rulers etc. Israel Judged in AD70 (fall of Jerusalem) Gentiles → 2000 years probation → developed into apostasy → Result: Roman Catholic Church etc. Judged at Armageddon & aftermath

The Old Testament Prophets condemned Israel for their apostasy and warned of coming judgement. Jesus did the same in the Gospels. Likewise, the Apostle Paul and others warned Gentile ecclesias of apostasy, the seeds of which were already working in the first century ecclesia. The Book of Revelation therefore continues this warning to Gentile Ecclesias. It warns of coming judgement upon this Apostate harlot system, just as the prophets had done with Israel many years before. The false elements within the truth led eventually (over hundreds of years) to the Roman Catholic Church and their Catholic Roman Empire.

In our days, we see Apostate Christianity in a position of great power in Russia, Europe and across the world. This even manifests itself in wars such as the recent conflict in the Balkans. The following chart shows that the events in our day have their roots right back in the apostasy which developed in first century ecclesias, which became evident in Constantine's revolution of AD312. Remember, the beginning of the story is found in **Revelation chapters 1-3**.



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#### **Introduction - Part 2**

## READING AND HEARING THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY

#### Reading and hearing the words of this prophecy

Let us first *believe* the word which tells us that the Revelation was given to "show" the servants of Jesus Christ things which must shortly come to pass. It was not intended that this symbolic prophecy should mystify and confuse the Lord's servants. We ought not therefore to feel daunted at the prospect of studying the book. It is our Father's good pleasure to show us his purposes.

The word "show" in Rev 1v1 is from the Greek *Deiknuo* meaning to show or exhibit. Vine says that it means "to show by making known". Let us not enter into our subject with doubtful minds therefore - let us expect that God will do what He says and enlighten us.

What is the alternative conclusion to this? Are we to say that the book has failed in its purpose? Has God failed? We know that that cannot be so.

What about ourselves then - Are we the ones intended to have this knowledge; are we really "his servants"? This is a serious question.

#### **A Preliminary Test**

Turn up **Revelation 5v2-4** and read the words: "Who is worthy to open the book...?" Is it not interesting that in opening the book of Revelation the first thing we meet is a test. We are, as it were, required to pass an inspection: Who is worthy to open the book; are we "his servants"?

For centuries, we are told, no one - not even the angels of heaven - were able to open the book. Until the Lamb prevailed no one could unseal the book (cp **Daniel 12v9**). If none of the faithful from Old Testament times were worthy enough to open the book - what about us! We surely feel the burden of our own unworthiness. Yet we read in **Revelation 5** that the Lamb *is* worthy. Now are we identified with the Lamb of God? Are we not identified with him through belief and baptism? Consider then the implications of **Romans 5v19** and let us receive in faith that we have been made, or constituted, righteous. Having then been baptised into Jesus Christ - baptised into his death - let us wake up and arise to walk in newness of life.

Beloved brethren and sisters let us grasp the message of **Romans chapter 6**. Can we be truly baptised into Christ and yet continue to be the servants of sin? Of course not! "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his servants ye are* to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (**Rom 6v16**).

Our baptism into Jesus Christ has freed us from service to sin, but it takes time for some of us to realise this! Do not be discouraged however; "Awake to righteousness and sin not" (1 Cor 15v34). Get busy in the work of the Truth (for Christ says he is the truth). Have we wasted years in serving the old man of the flesh - ie. ourselves? Let us do something about it then. Forget self, he's dead - he's history. *Arise* and walk in newness of life, serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### "Love one another"

Some may say, yes; we see that this is right - but what would our Lord have us do in service to him? In reply we would say that the general principle to be followed is - in the words of Jesus himself - "That ye love one another, as I have loved you" - see **John 15v12**. Let this spirit motivate us and we shall truly be "his servants".

In **Revelation 1v5** we read of "him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Here is our example; here is the one who has showed us what true service is. The apostle John makes the issue clear:

"Hereby perceive we the love (note: "of God" is not in the original) because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3v16).

We see this spirit in the apostle Paul; read what he says and consider the implications -

#### Romans 9v1-3

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

So here then is the qualification required for understanding the book of Revelation. We are to be identified with the Lamb of God through belief, baptism *and service*, for it is a book that is intended to show unto *his servants* things which must shortly come to pass.



The 7 sealed scroll - Revelation 5 (Painting by Simon Sawell)

"And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." (Rev 5v4-5)

#### "He Sent and Signified it"

To "signify" means to make something known by sign; to *intimate* it. It does not mean a straight forward telling of a thing, but rather an intimation of it by sign, signal or clue. It is to impart information by code or special language.

For example, the same word is used in the following passages:

**Revelation 12v1,3** "a great wonder (sign) in heaven".

**Revelation 15v1** "another *sign* in heaven".

The Revelation then is signified in a spiritual language which can be readily understood by those for whom it is intended - ie. by *"his servants"*. It is in this sense a "mystery": (a Revealed secret to the initiated - Vine). Compare the following:

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." - Rev 1v20.

"... I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns." - Rev 17v7.

#### Blessed is He that Readeth

"Blessed is he that readeth... the words (*logos*) of this prophecy". The *Logos - the reasoning* expressed in the prophecy, its teaching. The sense of this word *logos* may be seen from its use in **Hebrews 6v1** where it is translated "doctrine" in the King James Version.

Now there is a blessing for those who can read the *logos* signified in the prophecy. This idea is expressed also in the context of **Nehemiah 8v8**:

"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

It is important to note the RV marginal note here. It seems that the reading required some interpretation by those who read it. Another example can be seen from **Daniel 5** (**verses 8,17,&25-28**). The wise men could "read" the words written on the wall - but could not make sense of them. This is just like the book of Revelation - the wise men of this world can "read" what is written but have no idea what it's all about. As Daniel could *read* this writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast in Babylon, so in our day the servants of Jesus Christ can read the words or *logos* of the Apocalypse which completely mystifies the wise men of modern Babylon.

#### "And They That Hear"

There are two classes among Christ's servants here in **Rev 1v3**. Those who can *read* the words of the prophecy and those who are willing to *hear* them. This matter of "hearing" is a recurring theme worthy of our notice in the book of Revelation. Compare the following passages:

#### Revelation 2v7,11,17,29

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias, He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

#### Revelation 3:6, 13, 22

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

#### Revelation 13:9

"If any man hath an ear, let him hear."

#### Revelation 22:8; 17&18

"And I John saw these things and **heard** them. And when I had **heard** and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things."

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. For I testify unto **every man that heareth the words of this book**, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

True servants will always hear their Masters' voice, but the implication here, surely, is that not everyone in the ecclesias would hear. It is important to notice this.

Perhaps the words spoken to Israel will come to mind: "To day if ye will hear his voice, *harden not your hearts*" cp. **Hebrews 4v7**; **3v7-12**; also **verses 15-19** and **John 8v47**.

In the passage of Scripture which tells us how faith is obtained (**Romans 10v14-17**) it may be noticed that the true sense of "hearing" is that of belief and obedience. **Verse 16** reads "But they have not all *obeyed* the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath *believed* our report." This then is the biblical sense of "hearing"; it involves both belief and obedience to the message of the gospel.

Similarly in **John 10v16-27** Jesus says that his sheep *hear* his voice and *follow* him, whereas those who are not his sheep do not. So to "hear" signifies both the acceptance of the message as well as to act upon it.

So why is the message of the book of Revelation written in symbolic figures so that it is not readily understood? The answer is to be found in the same reason which Jesus gave to those who asked why he spoke in parables (see **Matt 13v13**) - the message just isn't intended for anyone and everyone. These things are holy and precious; thus they are protected and guarded from those who cannot walk in the way of the tree of life: the words of Jesus thus becomes a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient - 1 **Peter 2v8**. In practice this built-in protection works because the true meaning or interpretation is either unintelligible or else offensive to minds which are not in harmony with the things of the spirit of God (1 **Cor 2v14-16**)

#### "Keep Those Things Which Are Written Therein"

The word "keep" in **Rev 1v3** is from the Greek *Tereo* which we are told means to watch over, preserve. So the idea is that of "keeping" or preserving the *logos* or sense, meaning, or *teaching* of the prophecy. Compare this with the sober words of **Chapter 22v19**:

"And if any man shall take away from the logos (the reasoning expressed) of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life...."

Do we believe that? Do we hear it? Those who hear the words of the prophecy are responsible to keep and preserve it - as well as to observe it.

The meaning of the prophecy then, is something that we should seek to preserve or hold on to. In **Revelation 6v9** we read of "the testimony which they *held*". In **Revelation 12v17** we read of those who "*have* the testimony of Jesus Christ." This is not just a passive holding - the Greek word is *Echo* - the active sense is that we should echo the testimony of Jesus Christ.

#### The Origin of the Prophecy

The prophecy is "from Jesus Christ" (**Chapter 1v1**; **1v5**; **22v16**). It is his "testimony", account or record of what God gave to him so that he might show his servants the purpose or plan of his Father. Let us then open our ears to receive this message which is - as Bro John Thomas once expressed it - a "remarkable prophecy transmitted from unapproachable light".

#### The First Vision

The first things that we are shown are contained in the section - **chapter 1v12-20**. The first vision is important and we should take particular notice of what is said - and particularly how these things are to be "read" or interpreted.

Let us note what we are told:

- The mystery (or Revealed secret) of the 7 stars refers to the 7 angels (or messengers)
  of the 7 ecclesias.
- 2. The 7 Candlesticks are the 7 ecclesias.

The point to notice here is that the meaning is not left to our imagination; we are not left to guess at the meaning - we are told. This, surely, should teach us not to attempt to "read into" the prophecy anything which our own earthy "wisdom" might suggest. Let us understand and be content with being "shown" the things communicated for our information. Let the Lord himself teach us. This he will do *through Scripture*.

For example, this vision is clearly built upon other Scriptures. The imagery of **Chapter 1v13-16** rather obviously reflects passages such as **Daniel 7v9;22**, which provide us with a symbolic picture of the saints in judgment.

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."

"Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."



"His wheels as burning fire" - The Cherubim of Ezekiel 1 & Daniel 7 (Painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

#### Parallel ideas from Daniel 7 are seen in Revelation 1v13-16.



Dan 10 vision (Painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

We can see other reflections from Dan 10v5,6 also:



Dan 10 vision (Painting by Bro Stuart Gilmore)

"Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude."

There the symbolic man has the voice of the multitude, and therefore must represent a multitude. Compare also **Rev 1v17** with **Daniel 10v8-9**.

Who is this multitudinous man? It can be none other than the "One body" of 1 Corinthians 10v17 and 12v12-14:

"For we **being many** are one bread, and **one body**: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."

Every member of this one body is "knit together" in the manner described in Colossians 2v2,3:

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

In **Daniel 10** we see that the prophet's strength was turned into corruption - yet he is raised and strengthened. Similarly John, in **Rev 1v17,18** "fell at his feet as dead," but he is touched by the Living One, We would be slow to miss these similarities - and who can oppose the inevitable conclusion that it is God himself who explains and interprets these visions through His Word.

Finding this key then, we produce [a diagram opposite] showing the main features of the one "like the Son of man" tied to other Scriptures which can explain the vision. We find that it refers us to the grand theme of *The Spirit Name in Multitudinous Manifestation*.

#### **Introduction - Part 3**

## CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO ECCLESIAS IN A GENTILE WORLD

Although given to show *individuals* what must come to pass, John is told to send the prophecy to seven ecclesias in Asia (**Rev 1v11**). These ecclesias are addressed in **chapter 1v4**, and then in detail in **chapters 2&3**.

The first thing to note is the unhappy point that not everyone in these ecclesias would respond. See **chapter 2v7** for example. "He that hath an ear, let *him* hear what the spirit says to the ecclesias."

#### Why would Some not Hear?

In these 7 ecclesias there were those who were *not* servants of Jesus Christ.

eg. chapter 2v2 those who were false apostles

chapter 2v9 false Jews - the "synagogue of satan"

chapter 2v14 "thou hast there" Balaamites

chapter 2v15 Nicolaitaneschapter 2v20 Jezebel

These were not perfect ecclesias - True and false disciples were mingled together. Some in the ecclesia would hear and respond, others would not.

The seven ecclesias addressed here are *representative* of ecclesias in the Gentile world. The number 7 is, of course, a number which implies a completion. But more significantly we see that no limit is suggested in the words of **Revelation 22v16**.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the ecclesias..."

All ecclesias are thus included, showing that the original seven were representative - and the message delivered is as relevant for our ecclesias today as it was for those original seven in Asia. Ecclesias today are composed of false and true disciples, just as the early ecclesias of Asia were.

In 1 Corinthians 11v19 the apostle wrote; "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

"Heresies" literally mean a sect or party - A school of thought or opinion. Christadelphia today is full of "schools of thought" - and they cannot all be correct; some ideas are false.

We may not like to recognise this. It would be nice to think that everyone will be accepted when Christ comes - but we know it isn't so - 2 Cor 5v10; Col 3v24-25.

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

"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

We must not be surprised or discouraged by these facts. We should be stirred up and made manifest as **1 Cor 11v19** says. How? By holding fast to that which we have! (See **Rev 2v25**).

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." - Revelation 3v2-3.

"Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

- Revelation 3v1.

There is an important lesson here - a guiding principle.

We are given no instructions to leave or abandon a dying ecclesia

We are given no instructions to split an ecclesia and start a new one.

#### The task is:

- 1. Hold fast to what we have.
- 2. Strengthen what remains.
- 3. Remember our Roots!

This is the outworking of love of the brethren as we see it expressed in Jude -

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Jude v20-23)

Christ's mission was to save, not destroy. This must be our mission also.

#### The aim is - to "Overcome"

If there is one word expressing the exhortation of the Apocalypse this is it.

#### "To him that overcometh" - chapter 2v7

- **Chapter 2v11** "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, He that **overcometh** shall not be hurt of the second death."
- **Chapter 2v17** "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it."
- **Chapter 2v26** "And he that **overcometh**, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."
- **Chapter 3v5** "He that *overcometh*, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."
- **Chapter 3v12** "Him that *overcometh* will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."
- **Chapter 3v21** "To him that **overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

It is clear that in some way we are to overcome in order to receive the promises. But what are we to overcome?

The clue is given in **Revelation 3v21** where Jesus says "even as I also overcame". What does Jesus say he overcame? "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ve shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" - **John 16v33**.

This is the issue and the task before us Brethren and Sisters: To overcome the world. This is what the book of Revelation is all about.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5v4-5)

So *the* exhortation of the Apocalypse is that we should overcome the world through faith. The World - Gk. *kosmos* - signifies *this arrangement of things*; this system. The idea is that of the social, political and religious system - the world, the environment. Now with this in mind consider the following:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." - 1 John 2v15-17

All that is in the world - all that the world appeals to (the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life) is to be avoided.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." - 1 John 4v1-5

False prophets are "of the world", so that to "overcome them" - the false teachers - is to overcome the world (v4). We can readily apply this principle to the situation in Rev 2&3, where false apostles, Nicolaitanes, Balaamites etc must be overcome.

So it amounts to this: Overcoming the influence of the world within the ecclesia. This is what the seven letters are about. As individuals we must make the effort to overcome the world's influence in the ecclesia.

The influence of the world comes into the ecclesia in different ways - and it is the main avenues that are covered by the examples given in the letters to the 7 ecclesias. We will briefly consider each under the following four headings.

**Nicolaitanes** (Strong #3531) means "Victorious over the people". A study of the name shows that it signifies those who conquer or triumph over the people. This symbolic name refers to would-be rulers, the empire builders, leaders who seek a following for themselves. cp. **3 John v9,10**.

"I wrote unto the ecclesia: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the ecclesia."

We see here an illustration of "The pride of life" cp.1 Peter 5v3; Acts 20v29-30. Such men are destroyers of the people; false teachers as in the time of Jeremiah:

"Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD." - Jer 23v1.

This is the character of the Nicolaitanes.

**The Synagogue of Satan** is a symbolic title for those who say they are Jews (by adoption) but are not.

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." - Revelation 2v9.

Compare the description of Paul:-

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." - 2 Cor 11v14-15.

These "ministers of satan" teach another Jesus and another Gospel says Paul. Their technique is to use the terminology of the truth whilst teaching something different. They set up a rival community, a community within a community, a schism - see **Jude v16-19**:

"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." - Jude v 16-19.

They will be seen separating themselves, walking after their own ungodly (or worldly) lusts.

Why form their own separate synagogue or meeting? The answer must be that they think themselves above, or better than their brethren - Pharisaical. Again, pride is manifest.

**The Doctrine of Balaam** (Rev 2v14). Balaam was a traitor to Israel, and becomes a *type* of those who are willing to lead the brethren and sisters astray for the rewards of the world. Consider Num 22v17,37; 2 Pet 2v14-15. Again *the lusts of the world* are involved.

Do we think it can't be like this in the meeting today? We are being told that it *is* going to be like this, "He that hath an ear, let *him* hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesias." To him that overcometh this influence, there are rewards promised. When we see brethren and sisters being led along a wrong path, we must have the *faith* and courage to stand apart from those responsible.

Whether this has always been done in our Christadelphian community to the extent that it should have been, is a point that we do well to consider.

**That Woman Jezebel** (Rev 2v20). The apocalyptic Jezebel is a symbolic "woman" based upon the horrible character of the wife of Ahab in the Old Testament, who taught and encouraged Baal worship in Israel.

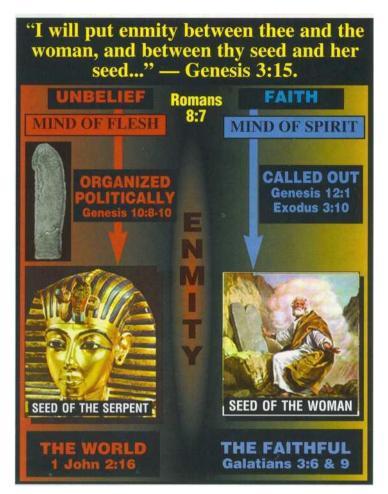
The point here is that this self-styled prophetess or teacher was "suffered". Here were teachers in the ecclesia that were paganising the truth.

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." - Jude v 4. cp Titus 1v10-11.

"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision. Whose mouth must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."

This surely teaches us that it is our duty as brothers and sisters, to protest against the abuse of the ecclesial platform. The spirit here says quite clearly that he held it against this ecclesia because they suffered or tolerated teachers who were leading the flock astray.

The original Jezebel was a Phoenician and she was bringing the world into the ecclesia. The apocalyptic Jezebel does the same thing and she must be "overcome" (v26). The lesson is there for us brethren and sisters, if we have ears to hear it.



↑ The age-old conflict initiated in the beginning (Genesis 3v15) continues through the whole of the book of Revelation. Overcoming the world or seed of the serpent is a great theme of Revelation. This chart is taken from Seminar notes by Bro P. Billington.

#### Overcoming the World

In **Revelation 2 & 3** then, we are exhorted to overcome the influence of the world *that threatens* the ecclesia. In other parts of the prophecy however we will see how the influence of the ecclesia can overcome world systems.

This idea of overcoming the world is seen again in the rest of the Revelation. For example in **chapter 6v2** we see the rider of the white horse going forth "conquering, and to conquer". The word here translated "conquering, and to conquer" is the same as for "overcometh" in **chapters 2 & 3**. So we can see that the efforts to overcome the world are continued. Again, in **chapter 12v11** there is reference to the dragon-power being overcome through sacrifice and testimony. In **chapter 15v2** we read of those who had "gotten the victory" over the beast system - they had also "overcome". In **chapter 21v7** those who *overcome* are promised their inheritance. Clearly, this theme runs throughout the book of Revelation.

We see then a conflict between the ecclesia - the Servants of Jesus Christ - and the world.

This is what the Book of Revelation is all about. It is the story of how the Servants of Jesus Christ overcome the Gentile world through Faith.

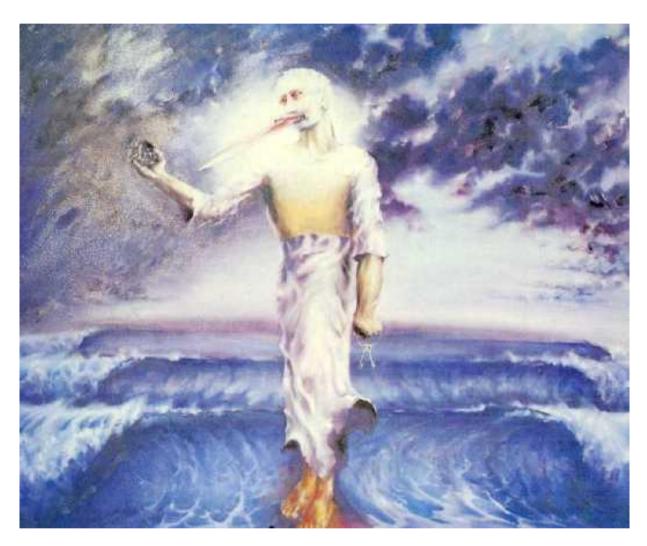
The end of the story is - Revelation 11v15:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev 11v15)

#### **NOTES**

#### **Revelation 1**

## THE SON OF MAN WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE 7 LAMPSTANDS





#### **Revelation 1**

## THE SON OF MAN WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE 7 LAMPSTANDS

Eureka Vol 1, p. 118-188

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17v3)

#### **Summary of Revelation chapter 1:**

v1-3 Introduction to Revelation

v4-8 Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ

v9 John on Patmos

v10-20 The first vision - One like unto the Son of Man

#### **VERSES 1-3: Introduction to Revelation**

#### Verse 1

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:"

"The Revelation" is a title that means what it says. The very title of the book indicates that this is a book written to be understood. In the Greek it is *Apokalupsis* (Str. #602) which means "disclosure" (Strongs) and comes from *Apokalupto*, meaning "to take off the cover". It is just like opening dark curtains in the morning which reveal a crystal clear sunrise. What may be clouded or covered to those in the world is revealed or uncovered for the saints. There obviously can only be one interpretation of the book, otherwise it would not be a "Revelation".

The word is translated "lighten" in **Luke 2v32** in the context of "a light to lighten the Gentiles". It is also translated as "appearing" (1 **Pet 1v7**), "coming" (1 **Cor 1v7**), and "manifestation" (**Rom 8v19**). It is often translated as "revelation". The word occurs 19 times in the New Testament.

#### "of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him" -

Jesus previously did not have detailed knowledge of the times and seasons (Mark 13v32; Acts 1v7), but now he is in heaven, God has provided him with the details. Many of these details are revealed in the book of Revelation.

#### "to shew unto his servants" -

These things are revealed to his servants, "because none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (**Dan 12v10**). A "servant" is a "bond-slave in the sense of subjection or subserviency" (Strongs) We are gladly in subjection to Yahweh and His Son. Paul the apostle spoke of such a relationship in **Rom 1v1** and **1 Cor 7v21-23**. The "servant" theme is often found throughout Revelation. The word is used 14 times in the book. John himself is called a "servant" in **John 15v15**. There are various allusions to the servant prophecies in **Isaiah 42-53** throughout Revelation.

The book is not written for every man. It is written for those who are Christ's "servants". In the Gospels, Jesus indicates that there would be 2 types of people who heard the message - those as his disciples and those like the Pharisees:

Mark 4v9-11 "And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear...

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand ..."

It is exactly the same with the book of Revelation.

Refer to the *Introduction - Part 1* under the heading "A correct understanding is important".

The purpose of the book is to **SHOW** these things to Christ's servants. This is what it says and this is what it has done. The book was not given to confuse Christ's servants. Bro Alan Eyre indicates in his books *The Protestors* and *Brethren in Christ* that in fact God has succeeded in His purpose of showing these things to Christ's servants. He indicates that through the ages there has been one consistent interpretation of the book - the very interpretation held by Christadelphians today. He says that the understanding of Revelation held by true believers over the centuries "both in generality and detail... was that with which Christadelphians have been familiar since the writings of John Thomas." (Brethren in Christ, p.33)

This Continuous-historic interpretation understands the book as a continuation from Daniel's prophecy and a book given for Gentile ecclesias in Gentile times. It is interesting to note that true believers in the dark ages all identified Rome as the great harlot entitled "Babylon the Great" and understood that the Beast symbolised Catholic Europe. Let us therefore be confident that Christ's words in Revelation have been understood and heeded by true believers through time.

There are some however who say that Christadelphians throughout the centuries *did not* properly understand the Apocalypse, and that the true meaning of the book has only emerged in the last 20 years or so. This is not only wrong historically but also Scripturally. To say that God *did not show* Christ's servants those things which came to pass is to say that God has failed in His purpose. This obviously cannot be true.

Let us be open and honest about this. If there has only been one interpretation through the ages, there can only be one interpretation today. If you go into Christian bookshops nowadays, you will find many different interpretations, with many different claims. Most of these writers will say that it doesn't even matter anyhow. But think about it: Why would Christ even bother giving a letter to his servants if his servants could not be sure what it really meant? We therefore can be confident that the book will show us these wonders of the Kingdom and that we will be able to understand. We need to put our trust in God to guide us, because His Son is worthy to open the book and unloose the seals.

Refer to the comments by Bro Eyre in the *Introduction - Part 1* under the heading "A consistent interpretation of Revelation through the Ages".

#### REVELATION OPENS OUR EYES

The Apocalypse was given to this end - that the servants of the Deity, who are keeping their garments, might be able to discern the signs of the times preceding the apocalypse of Christ; and the real nature extant in their several generations. No believer understanding this prophecy could be seduced into fellowship with the clerical (ie. religious) institutions of the world; because he would see them all in their native deformity and sin.

(Bro John Thomas, Eureka Vol. 1, page 116)

## "things which shall shortly come to pass" -

This statement in **verse 1** is important in outlining for us the timing of events and that the correct interpretation of the book is continuous-historic. The letters to the 7 ecclesias (**Rev 2,3**) and then the first seal (**Rev 6v1**) commences shortly after Revelation is given. Since the sixth vial ends with Armageddon (**Rev 16v16**), the only logical interpretation is that the seals, trumpets and vials all follow a natural chronological progression through history.

## "he signified it" -

Bro Thomas translates this phrase as "He indicated them by sign." This is vital in understanding the book. The book is symbolic so that it may be hidden from those without. It is like code-language that only those who have the Truth can understand. The symbols can be understood by a knowledge of both Old and New Testaments (**Prov 25v2**). Each symbol is the best possible representation that the Spirit could use to get the message across.

It is apparent that there was a special angel involved in transmitting the Apocalypse to John. This angel appears to be very real and close to John in the transmission of the events (see **Rev 19v9-10**).

## "his servant John" -

John also wrote the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel and the 3 epistles. He was a man of deep spiritual understanding and enters more into the Christ's Divine origin and the way in which God manifested (ie. *apocalypsed*) himself in Christ.

#### Verse 2

"Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

The word "testimony" means "witness" and is used often in **Revelation** (see notes on **v9**). Rotherham translates this as "who bare <u>witness</u> (Gk. *martureo*) as to the Word of God and the witness (Gk. *marturia*) of Jesus Christ."

Approximately how many times does this word "witness" (both *martureo* & *marturia*) occur in John's Gospel compared with the other 3 Gospels? How many times in his epistles? What is it therefore that John is trying to emphasise?

### Verse 3

"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."

A blessing is given to those who not only "hear" the words of the prophecy, but to those who give heed to what is written. The book is therefore not academic but is practical for daily life. The study of Revelation can transform our lives:

## THE WORD OF GOD CAN TRANSFORM US

"When we feed on the Word of the Lord; when we study the message of the prophets; when we remember the sayings and the prayers of Jesus, we ought to realise that we are reading of things which are not only profitable for our learning, but are of a spirit which can powerfully control and transform our lives...

(Bro John Marshall, Portrait of the Saint)

 **■ NOTES** 

The prayerful daily reading of the Bible is so important. Today, there is a tendency more and more for this to be neglected. When there are such amazing blessings promised to those who read and practically apply the Word, why are so many of us neglecting the daily readings? If we find it difficult to read the Bible every day, we need to re-focus on what we are actually doing when reading - We are listening to our Father speaking to us! When we neglect to read the Bible we are in effect refusing to listen to God. Our God is such a kind, loving and merciful Father who wants us to listen to Him. Why would we possibly reject Him? Tragically, it becomes easier to tune into what the world is giving us than to God's Word. We need to turn our ears and eyes away from the world, and with childlike humility seek after our Heavenly Father. We will be blessed (Rev 22v17).

The word *"blessed"* here is the same word used in Christ's Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5**. Christ's words in the Apocalypse are therefore just as important as those in the Gospels. Revelation is practical and therefore vital.

There are untold blessings promised for those who prayerfully study and come to understand the words of Christ in this book.

Bro Thomas makes the following comment:

"The word 'anaginosko' does not merely mean "to read" but signifies one who gathers exact knowledge of a matter, hence, in my translation I have rendered it 'he that knows accurately.""

Bro Thomas therefore translates the verse as:

"Blessed is he that knows accurately, and they that give heed to the words of the prophecy, and observe narrowly the things which have been written in it."

A similar encouragement is given in **Rev 22v7** in closing: "Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that **keepeth** the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

- How do you think we can also be blessed NOW by studying a book such as Revelation?
- Read **Matt 5v1-12** where wonderful blessings are offered to those whose characters are like Christ's character. How are these blessings similar to those blessings and visions offered in the book of Revelation?

## **VERSES 4-8: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ**

## Verse 4

"John, to the seven ecclesias which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne"

### "the seven ecclesias" -

John writes to ecclesias outside of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. This sets the pattern for the whole book of Revelation. The Greek word "ekklesias" indicates those "who are called out of" which is very different to the English word "church" as it is used today. We are called or invited to come out from the churches of Christendom (Acts 15v16; Rev 18v4). Wherever you read the word "church" in the New Testament, the Greek is ekklesia, except for Acts 19v31 where it means "temples".

The first part of the word "ekklesia" is "ek" meaning "to come out of". It is actually translated "out of" in Rev 5v9-10; Acts 15v14 & 2 Cor 6v17.



Map from the notes by Bro John Knowles

The second part of the word "ekklesia" is "klesis" which is found in many different Scriptural passages (eg. Rom 11v29) and is translated as "calling".

Seven indicates the complete ecclesia. It appears that these 7 ecclesias are also *representative* ecclesias, used to represent the whole ecclesial body throughout the Gentile world (**Rev 22v16**).

"Grace be unto you, and peace..." - Grace indicates Divine favour (Eph 1v6-7; 2v7-9). It is opposite to law. Peace indicates "to be at one". Peace does not purely mean the end of war, but positively indicates a unity and a binding together (John 14v27; 16v33).

For further reading on grace and peace, read detailed comments by Bro HP Mansfield on page 28 of *Apocalypse Epitomised*, verse by verse notes.

## "which is, and which was, and which is to come" -

This is speaking of the timeframe of God manifestation (or, *apocalpyse*). This is the way in which Yahweh will reveal himself. The first chapter of Revelation really emphasises the importance of manifestation. Refer to notes on *God Manifestation and Revelation* in these notes at the *Introduction - Part 1*.

"which is" - Yahweh is manifested now in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"which was" - Indicates Yahweh revealing himself to men of old, especially to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3v14).

"which is to come" - Yahweh will also be manifested in the future by the multitude of redeemed (Deut 33v2; Isa 30v27, Zech 14v5, Rev 1v13; 10v1; 14v1 etc.) The redeemed will be able to perfectly manifest Yahweh as we will be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1v4).

As an example, consider the words of Isaiah 41v4:

"Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he."

## Isaiah 41 - Yahweh will be revealed in a multitude

"He has and will reveal Himself: *firstly*, in the Word; *secondly*, in the Lord; *thirdly*, in the Redeemed. Through Isaiah, He declared: "I am the first with the last" (Isaiah 41v4). In this statement, first is in the singular number, and last is in the plural. "The first one" relates to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the manifestation of the Father; the "last ones" relate to the brethren of Christ in whom he will be glorified (2 Thess 1v10). The name, Yahweh, signifies *He who will be*, and proclaims the intention of God to reveal Himself in a family of His choice. The Ecclesia, therefore, comprises a company of people who have been "taken out of the Gentiles" for "His name" (Acts 15v14)"

(Bro HP Mansfield, Apocalypse Epitomised, p.28)

## "From the seven spirits that are before his throne" -

The phrase should actually read "which is before His throne" (see Diaglot, the original Greek). This shows the **oneness** of God's Spirit while working in **many** different ways, and they are also "before the throne" or "in presence of the throne" (Diaglot). This phrase actually goes against the rules of grammar for the convenience of declaring a Scriptural truth.

**Ephesians 4v4** says that "there is one body and one Spirit..." Seven however is the number for perfection and completeness. This is the one complete spirit acting in a variety of ways and for specific purposes.

This term is used in the same way that seven angels are continually used to unfold historical events. In fact angels themselves are called "spirits" in **Heb 1v7**, and "ministering spirits" in **Heb 1v14**. The power of Yahweh is known as "the Spirit" and it was by this "Spirit" that His Word was made available to the ecclesias (**Rev 2v7**). It is by God's Spirit that His work is performed throughout the earth. His Spirit today is found in the Word of God which we hold (**John 6v63**; **Eph 6v17**). We are told in **Eph 6v17** that the "sword of the Spirit" is "the Word of God". God's Spirit is manifested in so many different ways, that we cannot pin it down to one particular work or object.

## THE 7 SPIRITS BEFORE THE THRONE



The symbolic "7 spirits before the throne" - Painting by Bro Simon Sawell

 **■ NOTES** 

The 7 spirits before the throne are referred to in the introduction to the letter to Sardis, and for a very important reason. Refer to notes on **Rev 3v1**. We are being directed in these verses to highly spiritual language which is meant only for the spiritual mind.

#### Verse 5

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"

**Witnessing** is a very important theme in the book of Revelation. The word "witness" (*martus*) is similar as that translated "testimony" in **v9** (*marturia*). Jesus was the greatest witness for the Truth, whose example we follow. He describes himself in this way to the ecclesia of Laodicea for a very important reason. See the notes on witnessing in **Rev 1v9 & 3v14**.

What are some of the things Christ did to "witness" to the world in his mortality? How can we also do the same?

Although Christ is not the first to rise from the dead, he is the first to have been risen to immortality, the "firstfruits" (see 1 Cor 15v23). In Rev 1v5 however, the phrase literally means "the chief born from among dead ones". Jesus Christ was truly "the beginning of the creation of God" and this is the title used of him in the letter to Laodicea in Rev 3v14.

The "first begotten of the dead" is a title based upon the Law of the Firstborn, a summary of which follows:

## THE LAW OF THE FIRSTBORN

- 1. The firstborn son was consecrated to God (Exod 13v2; 22v29) and held the position of priest in the family (Num 3v12,13; 8v14-18)
- 2. He received a double portion of the inheritance (**Deut 21v15-17**; **Ezek** 47v13)
- 3. He was held in honour to his parents (**Gen 49v3**)
- 4. He succeeded in control of the family (or Kingdom) on the death of his father (2 Chron 21v3)
- 5. He could forfeit his position through misconduct or incompetency (1 Chron 5v1; 26v10; Gen 25v31; 48v5,13,14)
- 6. A younger son could assume the position (1 Sam 16v12)
- Israel was a national firstborn (Exod 4v21-23), elevated above other nations who existed before them.

## CHRIST THE FIRSTBORN (Col 1v18; Rev 1v5)

Adam was a son of God (Luke 3v38) but he forfeited his right through misconduct. Consider the following quotations in line with the foregoing points:

- 1. Luke 1v32,33; 2v22; Heb 4v15
- 2. Rom 8v17-29; Heb 1v3,4; Phil 2v9-11
- 3,4. Rev 3v21; Heb 3v17
- 5. 1 Cor 15v25
- 6. Psalm 89v24-27
- 7. Hosea 11v1; Isa 49v3

Summary by Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, page 6

## **■ NOTES**

## "the prince of the kings of the earth" -

The saints will be "kings" in the Kingdom in the sense that they will *rule* (Rev 5v10). A careful consideration of terms in Daniel 8 reveals that the one who was "prince of the host" and killed (v11) is also the one who will be "Prince of princes" at the time of Armageddon (v25). He will be the "commander" of the multitude of commanders in that day. Jesus Christ as king is described in Rev 17v14 as "Lord of lords and King of kings".

#### "unto him that loved us" -

This is he who "loves us" (present tense in the original). That is why he is our mediator. The love and concern for his brethren's eternal wellbeing is found in Jesus's prayer in **John 17**.

#### "washed us from our sins in his own blood" -

This phrase is taken up again in Rev 5v9 & 7v14 to describe the redeemed in their immortality. See Heb 9v22 and 1 John 1v7, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

## Verse 6

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

**"kings and priests" -** Why will we be kings and priests? On one hand we will be rulers, while at the same time acting in the role of priest, ie. bringing people close to God. The same phrase is used also in **Rev 5v10** and actually means "a kingdom of priests" (Diag.) The principles of the future kingdom are based on the order of Israel's kingdom.

The ecclesia in the times of the Gentiles is a "holy and royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2v5-10) and is now described as the "Israel of God" (Gal 6v16) even though we have been "in time past Gentiles in the flesh" (Eph 2v11).

We can ALL act as "priests" today by bringing others closer to God. What are some ways in which we can do this, both in the ecclesia and to the world outside? How does this prepare us for the future Kingdom?

John's prayer for God to have "glory and dominion" will be accomplished when the Catholic nations of Europe are finally subdued in the years subsequent to Armageddon (**Psalm 2v8**; **Rev 17v14**; **19v20**).

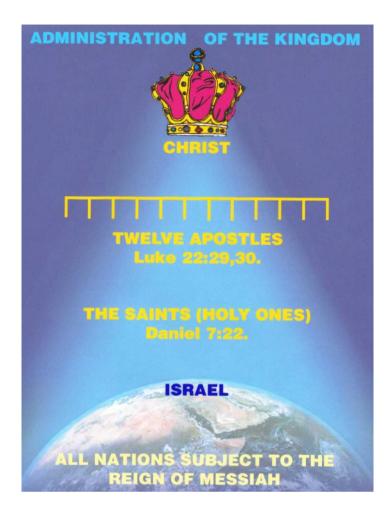
Jesus Christ has authority to carry out judgement because he is "Son of Man". This title indicates that he has had *dominion* over the flesh (cp. **Gen 1v26-28; Psa. 8v6; 1 Cor 15v24-28**). As a result, all things will be subject to him in the Kingdom age. This is why the phrase "Son of Man" is used in **Rev 1v13**.

**"For ever and ever"** means "the age of the ages" (in the Greek) and refers to the period of time incorporated in the Millennium.

**Revelation 1v18** is the only place in which the term is translated "for evermore" in the Apocalypse. It is translated elsewhere as "for ever and ever". The phrase is found 14 times in the Apocalypse surely indicating a double measure of perfection (ie. 7x2)

At the end of the millennial age will be the greatest victory, when a "new heaven and a new earth" will not know sin and death (Rev 20v14, 21v1).

"Amen" is again repeated in verse 7 (refer to comments there).



## Verse 7

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

The various elements of weather are beautifully used by God to symbolise the coming of the saints in the Kingdom. The clouds that Christ comes with are the saints, a great "cloud of witnesses" (**Heb 12v1**). This is the symbol used to describe the Saints in **Rev 10v1**.

The word used here for "cometh" is the Greek *erchomai*, which indicates not just the arrival of someone but the actual coming or going. The "coming" here relates to the time in which Christ reveals himself to *the world*. When this happens, the saints will already be with him. The resurrection will have taken place, the marriage of the Lamb complete, and the saints prepared for warfare. The same word *erchomai* is used in **Matt 24v30 & 26v64**. *Erchomai* is translated "cometh" in **Jude v14**, and this describes him coming with 10,000's of saints! Jesus Christ and the saints come from Sinai into Jerusalem to overthrow the invader at the battle of Armageddon. The judgement seat occurs before the battle of Armageddon:

- 1 Pet 4v17 "For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"
- Mean How often do we meditate upon the return of Christ and the Kingdom when we see different aspects of weather and nature? God's creation has been made to teach us lessons. Let's be thankful for this and think about it.

#### 

Judgement is given to the saints, not the angels of heaven:

**Heb 2v5** "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

Following are a number of quotes showing the saints coming with Christ in judgement to the world:

Jude v14 "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints..."

**Daniel 7v22** "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgement was given to the

saints of the most high; and the time came that the saints

possessed the kingdom"

**Zech 14v5** "the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee..."

Joel 3v11 "thither cause thy mighty ones to come down O LORD"

**Obadiah v21** "And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of

Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's"

**Deut 33v2** "The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them;

he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for

them..." ("them" refers to Israel)

Psalm 68v17 "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of

angels (Heb. "changed ones"), the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." The Jerusalem Bible translates this as "The Lord

has left Sinai for his sanctuary"

**Hab 3v3** "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.

Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise" (The word for 'God' here is Eloah - the MIGHTY ONE)

Matt 26v64 "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto

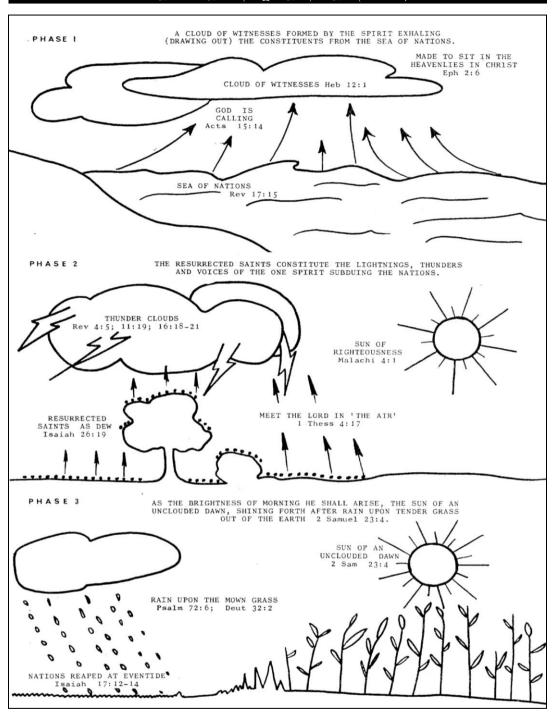
you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right

hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."



"Behold he cometh with clouds"

## BEHOLD HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS



Above chart from Bro John Knowles's notes, page 48

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of light, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isa 26v19) Note: the word "light" is incorrectly translated "herbs" in the KJV

The above chart shows how that God beautifully created the earth to teach us lessons about the Kingdom. Christ comes with healing in his beams (Mal 4v2). The saints are like dew drops upon the grass (Psa 110v3; Isa 26v19) who are drawn up into the atmosphere by the sun's rays. These saints are resurrected to immortal life, and are therefore "kings of a sun's rising" (Rev 16v12). The dew droplets evaporate and are gathered "in clouds" (Heb 12v1). The saints therefore meet their Lord "in the air" (1 Thess 4v17). These clouds bring about thunder and lightnings as they judge the nations (Rev 4v5; 11v19; 16v18-21) and then like rain they bring about the teaching of God's Word upon the mown grass - the mortal population in the Kingdom age (Psa 72v6; 32v2).

## "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" -

The whole world will clearly know when Christ arrives in Jerusalem with the saints. The whole world will see the character of the Lord Jesus Christ in the saints who are sent out among the nations.

In **Zech 12v10** it says that Israel "shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." It is after this deliverance of the Jews that they recognise him as their true Messiah (**Zech 13v6,7**).

"All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" - This happens because of God's judgements brought upon the earth at Armageddon and its aftermath:

**Dan 12v1** 

"There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book...."

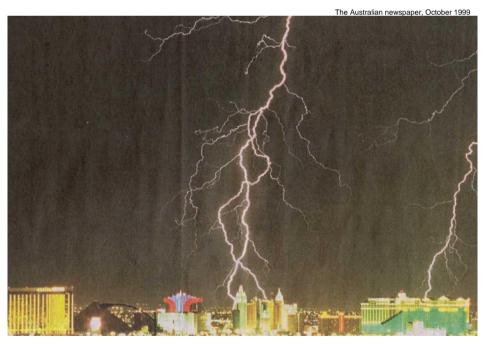
**Jer 25v30-33** "the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth"

Matt 24v30

"and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"

Ezek. 38v23

"Thus I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am Yahweh"



"And the temple of God was opened in heaven... and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." (Rev 11v19)

John adds "Even so, Amen" which is a Hebrew word transliterated into Greek and English. It is an acknowledgement by the writer that what has been said is correct and true. That is why we say it at the end of a prayer. Christ himself is called "The Amen" in Rev 3v14 because he is the centre of that purpose, a purpose which is certain. The word actually means "faithful". Yahweh is called the "God of Truth" or the "God of Amen" in Isaiah 65v16. It is translated as "faithful" in Deut 7v9 and Isaiah 49v7. See notes on this in Rev 3v14.

#### Verse 8

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

"Alpha and Omega" are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, of which there are 24 letters. This indicates that Christ is the beginning and the ending of God's purpose. He is the very manifestation of God Himself. He is the be all and end all of God's purpose with the earth. In **Heb 12v2** we are exhorted to "look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...."

Jesus Christ is the first to live, die, and then receive eternal life:

1 Cor 15v23 "Christ the firstfruits"

**Rev 13v8** "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"

Col 1v18 "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he

might have the pre-eminence."

The work of Christ incorporates the whole purpose of God. God obviously does not have a beginning and an ending, but this phrase "Alpha and Omega" indicates that God's whole purpose is covered.

We are told that the best original texts omit "the beginning and the ending". This phrase appears to have just been added by the translators as an explanation of the Alpha and Omega.

## "the Lord" -

In the Greek this is actually "the Lord God" ("*Kurios Theos*"). The word "Lord" means "supreme in authority or controller" (Strongs) whereas "God" means "Deity, the supreme divinity" (Str. #2316) or "the disposer and former of all things" (as translated by Bro Thomas). Bro Thomas's description is also supported by **Isaiah 43v21 & 45v7,12,18** where Yahweh is seen as forming, creating, and making all things. The English word "God" is derived from "good", and is used for "theos", possibly on the basis that "there is none good but the Theos" (*Eureka*, p 92). The Hebrew equivalent of "Theos" is "Ail" which means "might, strength or power". We therefore have Yahweh speaking here, not Christ. Christ however says that he is the "Alpha and Omega" in **Rev 22v13**. He is the perfect manifestation of his Father.

"which is, and which was, and which is to come" - See comments on v4.

"The Almighty" refers to "the all-ruling God as absolute and universal sovereign" (Strongs). The Almighty is found in Rev 4v8, 11v17, 15v3, 16v7,14, 19v6 and is translated "omnipotent" in 19v15, 21v22. It indicates strength and power. The equivalent in the Hebrew is "Yahweh Sabaoth" or "Yahweh of Armies". The only other occurrence in the New Testament is 2 Cor 6v18.

John now relates his own personal experience on Patmos with the work of Christ in his ministry, and how we also should be living witnesses to the Truth. John is a writer who personally lived out the message in his own life. John was a faithful brother who could personally relate to the sufferings of our Lord. He clearly had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ because he had a fellow feeling with him. This is clearly seen now in the words of **Rev 1v9**.

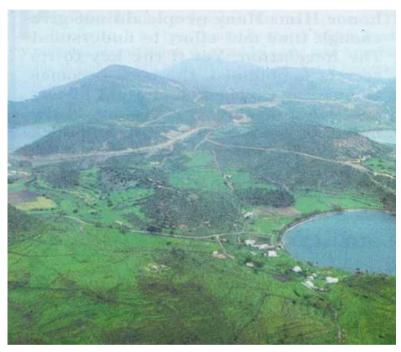
## **VERSE 9: John on Patmos**

#### Verse 9

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

The word *"tribulation"* in the Greek means "pressure". It says in **Acts 14v22** that it is "through much tribulation (that we) enter into the kingdom of God." The isle of Patmos was like a prison, and there were possibly other prisoners on the island. Banishment was characteristic of Emperor Domition's reign.

Think of how we are put under "tribulation" and "pressure" in our walk towards the Kingdom today. How does this help us towards the Kingdom?



The Isle of Patmos

## "patience of Jesus Christ" -

The Diaglot translates this as the "patient waiting for Jesus Christ"

**James 1v3,4** "Knowing this, that the trying of our faith worketh patience, But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

The Greek word translated "patience" is used 7 times in the Apocalypse (Rev 1v9, 2v2,3,19, 3v10, 13v10, 14v12) and indicates "endurance and constancy" (Strongs). The saints of all ages are required to have "patient continuance in well doing" (Rom 2v6-8).

## "for the testimony of Jesus Christ" -

The word "testimony" means "witness" (see 1v2,5; 6v9; 20v4 etc.) A "witness" is someone who witnesses or testifies in the dock, in a court of law. Strong indicates that a witness is one who does so "judicially" or one who is a "martyr". The Greek is actually "marturia". Similar words "martureo", "martus" and "marturion" are found extensively throughout Revelation and are all from the same root word. These words are translated in Revelation as "bare record", "testify", "testifieth", "testimony", "martyr" & "witness".

 **■ NOTES** 

The same word is used to describe the 2 witnesses in **Rev 11v3** and the "cloud of witnesses" in **Heb 12v1**. It is translated "witness" in **Rev 1v5**. Antipas was the faithful martyr (**Rev 2v13**) - He witnessed for the Truth!

Just consider how many times this theme of witnessing is found in Revelation:

Rev 1v2(2x), 5,9; 2v13; 3v14; 6v9; 11v3,7; 12v11,17; 15v5; 17v6; 19v10(2x), 20v4; 22v16,20

The theme is therefore found 18 times in Revelation and is also found 47 times in John's gospel. We can therefore see that **Witnessing** is one of the **KEY THEMES** in the book of Revelation. The book is all about how people in times past have witnessed for the Word of God. We therefore need to be witnesses to a world in darkness.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest witness of all:

#### John 18v37

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from thence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

This theme is found even at the very end of the book of Revelation, when the Lord Jesus Christ is setting up his Kingdom:

#### **Rev 19v10**

"And I fell at his (the angel's) feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the **testimony** of Jesus: worship God: for the **testimony** of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

In Rev 19v10 the word "testimony" is the same in the Greek as "witness" in Rev 1v2,5,9. The Apostle Paul followed in the footsteps of his master and those who had gone before. He was a witness (Acts 23v11; 26v21-22; Rev 20v4). Probably one of the best examples of a martyr who witnessed is Stephen (Acts 6v9-7v60).

John had been banished to Patmos by the Roman authorities. This persecution was to set the scene in the Brotherhood for the next 1700 years or so. *This would therefore set the scene for the whole book of Revelation.* 

We know from the prophecy of **Daniel** that the Roman power was to emerge just before the time of Christ and continue in different phases right through until Christ's return (**Dan 2v44**; **7v11,22**; **8v25**; **11v36**). In **Daniel 2**, Rome is symbolised by the *iron* in the legs, feet and toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image. In **Daniel 7**, Rome is symbolised by the great and dreadful *Fourth Beast*. The continuing phase of the 4<sup>th</sup> beast up until Christ's return is shown below:

PAST	DURATION OF THE KINGDOM OF MEN							
THE KINGDOM	BABYLONIAN EMPIRE	MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE	GRECIAN EMPIRE		ROMAN DOMINION ound end of 20 <sup>th</sup> century	STONE smites the image on the feet -		
OF ISRAEL AT SINAI, B.C. 1626, AND OVERTHROWN BY THE BABYLONIAN POWER B.C. 592	Head of Gold	Breast and arms of Silver	Belly/thighs of brass	Legs of iron	Feet part iron and part clay	Ancient of Days manifested to		
	1 <sup>ST</sup> BEAST	2 <sup>ND</sup> BEAST	3rd BEAST	4th BEAST	At the time of the end, Jesus Christ will return to "Judge the living and the dead at his appearing and HIS KINGDOM." He will afterwards break in pieces all other kingdoms.	destroy 4 <sup>th</sup> Beast - The kingdom of Israel re- established by JESUS CHRIST		

Above chart from the Bible Magazine

## **VERSES 10-20: The first vision**

Verse 10

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet"

The Greek indicates "I was in Spirit", hence the definite article is missing. He had the Holy Spirit and that guided him in the writing of the Scriptures. This was the comforter:

John 14v26 "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 16v13 "Howbeit when he, that Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

John's attention was totally fixed on the vision before him. The same comment is made further on in **Rev 4v1-2** when he "was in spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne..." He was in a similar situation to Ezekiel who said that "the spirit entered into me when he spake to me..." (**Ezek 2v2**).

## "I was in spirit on the Lord's Day"

By reference to Ezekiel we find that when he was simply about to deliver a prophetic discourse, he introduced it by saying, "the Word of Yahweh came unto me," but when he was about to relate a prophetic vision he had seen, he prefaces his description by informing us that "there was upon me the hand of Yahweh, and he carried me out in spirit of Yahweh". When "in spirit", then, he both sees visions and hears, and then proceeds to narrate. This was the case with John. He was "in the spirit" and then he beheld, or was caused to see, what was invisible to men in their normal state. When the vision disappeared, he was again as usual, and proceeded to write whatever might be communicated (cp. Rev 4v2; 17v3; 21v10).

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, p.8)

## "The Lord's day" -

This has nothing to do with Sunday. The phrase rather indicates that it is "The Day of Yahweh" or Armageddon. This is the day when God is glorified and man is abased. John was physically on Patmos, but mentally transported into the day of Christ's return.

There are many quotes about the "Day of the LORD", eg. Mal 4v1-2: "the day cometh that they shall burn as an oven...", Isaiah 2v12: "for the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low" (note also further references to "in that day" in Isaiah 3v7,18; 4v1,2, 13v6), Acts 17v31: "he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness...", 1 Thess 5v2: "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night", 2 Thess 2v3: "the day of Christ is at hand".

 **■ NOTES** 

The **Trumpet** was used to call together a religious gathering for a special purpose (**Joel 2v1,15**: "sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly") and also to proclaim the return of Christ. This was the trumpet that Ehud blew when he led the children of Israel to victory over Eglon king of Moab (**Judges 3**). The trumpet was a symbol of peace and liberation at the time of Jubilee on the first and tenth days of the 7th month (**Lev 23v24**; **25v9-10**; **Num 10v3**). Christ's return is therefore linked with the Jubilees (**Isa 61v1-3, 1 Thess 4v16**). Because John is about to witness a vision of the resurrection and glorification of the saints, the trumpet voice is a fitting symbol for what he saw.

Isa. 27v12,13 "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

**Zech 9v13,14** "When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightening: and **ADONAI YAHWEH (Yahweh's Lords) shall blow the trumpet**, and shall go with the whirlwinds of the south."

#### Verse 11

"Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven ecclesias which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."

"Alpha and Omega" - See notes on verse 8.

It is apparent that "the first and the last" in this verse is not in the original. It has just been included by the translators as an explanation because it is used in **v8** and **v17**. In this respect, refer to the Diaglot.

What he was to see was to be written down, which he does, indicating that the vision of the multitudinous Christ is what is referred to in **v19** as "the things which thou hast seen."

There was to be a specific message for each of these ecclesias, however these ecclesias were representative of the whole body of Christ in the times of the Gentiles (**Rev 22v16**).



 **■ NOTES** 

#### Verse 12

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

The word for "candlesticks" means "lampstands". It is an allusion to the tabernacle in Exodus 25-31.

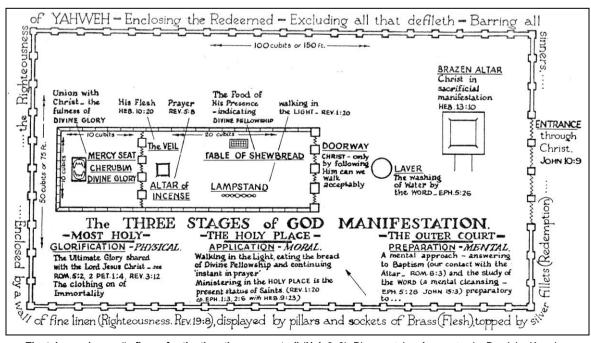
The explanation is given for us in **verse 20** - The 7 lampstands symbolise the 7 ecclesias.

Many of the visions in Revelation are based on the temple, its courts, altars and furniture. The children of Israel brought pure olive oil into the tabernacle to feed the light of the lampstand. This was "beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always" (**Exodus 27v20**).

Consider the exhortational aspect to this:

- Matt 5v14-16 "Ye are the light of the world. The city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
- The Holy Place was lit by the lampstand. If the lampstand was not alight, then the Holy Place was in total darkness there were no windows in the Holy Place. You would not be able to offer incense on the altar and you wouldn't be able to officiate at the table of shewbread. A lampstand is useless if it is not alight. There is a very important lesson in all this. We all need to be lampstands to those around us. Our ecclesias are lampstands. If the light is not burning, then what is the use of having an ecclesia? This ought to be in the forefront of our minds all the time in ecclesial life.
- Think of practical ways in which we can be "lampstands" in daily life.

## THE TABERNACLE - CENTRE OF DIVINE WORSHIP IN ISRAEL



The tabernacle was "a figure for the time then present..." (Heb 9v9) Diagram taken from notes by Bro John Knowles

The lampstands were "golden", indicating tried faith:

1 Peter 1v7 "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Lam 4v1-2 "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!"

**Rev 3v18** "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich..."

The previous diagram shows the layout of the tabernacle. The 3 areas of the temple and tabernacle represent the 3 stages of our spiritual lives. These are:

Outer Court - Preparation for baptism through study of the Word

Holy Place - Baptised saints walking in the light

Most Holy Place - Ultimate glory with Christ in God's Kingdom

## LAMPSTANDS SYMBOLISE GENTILE ECCLESIAS

John is granted a vision of 7 lampstands which are Divinely interpreted as signifying 7 representative ecclesias (1v12,20). This interpretation forms an important precedent to aid our study of the book as a whole. **Firstly**, it focuses our attention firmly on the community represented by the 7 ecclesias and *consequently away from the Jewish nation*.

**Secondly**, it provides a "worked example" of the way in which apocalyptic symbols can be understood as applying to the new constitution of primarily Gentile believers, despite the fact that the O.T. context of those symbols has to do with the constitution of the Jewish nation. So, when we find other symbols and figures in the Apocalypse drawn from a Jewish context in the O.T., we may, on the basis of this Divine precedent, have no hesitation in interpreting them as relating to the Ecclesia of Christ.

(From Revelation - Which Interpretation? - Appendix 4, p 136)

## Old Testament symbols used to represent the ecclesia of Christ

There is an additional scriptural warrant for the Christian-Roman interpretation of the Revelation, from a different direction. ...The Revelation has many phrases that one associates with the nations of Israel in Old Testament times; the lightstand, the ark, the altar, the tabernacle of testimony, the Lamb, the Holy City, etc.

Attention to the New Testament writings shows that the Old Testament items regarding national Israel are transferred as figures to the new Israel in Christ. In the epistles, the believers in Christ are partakers of the circumcision in Christ; they are a "royal priesthood, an holy nation", offering up spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2v5,9); they are a holy temple (Ephesians 2v21); they are the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6v16); they belong to the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12v22); they are the nation Jesus spoke of to the unbelieving Pharisees...."The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21v43).

Here is a clear pattern to guide us. Should we not follow the guidance of the apostles, and apply the same principle to the inspired writing that follows theirs, in the book of Revelation? The Revelation takes Old Testament items concerning the nation of Israel, and makes them symbols for the believers in Christ, the true Israel in the times of the Gentiles. The Revelation is about the affairs of the saints, not national Israel.

(Graham Pearce, Revelation - Which Interpretation?, p 39)

 **■ NOTES** 

#### Verse 13

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

Notice that the vision was not only of Jesus Christ himself but "one like unto" him. The "voice as the sound of many waters" in verse 15 indicates that this "Son of Man" symbolises a multitude (cp. Dan 10v6). This is someone who has his appearance and character. This is a vision of the perfected body of Christ, the multitude of believers in immortality. In Acts 15v14 it says that "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name". The multitudinous body of Christ is in the middle of the Gentile ecclesias in Asia, indicating that the book of Revelation relates to the "time of the Gentiles".

## The Symbolic Man represents a multitude

In various places the Scripture uses **the figure of a man** to represent a **multitude**. Perhaps the best known is Paul's use of the idea in **Ephesians 4**, where he speaks of the edifying of the body of Christ until it attains the stature of the perfect MAN. Paul uses this figure of the multitudinous man several times. **Daniel** in his **tenth chapter** records a vision concerning the resurrection, and in it there is "a certain man"... his body like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude". Here is a symbolic man representing the multitude of the redeemed.

A similar symbol is used in **Revelation 1v13-16**. **Revelation 10** is a little different. In verse one there is a mighty angel "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... and (he) cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth". Clearly this is not an actual angel, but a symbolic man representing the multitude of Christ and his people going forth to conquer. A similar "mighty angel" occurs in **Revelation 18** when Babylon falls. "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power: and the earth was lightened with his glory." The cherubim of **Ezekiel chapters 1 & 10** are more complicated, but there is the same idea that the physical features and movements describe the one body of Christ in power at a time of judgement. "They went everyone straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went... their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps" (**Ezekiel 1v12-13**).

The study of these symbolic figures is an extensive subject. The reader is referred to *Phanerosis* and *Eureka*, especially Volume One by John Thomas. But without such a study, it is plain that these figures do not represent Jesus alone. Their teaching is that the manifestation of God on earth, with power and judgement, is through *Christ combined with his people*.

(Graham Pearce, How will Christ come?, p. 20)

We know that the perfected body of Christ is ONE because of what we read in **Daniel 10** and **Ephesians 4v13-16.** Consider the words of John in his first epistle:

**1 John 3v2** "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is"

The vision of the Multitudinous body of Christ is found in many Scriptures, with many different expressions and symbology. Some of these Scriptures are briefly summarised by Bro Thomas in *Eureka* Vol 3, p184:

Deut 28v58 "the glorious and fearful name YAHWEH Elohaikha" of

Moses

**Psalm 68v4** "YAH that rideth in the deserts" of David

**Isaiah 6v5** the "King YAHWEH *Tz'vaoth*"

**Ezek. 1v5.12** "Four Living Creatures with the likeness of a Man"

**Daniel 10v5,6** the "Man with the voice of a multitude"

**Hosea 12v5** the "YAHWEH *Elohim of hosts*, YAHWEH his memorial" **Joel 3v11** the "YAHWEH *Givborim* - the Yahweh-mighty ones"

Obadiah v21 "Saviours who come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount

of Esau"

Micah 5v2-6 "Man of Bethlehem Ephratah" with his companions, who

delivers Israel from the Assyrian, and wastes Assyria with

the sword

**Hab 3v3,8** the "Eloah upon his horses and chariots of salvation"

Zech 6v1,5;14v9 the "four chariot-spirits of the heavens" and the "one

Yahweh and one name"

Rev 5v6 the " the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes"
Rev 10v1 the "Rainbowed Angel" who is clothed with a cloud

Rev 14v3,4 the "144,000 who follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth"

Bro Thomas comments as follows:

"all the things signified by these diverse forms of speech are essentially one and the same theophany, or **God Manifestation**, simply expressed by the words **the Eternal Spirit by spirit incorporate in Jesus and his Brethren**."

The vision of Revelation 1v13-16 is therefore of a multitude who are "one".

## Why use the title "Son of Man"?

It says that Yahweh "hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the <u>Son of man</u>." (**John 5v27**). He has authority to judge because he knows what is in man. Because he has overcome the flesh, to him is given "glory and dominion" (**Rev 1v6**).

Important quotes that beautifully link up are...

Gen 1v26-28; Psa 8v6; 1 Cor 15v24-28 & Heb 2v8.

## "Son of Man" indicates dominion over the flesh

**Son of Man** is a title applied in a primary sense to the Lord Jesus, not so much to indicate his humanity, but rather that as a member of the Adamic race he is worthy to bear the title as descriptive of one who has "had the dominion" over the flesh. It is a title which applies in an apocalyptic sense (ie. God Manifestation) to the Lord Jesus and those who are imitators of him. It was used of Ezekiel approximately 100 times because he was a "man of sign" (Ezek 24v24) who was "strengthened by El" (Hebrew - Ezekiel) through visions of Elohim which he saw by the river Chebar (Ezek 1v1-3). He was a type of Christ and an example to all who desire to manifest Godliness. The same title was appropriated by the Lord to himself in such places as **Matt 25v31; 26v64** (cp. Son of God v63); **John 5v25,27**, etc. Note that it is just as important to distinguish the various titles used of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is to study the Name and Titles of Deity.

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, p.10)



The Man of the One - (Painting by Bro Stuart Gilmore)

## DANIEL'S "MAN OF THE ONE"

"Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." (Daniel 10v5,6)

"Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (Daniel 12v5-6)

## COMPARISON WITH DANIEL CHAPTER 10

The vision in **Daniel 10** provides an important basis for the vision of **Revelation 1**.

In **Daniel Chapter 10**, Daniel saw a certain man, or as the Hebrew indicates, *the Man of the One* (v5). It was a *multitudinous* man (v6) yet it was one. John saw the same thing, one like the Son of man (Rev 1v13) - the Christ body in glory. The various elements of *the man* represented different characteristics of glory:

## The Man of the One - symbolic of the Saints in glory

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= righteousness and salvation (Rev 19v8; Isa 61v10). They were king/priests (Ex 28v42-43; Rev 19v14,8).

# girded with fine gold of Uphaz

= mind girded with faith (1 Pet 1v7,13). Like a bride's garment interwoven with gold (Psa 45v10-11).

body also was like the beryl

Heb. - *Tarshish* ( = from the root, to break in pieces, destroy, which describes the mission of the stone power in **2v44**). Beryl = gem in the High Priest's breastplate corresponding to the tribe of Dan (cp **Exod 28v20** with **Num 2**). Dan = judge, hence the body is in a state of war. Like the cherubim of beryl (**Ezek 1v16**) they are seen in judicial manifestation.

# face as the appearance of lightning

symbol of wrath (Psa 144v5-6; Zech 9v14) and warfare (Psa 18v8-16). The face of the Lord is associated with devouring fire in 2 Thess 1v7-9.

eyes as lamps of fire

eyes = intelligence (**Eph 1v18**). In **Zech 4v10**; **9v14** they represent the spirit manifested in the saints (**Rev 5v6**). These eyes will not pity the wicked (**Ezek 5v11**). They are associated with 7 spirits of God (**Rev 4v5**, **5v6**), ie. complete manifestation of spirit power in judgement (**Ezek 1v13**)

his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass

arms = power, force, sovereign authority (Isa 40v10, Ezek 20v33-34). Feet used for mobility and treading down (Psa. 18v38-40). Brass purified by fire and polished by friction (Num 31v22-23) = flesh purified by trial. Having purified themselves, they now will purify the world through judgement (Ezek 1v7; Mic 4v13; Mal 4v3, Rev 1v15)

the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude

single united commands from a multitudinous army (Ezek 1v24)

Above summary by Bro Carl Parry, taken from the 1999 Sydney Youth Conference notes on Daniel

The rest of the group fled in fear at the vision (v7). They represent the fearful who have no part in the body of Christ.

## THE VISION OF REVELATION 1v13-16



The multitudinous Son of Man (painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

### **SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURES**

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the messengers of the seven ecclesias: and the seven lampstands which thou sawest are the seven ecclesias." (Rev 1v20)

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1v18)

"And he is the head of the body, the ecclesia: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Col 1v18)

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of **gold** that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 1v7)

"Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." (Rev 16v15)

"Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy." (Psalm 132v9)

"And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass." (Ezek 1v7)

"And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings." (Ezek 1v24)

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." (Eph 6v17)

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Eph 1v18)

"Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." (Nahum 1v6)

# ONE LIKE UNTO THE SON OF MAN

## Vision of the multitudinous body of Christ

## **Revelation 1v13-16**

"clothed with a garment down to the foot" "girt about the paps with a golden girdle"

"countenance as the sun"

"eyes were as a flame of fire"

"feet... as if they burned in a furnace"

"voice as the sound of many waters"

## Daniel 10v5-6

"clothed in linen"

"loins girded with the fine gold of Uphaz"

"as the appearance of lightning"

"eyes as lamps of fire..."

"feet like in colour to polished brass"

"words like the voice of a multitude"

## Revelation 1v13-16

"countenance as the sun"

"feet...as if they burned in a furnace"

"voice as the sound of many waters"

## Revelation 10v1-2

"his face was as it were the sun..."

"his feet as pillars of fire..."

"clothed with a cloud"

## Revelation 1v13-16

"countenance as the sun"

"sun shineth in his strength"
"feet... as if they burned in a furnace"

"...a sharp 2-edged sword"

## Habakkuk 3v5

"his brightness was as the light"

"rays flashed from his hand..." (NIV)

"burning coals went forth at his feet"

"he.... drove asunder the nations"

### Habakkuk 3v3-5

"from Mount Paran"

"his brightness as the light"

"beams out of his hand"

## **Deuteronomy 33v2**

"he shined forth from Mount Paran..."

"he rose up (as the sun) from Seir unto them..."

"from his right hand went a fiery law..."

<u>Daniel 10</u>: The Man of the One <u>Revelation 1</u>: One like unto the Son of Man <u>Revelation 10</u>: The Rainbowed Angel <u>Habakkuk 3</u>: Eloah came from Teman Deuteronomy 33: Yahweh came from Sinai

The above 5 chapters therefore all speak of the one man – the multitudinous Son of Man, symbolising Jesus Christ and the Saints in the Day of Yahweh's Judgement.

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

(Ephesians 4v12-16)

Because of his origin as both the root and the offspring of David (Rev 22v16, Isa 11v1), therefore "he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall judge the poor..." (Isa 11v3,4)

The Lord Jesus Christ is described as the Son of Man in **Dan 7v13**. He has the perfect qualifications to execute judgement because he has exercised that warfare against sin in his own life. He is best suited for that career, as are the saints who have attempted to follow in his steps. Daniel is called "Son of Man" in **Dan 8v17** after he had become prostrated before God in humility.

## "clothed with a garment down to the foot" -

This indicates a covering (cp. Rev 16v15). Nakedness is a symbol of sin and the covering is to represent the sacrifice of Christ covering our sins, "if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked" (2 Cor 5v3). The clothing was one of the first principles that was impressed upon Adam and Eve. Their covering was a lamb's skin from one which had been slain (Gen 3v21) - typifying the Messiah. That was God's purpose right from the beginning, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13v8).

**Gal 3v27** "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ"

There were many brethren at Sardis whose garments had not been defiled and who were to "walk with me in white: for they are worthy." (**Rev 3v4**). See notes on **Rev 3v4-5**.

The Greek for "down to the foot" here indicates that the garment was "fastened around the foot", the same word is found in the Septuagint Version (Greek Old Testament) for the covering that the high priest had in Exodus 28v4, being a "robe". This was the robe which was "all of blue" (v31) which had "an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent" (Exodus 28v31). Jesus Christ is the perfect High Priest (Heb 4v15).

The saints in **Rev 19v8** are clothed in "fine linen" which is "the righteous actions of the saints." Isaiah paints a beautiful picture of the saints rejoicing at the marriage of the Lamb, when the bride presents herself for her husband:

Isaiah 61v10 "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

**Rev 7v14** "....These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

## "girt about the paps with a golden girdle" -

The paps are "the breasts" (in the Greek). The RSV translates this as "a golden girdle round his breasts." Gold symbolises tried faith (1 Pet 1v7, Lam 4v1-2).

Bro John Knowles makes the following comments (p.11):

"The girdle is not about the loins as in **Dan 10v5**. The normal attire in ancient times included a girdle worn about the loins when performing work or going on a journey and this led to the expression "gird up your loins" (**Jer 1v17** etc.). Peter extends the idea and says "gird up the loins of your mind" (**1 Pet 1v13**) when exhorting brethren to diligence and soberness in the Truth. The golden girdle of this verse would answer more to a breast band than a girdle. According to Josephus (Antiquities 3.7.2) the priests wore such a girdle, made of linen, upon their breasts."

The girdle symbolises righteousness, mercy, truth and power:

**Isaiah 11v5** "And **righteousness** shall be the girdle of his loins, and **faithfulness** the girdle of his reins"

Isaiah 22v21 "I will clothe him (Eliakim) with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah."

Job 12v18 "He (Yahweh) looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle."

#### Verse 14

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

Of all the parts of the body, Christ is the head - "the head of every man is Christ..." (1 Cor 11v3). "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the ecclesia" (Eph 5v23). The ecclesia should be united as one body to the head, who is Christ (Psalm 133).

Also, "the body is of Christ" (**Col 2v17**). If we are led away from the Truth, we are spoken of as "not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together..." (**Col 2v19**)

We are also exhorted to have the mind of Christ: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (**Phil 2v4-5**)

**Snow** and **wool** are mentioned specifically in reference to forgiveness of sins through Christ in **Isaiah 1v18**: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as **white as snow**: though they be red like crimson, **they shall be as wool.**"

White snow is here used in contrast with scarlet, a colour used specifically to represent the system of Babylon in **Rev 17&18**. The woman rode a scarlet coloured beast (17v3) and was clothed in scarlet (17v4).

No two snowflakes are the same. Likewise, the characters of the saints are so diverse, yet they are all one with Christ as they are washed from their sins. Snow is spoken of in <code>Isaiah 55v10</code> as "watering the earth" surely in reference to the refreshing waters of God's Word. David acknowledged that God's forgiveness would make him "whiter than snow" (<code>Psalm 51v7</code>). This concept of purity is also followed up in <code>Lam 4v7</code>, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they are whiter than milk..."

#### 



The Cherubim - Ezekiel 1 (Painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

#### Ezekiel's vision of Cherubim with feet like fine brass

"And as for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire..." (Ezekiel 1v13)

"I beheld till the thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." (parallel vision in Daniel 7v9)

Exactly the same symbols are used for Yahweh's character Himself in **Daniel 7v9**, "the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was <u>white as snow</u>, and the hair of his head like the <u>pure wool</u>..."

Even the angel who rolled back the stone from the door of the tomb in **Matt 28v3** is described in the same way. While "his countenance was like lightning" his "raiment (was) white as snow." (**Matt 28v3**)

## "eyes were as a flame of fire" -

Fire indicates judgement. Eyes indicate one who is "all-seeing". This takes our minds back to the vision of Cherubim in **Ezekiel 1v18** - "their rings were full of eyes round about them four." In the future age the saints will be "the eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth" (**Zech 4v10**).

In the past the angels have been the eyes of YAHWEH "running to and fro throughout the whole earth" (2 Chron 16v9, Gen 11v5; 18v21), but in the future age the saints will do this work - "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb 2v7)

The fire symbolises Yahweh's anger eg. **Isaiah 30v27...** "the name of Yahweh cometh from far, burning with his anger...his tongue as a devouring fire".

 **■ NOTES** 

The Rainbowed Angel of **Rev 10** is a similar vision to that here in **Chapter 1**. The Rainbowed Angel also has "feet as pillars of fire" (**10v1**).

Fire is used in the context of judgement in many places in Revelation... See Rev 10v1, 11v5; 13v3; 14v10,18; 15v2; 16v8; 17v16; 18v8; 19v12,20; 20v9, 10, 14,15; 21v8.

The eyes of Christ are "as a flame of fire" in Rev 19v12. See also Psa 106v18.

#### Verse 15

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

The phrase "feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace" takes us back to the vision of Ezekiel 1 where the feet of the cherubim sparkled "like the colour of burnished brass" (v7). Feet indicate movement, transport and treading down. Bro Thomas says that "feet are the symbol of progress, of advance into the area of conflict." These feet go forth at Armageddon to bear Yahweh's name (Isaiah 30v27 & Zech 14v3,6) and they "tread down the wicked" (Mal 4v3). Consider also the following quotes:

- Micah 4v13 "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, For thy horn will I make to be iron, And thy hoofs will I make to be bronze, So shalt thou beat in pieces many peoples, And shalt devote to Yahweh their unrighteous gain, And their substance to the Lord of all the earth" (Rotherham)
- Rev 14v18-20 "And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of 1600 furlongs."
- **Psa 18v32-33** "He causeth my feet to be like hind's feet.... He is training my hands for war so that the bow of brass has been broken by my arms."



Feet like fine brass

Psa 58v10,11 "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily there are Elohim ruling in the earth"

NOTES

"Feet like unto fine brass" indicates flesh purified by fiery judgements:

Num 31v22,23 "Only the gold, and the silver, and the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water."

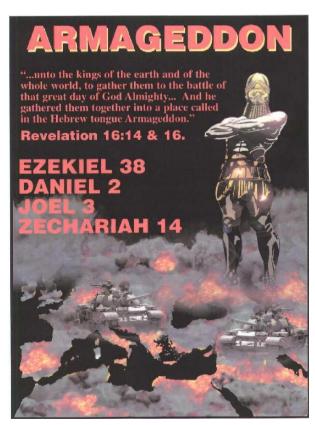
Likewise in **Num 16v35-38** when God's fire came down from heaven to consume the Levites who rebelled against Moses and Aaron, only the brass of their censers remained "out of the burning". This brass was then used in the brazen altar to symbolise flesh purified by fire. Bro Thomas says that the 4 horns on the altar "represent the same thing as the Four Cherubim, the Four Carpenters, and the Four Living Ones of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and John; only in the Brazen State, which precedes the Golden Olahm, Aion, or Millennium." (Eureka, Vol 1, p 177)

For more detail on the altar in the tabernacle, read Eureka Vol. 1, p.176-177.

The "burning in a furnace" describes judgement that is executed at Armageddon and its aftermath. There is a parallel here with **Rev 10v1**. Also...

Mal 4v1,2

"For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his beams..."



At the battle of Armageddon, the multitudinous Son of Man contends in battle with Nebuchadnezzar's image of a man - the image symbolising the Kingdom of Men.

Israel have been brought through "the furnace" of the nations in their captivity (Ezek 22v15-22). This will also happen again at Armageddon (Zech 13v8-9). Isaiah 31v9 says that Yahweh's "fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem".

## "his voice as the sound of many waters"



"his voice as the sound of many waters" -

This immediately identifies the Son of Man as symbolising a MULTITUDE. Many waters represent "peoples, and multitudes, and nations and tongues." The sea symbolises a multitude of peoples (Isa 57v20; Rev 15v2; 17v15).

In Daniel 10v6 it describes this voice as being "the voice of a multitude."

**Ezekiel 1v24** records the vision of the 4 Cherubim whose wings were "*like the noise of many waters.*" Again, this symbolises a multitude.

"The Almighty" of **Rev 7v9** also symbolises the multitudinous body of Christ because this is "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne."

The voice is likened also to the sound of a trumpet in **verse 10**, as it is in **1 Thess 4v16**. See notes on this trumpet voice in **v10**.

☑ The purpose of Revelation is to develop God's character in a multitude. The vision at first may appear to be of Jesus Christ only. However, the Son of Man also includes those of Christ's brethren who are "in Christ". We need to develop our characters on the example of our Lord. See the notes on God Manifestation and Revelation on pages 14-15.

## Verse 16

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

"seven stars" - The explanation of the 7 stars is given for us in v20. They are the "angels of the seven ecclesias". The angels were the Spirit-gifted elders.

 **■ NOTES** 



## THE DOUBLE-EDGED LONGSWORD

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Rev 19v15)

"and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword" -

There are 2 types of swords mentioned in the Greek New Testament. One is a long sword and the other is a short sword.

The *long sword* (Gk. *rhomphaia*) is used here in **Rev 1v16** as it is also in **Luke 2v35**; **Rev 2v12,16**; **6v8 & 19v15,21**. It is this sword that is used to *execute judgement upon the nations*. This is why it is used in the context of destroying the Papacy in **Revelation 19**. Bro Thomas therefore translates the sword of **Rev 1v16** as being a "sharp double-edged longsword."

The **short sword** (Gk. *machaira*) is used symbolically in **Eph 6v17** & **Heb 4v12**. This sword represents the powerful teaching of the Spirit Word (cp. Christ smiting the earth as recorded in **Isa. 11v4**).

Bro Thomas makes the following comments in *Eureka* Vol 1, p.184:

"If the Son of Man were in an attitude of speaking peace to the nations, his eyes would not be as a flame of fire, and his feet would not glow incandescently, nor would his countenance be as sun-smiting heat; but all this would be modified and changed, and instead of "a sharp double-edged long sword," an Olive Branch would stand related to the Mouth. According to the tenor of the words is the character of the symbol."

Compare the record in **Isaiah 11** about Christ's ability to judge righteously and teach with discernment, and **Isaiah 30v19-21** which speaks of the saints teaching the mortal population in the Kingdom with discernment:

"For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, **This is the way, walk ye in it**, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left." (Isaiah 30v19-21)

 **■ MOTES** 

It is said of the man Ehud that he "made himself" a dagger to defeat king sin, who was Eglon, King of Moab (**Judges 3v16**). There was *preparation* involved! An example of spiritual discernment is the judgement of Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5v3-7**) which is how the saints will work in the Kingdom.

## "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" -

The "countenance" is not just the face but the whole person. His whole appearance was therefore as the sun.

The sun is used as a symbol of Christ in **Malachi 4v2** where he is described as "the sun of righteousness". The Rainbowed Angel of **Rev 10v1** is described as having his "face as it were the sun". **Rev 16v12** outlines the drying up of the Turkish power to provide a way for the "kings of the sun's rising" to enter in and take the Kingdom. The time of Armageddon is spoken of by the prophet Isaiah:

**Isaiah 24v23** "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."

In **Deut 33v2** it says that the Saints "shine forth" from Mount Paran as they set themselves for warfare at the battle of Armageddon. The sun will already be in the sky and shining at this time. This will be the dawning of a new day. The saints rise from the sea of the nations (**Rev 17v15**) and then go out in clouds (**1 Thess 4v17**, **Heb 12v1**) with Christ to enlighten the darkness of the earth (**2 Thess 2v8**, **1v7-10**). See the notes on clouds and the diagram in **Rev 1v7**.

Habakkuk 3 also reveals the Saints shining forth from Mount Paran in the lead up to Armageddon. Mount Paran is in the Sinai Peninsula. Both Habakkuk 3 and Deut 33v1-3 reveal the saints in glory in their move towards Jerusalem for the great day of God Almighty. A comparison of the language used in these Scriptures is shown in the earlier chart on the "One like unto the Son of Man" in Rev 1v13.

### Verse 17

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:"

Daniel also went through a symbolic death and resurrection after seeing a similar vision (**Dan 10v9-19**). This indicated that the vision was set at the time of the end when the saints are revealed in glory.

For instance the eyes of the man in **Dan 10v6** were "as lamps of fire". His voice was "as the voice of a multitude". His feet and arms were of brass.

The angel laid his right hand upon John in the same way as when Daniel saw his vision in **Dan 10v10**. The same words "fear not" are often addressed to those believers who are visited by angels (eg. **Dan 10v19**).

## "I am the first and the last"-

This is used 3 times of Yahweh himself in Isaiah (Isaiah 41v4, 44v6, 48v12). The title is given of Christ twice in Revelation (Rev 2v8, 22v13). Note that in Rev 1v11 it is not in the original text. The "author and finisher of our faith" is a similar title given to Jesus Christ in Heb 12v2. Bro Mansfield comments:

"In Isaiah, the word 'last' in **ch 44v6** is in the singular number: the **last one**; but in **Ch. 41v4** it is in the plural: **the last ones**. This variation predicts the development of God manifestation: firstly in the Lord Jesus, **the last one**; and ultimately in the multitudinous Christ, **the last ones**."

#### **■ NOTES**

#### Verse 18

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

"I am he that liveth, and was dead" - This is a beautiful phrase alluded to in the letter to Smyrna in Rev 2v8. Refer to the notes on that verse. There is a very important reason why this title is used there. Christ had previously been dead but was now alive through the resurrection (1 Cor 15v54-58).

"I am alive for evermore" indicates living in "the ages of the ages", being the millennial age of 1000 years. This phrase occurs 14 times in Revelation, indicating a double measure of perfection (ie. 7x2).

"Amen" - See notes on the letter to Laodicea in Rev 3v14.

"the keys of hell and of death" - This refers to Christ's power to open the grave and to grant immortality. An understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God is the basis upon which Christ gives us "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 16v16-19). See notes on "the key of David" in the letter to Philadelphia in Rev 3v7.

#### Verse 19

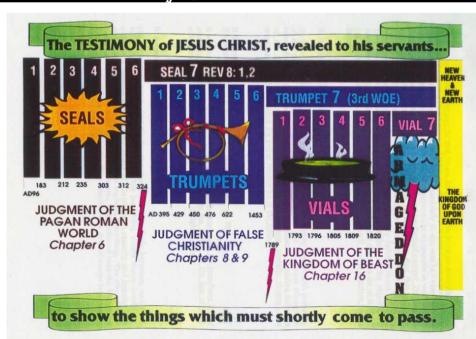
"Write these things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;"

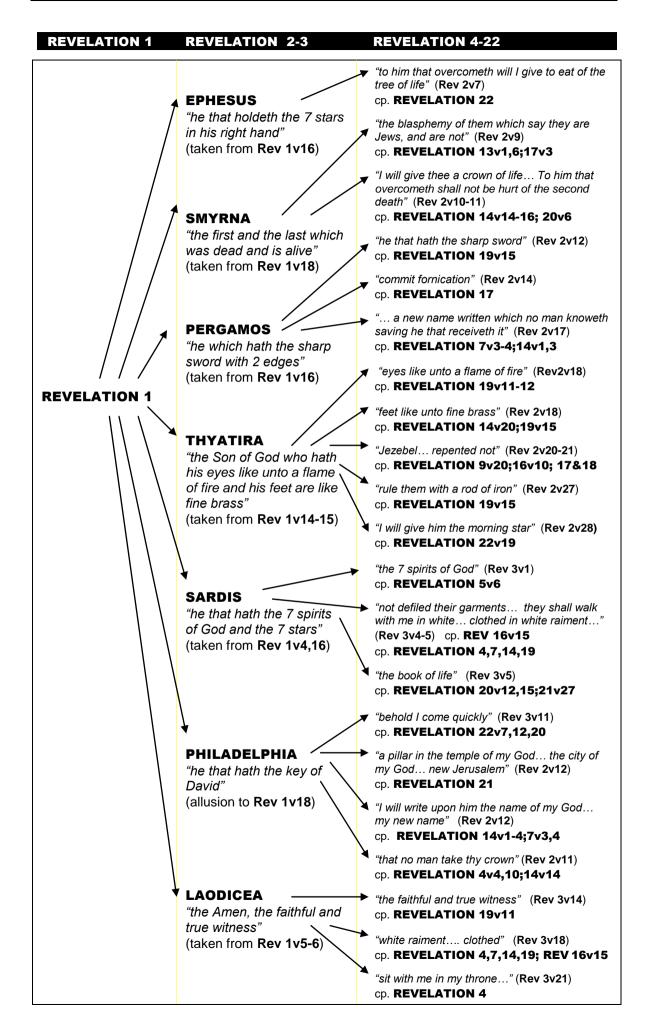
"Write therefore the things thou sawest, even those which are, and the things which are about to transpire after these." (Diaglot) Bro Thomas similarly translates as "...and the things that shall come to pass after these."

There are 3 sections to Revelation. These are all very closely linked however (as shown on the next page). The 3 sections are summarised as follows:

- 1. "the things which thou hast seen" (Rev 1)
- 2. "the things which are" (Rev 2,3)
- 3. "the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev 4-22)

## "The things which shall be hereafter"





 **■ NOTES** 

Revelation Chapter 1 is therefore the basis for much of Chapters 2 & 3. Jesus Christ introduces each of these letters with important detail from Chapter 1. Chapters 2 & 3 are then found to be the basis for much of the remainder of Revelation. There are many more allusions and themes that arise throughout the rest of the book, bringing us back to Revelation 1-3. The book of Revelation is therefore structured in the best and most orderly format that Christ could devise for our benefit.

But remember, the important foundation of Revelation is CHAPTERS 1-3.

☑ IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND: We need to see our ecclesial lives in the context of Revelation chapters 1 & 4. Chapter 1 in effect is a vision of the Holy Place, with the priestlike Son of Man amongst the lampstands. This tabernacle scene is symbolic of our lives now. We are developing our characters upon that of our Lord, aiming towards his perfect character. Chapter 4 is a vision of the Most Holy Place. This is symbolic of the saints immortalised in the Kingdom age. In Chapters 2 & 3 we are given examples of how faithful believers go from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place. In our ecclesial environment, we are ministering amongst the lampstands to help others towards the Kingdom of God. Our whole lives should be seen in this context. Our whole lives should be aimed at helping each other towards that day of glory. This is the be all and end all of what the Truth is all about giving our lives for others, that God may be glorified.

#### Verse 20

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven ecclesias: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven ecclesias."

"Mystery" indicates a secret or something that is "only known to the initiated". See the notes on Rev 1v3 where Revelation is given to Christ's "servants".

## "the seven stars" -

Stars in **Dan 12v3** are used to symbolise "teachers" (see margin). The stars in Revelation are clearly the elders of ecclesias who were in a position of authority. These are different to elders in ecclesias today because these had the Holy Spirit and were Divinely appointed- "over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the ecclesia of God..." (Acts 20v28).

**1 Cor 12v28-29** "And God hath set some in the ecclesia, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues..."

## "the seven golden candlesticks" -

The candlesticks were introduced back in **verse 12**, and represent lightstands or lampstands, our example to the world around. Our ecclesias must be alight. A lampstand that is not burning is of no use. We all need to be lampstands in our daily lives. Why? To help others to the Kingdom and to shine forth Yahweh's character.

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

(John 17v25-26 - The prayer of Jesus just before going into the Garden of Gethsemane)

## REVELATION IS A MESSAGE OF LOVE AND INSTRUCTION

The book of Revelation provides evidence that God has not only worked in Old Testament times, but during the Christian dispensation also. The remarkable accuracy of so many fulfilled prophecies constrains us to rejoice in the Apocalypse as a wonderful program of God's work in Europe from John's day to ours, and a tremendous aid to faith. It has been of inestimable value in sustaining our persecuted brethren who met in dens and caves of the Roman earth, and it is no less effective in **sustaining us** in the bleak world of godlessness in which we live.

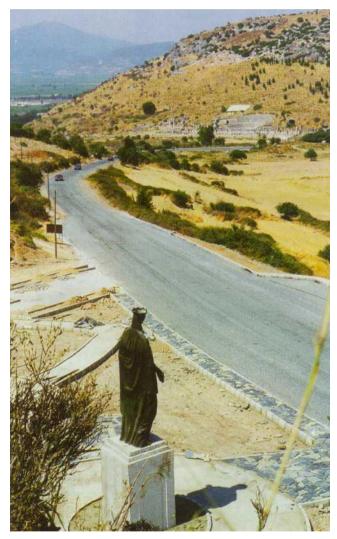
The Apocalypse is, indeed, a message of love and instruction from the heavenly bridegroom to his ecclesial bride as he labours to perfect her for the glorious marriage of the Lamb. The bride is to "make herself ready", and keep herself "unspotted from the world". With the help of Revelation, she is able to follow the events that herald her Lord's coming, and she is kept in a watchful and waiting attitude. With the help of the Apocalypse too, she is shown the path of separation and purification. Men speak of the present world as a wonderful achievement by the work of great people, they look to the past as their glorious Christian heritage. But Jesus in His last message presents the world through the centuries as so many wild beasts, her churches as a harlot, her worship as spiritual fornication and sorcery, with theft and murder, Rev 9v21. These are strong words, but they are the words of God. This instruction leads the believer to a true assessment of the world and its churches, so that he is able to avoid the enticing golden cup and pleasant wine which the world offers in its philosophy and worship, and the saint walks steadfastly in the path of separation.

The book of Revelation *diligently and prayerfully studied* has power to bring about this separation, and maintain the sanctification of the believer. **It enlightens the eyes** and **quickens the perception** of what is defiling in the systems of theology and philosophy around us. As its meaning becomes plain, it is a manifest beacon-light for the traveller to Zion, guiding his steps and ensuring deliverance from the subtle ways of the flesh and the power of the dragon.

(Bro W.G. Houlton, The Dragon and the Lamb, p.7-8)

# **NOTES**





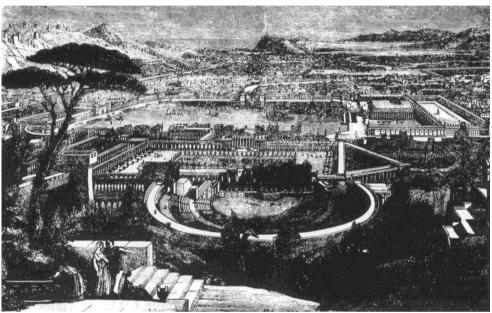
**Ephesus**, where once the inhabitants worshipped Diana (**Acts 19v26-28**) is seen in the Background. Today a Roman Catholic statue of Mary looks towards the theatre.

- This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- ☐ This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

# Revelation 2v1-7 LETTER TO THE ECCLESIA AT EPHESUS

Eureka Vol 1, p. 189-219

**□** New Testament Background: Acts 19-20; Ephesians 4-5



The city of Ephesus - A large and commercially important seaport in Asia Minor (picture from Logos, Aug. 1989)

# THE CITY OF EPHESUS

At the time of the giving of Revelation, Ephesus was a large and thriving city, the principle centre of commerce for the Roman province of Asia and known (with Smyrna) as one of "the eyes of Asia". It was blessed with a fine harbour and this attracted many ships, bringing people, wares and philosophies. Yet the most notable feature of the city was the Temple of Diana (or Artemis), one of the "7 wonders of the world", which had taken 200 years for its construction, beginning shortly after the time of Alexander the Great (BC322) and draining enormous amounts of taxation from all the citizens of Asia. One hundred and twenty vast columns, 60 feet high, had been donated by the kings of Ionia and some of these are still standing.

Today the city is of no practical significance whatsoever, being visited by occasional tourists as an archaeological point of interest, and known as Ajasaluk by the Turkish inhabitants of the area. What occurred to take Ephesus out of the limelight of the world's interest? Running out of the rugged hill country behind the city of Ephesus was the River Cayster, bringing its annual deposition of silt, which, with the passing of centuries, completely obliterated the once bustling harbour. As time went by this new area became more clogged with silt until Ephesus was surrounded by a most undesirable boggy marsh. Life and importance had been departing the city for many years so that it became known as the "city of change"!

We shall see these historical and geographical facts of Ephesus are mirrored in the behaviour of the ecclesia in that city. A once thriving ecclesia, with whom Paul had spent 2 whole years, became the centre of the advancement of the Gospel into the whole province (see **Acts 19v10**). By the 4<sup>th</sup> Century the Apostasy convened a great council in the city, during which Mariolatry, the worship of Mary, was officially recognised. Like the silting of the harbour, the ecclesia became gradually bogged down with doctrinal and moral corruption, so that apart from several Roman Catholic shrines among the rubble, Mohammedanism is the only religion heard in the city today!

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 9)

### THE 7 LETTERS ARE RELEVANT TO ALL AGES

The seven messages contained in these chapters are not haphazard and formless, but are carefully constructed upon a principle of symmetry and appropriateness. They are as applicable in a general sense to ecclesias in all ages as they were in a specific sense to the seven ecclesias who originally received them.

Each epistle is introduced by reference to a certain attribute of the Speaker, which bore directly on the circumstances of the ecclesia addressed. The epistles are intimately linked with the vision of **Chapter 1** and as such, provide a comprehensive description of what the Father desires to see in his children (**Chapter 1**) and compares this with what he does see in them (**Chapters 2** and 3). "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the spirit saith to the Ecclesias, p.14)

# BACKGROUND TO THE ECCLESIA IN EPHESUS

### THE TRUTH COMES TO EPHESUS

It was at the end of his second journey that the Apostle Paul visited the city of Ephesus to preach the Gospel. Leaving the infant ecclesia of Corinth he sailed with Priscilla and Aquila across the Agean Sea to this thriving metropolis on the west coast of the Province of Asia. He found a ready audience with the Jews in the synagogue and his discussions brought forth the desire that he remain longer. As his immediate plans did not allow for a longer stay, he left Priscilla and Aquila there with the undertaking that "I will return again to you, if God will" (Acts 18v19-21). During this brief stay Paul must have been impressed with the interest shown by the Jews in those things he had spoken in the synagogue, and would also realise the value of Ephesus as a centre from which the Truth could radiate into all Asia.

### CENTRE FOR THE TRUTH IN ASIA

Paul returned to Ephesus on his third journey to fulfil his desire to preach there and to establish a focal point for the spreading of the Truth in Asia. For 3 months he spoke at the synagogue (**Acts 19v8**), but after this avenue failed to produce further fruit, he moved his activities to the School of one Tyrannus and continued to preach there a further 2 years (**Acts 19v9-10**).

Paul's forethought and planning, together with the Father's blessing, caused the Truth to take deep root in Ephesus, and to spread throughout the whole region of Asia. Not only did Luke note this when he wrote "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jew and Greek" (Acts 19v10), but Demetrius, the silversmith, the opponent of Paul, made a similar observation when agitating his fellow-craftsmen against Paul when he stated "ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands" (Acts 19v26).

### PAUL EXHORTS THE ELDERS OF EPHESUS

From Macedonia, Paul, in his haste to be in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, determined to sail past Ephesus to Miletus. It was from this neighbouring port that he called for the elders of Ephesus to come and meet with him that he might give them words of exhortation (**Acts 20v16-17**).

He reminded these overseers of the ecclesia, that he had faithfully set before them and all the ecclesia the full counsel of God (Acts 20v20,26-27). He warned them that apostasy threatened the ecclesia and that false teachers would arise of their own ranks as grievous wolves to scatter and destroy the flock of God (Acts 20v28-31). He finally counselled them to give careful attention to "the word of God's grace" which was able to build them up that they might contend earnestly for the Truth. With great sorrow, the apostle and the brethren parted; Paul to continue toward Jerusalem, the others to make their way back to Ephesus (Acts 20v38).

### **TIMOTHY SENT TO STRENGTHEN EPHESUS**

Paul constantly considered the "care of all the ecclesias" and ensured that they were continually guided and instructed by his faithful fellow-labourers. Therefore, he requested Timothy to remain at Ephesus that he might silence false teachers and teach the ecclesia how they "ought to behave themselves in the house of God: which is the ecclesia of the living God" (2 Tim 3v15). (summary by Bro. David Evans, *Logos*, August 1989, p.328)

### **Summary of the Letter to Ephesus:**

v1 Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ

v2-3,6 The Ecclesia commendedv4 The Lord's disapproval

**v5** Exhortation

**v7** He that overcometh

#### IMPORTANT NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND:

It is highly recommended that we firstly read through **Acts 19-20** to gain an introduction to the ecclesia at Ephesus.

Also, remember the context in which **Revelation 2-3** is written. Go back to the important comments on the first half of page 70. It is important to see these letters in the context of **Revelation 1 & 4**.

### **VERSE 1: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ**

### Verse 1

"Unto the angel of the ecclesia of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

The word "angel" means a "messenger". This "angel" at Ephesus was the elder or group of elders in the ecclesia who had been specially appointed as such - "which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the ecclesia of God" (Acts 20v28).

"he that holdeth the 7 stars in his right hand" -

The introductory title is taken from the vision found in **Rev 1v13-16**. See notes about this vision on pages 54-66. These stars represent the spirit-gifted elders of the ecclesias (**Rev 1v16,20**).

### The Ecclesias are under Christ's control

Changes are made from **Revelation 1** to encourage them. In that chapter the Lord has the 7 stars in his right hand but a much stronger word is used in the letter. He holds them, or better, firmly grasps them and, using his own words, "no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (**John 10v28** RSV). They are completely in his power, under his almighty protection. Again in **Revelation 1**, the Lord was in the midst of the lampstands but in the letter he is walking among them. The priest in the tabernacle or temple, trimming the lamps in the 7 branched golden lampstand and maintaining their oil supply, would appear to an onlooker to be moving among the 7 branches. So Jesus walked among the 7 lampstands, unceasingly active on their behalf, to enable them to shine as lights in the world. The Lord, walking in the midst of the ecclesias, knew at first hand what was happening to them. He was fully cognisant of their difficulties and problems, their successes and failures.

This could be a warning as well as a comfort. Ecclesias would not hide anything from the Lord nor could any save them if he relinquished his hold on them. The same Lord walks in the modern brotherhood, fully aware of our temptations and problems, successes and failures. We may present a good face to our brethren and sisters, or to other ecclesias but the Lord sees us as we really are. It is for us to look at ourselves through our Lord's eye and adjust our manner of life accordingly.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, Letters to the 7 churches, pgs. 18-19)

 **■ NOTES** 

## "He who holds the 7 stars in his right hand"

The title is drawn from **Rev 1v13,16**. It represents the Son of Man (the Lord Jesus Christ in the first instance) as the one who guided these Spirit-endowed elders of the Ephesian Ecclesia. It is nevertheless remarkable, that even though these men were in a most privileged position and able to draw on the power of the Spirit which the Lord had promised them (**John 14v16-18,26**), they still left their first love. This teaches us that the Lord is ever willing to help (whether then or now) but he does not force anyone to "act like a robot". Even the Spirit-endowed elders could be carnally-minded if they did not draw on the power which God was ever ready to grant them through his Son. Consider Paul's messages to the Ephesian elders in **Acts 20v17-35**, especially **v28-31** and also **Ephesians 4v1-16**.

The Lord, who walketh in the midst of the ecclesias, is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart and through the Spirit Word is able to discern between that which is soulish (of the flesh) and that which is spiritual (**Heb 4v12,13**).

It must not be overlooked, however, that the title "Son of Man" is representative of one who has overcome the flesh through the Word of God and is equally applicable to those "in Christ" who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (**Rom 8v1-4**). It is the Spirit of Christ which must be seen guiding the eldership (or teachers) and walking in the midst of ecclesias everywhere and at all times.

The implied lesson found in this title is that the Living Word must be operative in the minds and hearts of the saints, to guide and control all their thoughts and actions that the Spirit mind might be developed and the flesh crucified. Such a spirit walking in the midst of the ecclesias will cause the lampstand to burn brightly as the oil of the Word by the process of combustion shines forth the light of the Truth (Matt 25v1-13).

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, p.14-15)

The right hand always symbolises strength & power (eg. Psa 80v17; 110v1; Eph 1v20-21; 1 Pet 3v22).

The "One like unto the Son of Man" of **Rev 1v13-16** is the Lord Jesus Christ. By extension however, it also includes those who have "put on Christ" through baptism, and who are therefore "in Christ". Jesus Christ is the one who holds the 7 stars in his right hand and who walks in the midst of the 7 ecclesias. This indicates that while Christ firmly holds onto the ecclesias we should also do the same. Christ also is holding us in his right hand.

### "who walketh in the midst of the 7 golden candlesticks" -

The "candlesticks" are actually "lampstands", as in the 7 branched lampstand in the tabernacle (see **Rev 1v12-13**). Lampstands symbolised the ecclesias. Read notes on the significance of lampstands on pages 52-54.

In **Chapter 1**, Christ is simply just "in the midst of the 7 lampstands". In **Chapter 2** however, he is actually WALKING in the midst of their ecclesia. He is intimately amongst them. He is right there and he KNOWS what is going on.

**2 Cor 6v16** "...Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them**; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Deut 23v14 "for Yahweh thy Elohim walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."

### VERSES 2-3: The ecclesia commended

### Verse 2

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:"

"I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false." (New American Standard Version)

### "I know thy works, and thy labour" -

"I know thy works" is stated to all 7 ecclesias. To "labour" means literally to "toil with pains" (Strongs). See **Phil 2v16**; **4v3** where the same word is used. It appears that there is a play on words in this verse - Bro Bedwell says "they had toiled until they were weary but they had never wearied of their toil." (p.20) It says that those who "rule well (are to) be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and the doctrine" (**1 Tim 5v17**). See notes on **verse 5** where the Ecclesia is exhorted to "do the first works".

### "patience" -

The Diaglot translates "patience" as "patient endurance" and implies the necessity for "patient continuance in well doing" (Rom 2v7). The apostle John on Patmos was our "companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1v9)

☑ As the following comments indicate, despite their waning love, there is much example to be gained from the hardworking attitude of this ecclesia. We may be tempted to reject Christ's commendation of diligence, because of the problem they had in **verse 4**. Today there is a tendency for some to see the faults of ecclesias like Ephesus, whose love has waned, using this as an excuse for taking life easy, neglecting "works" & "labour". Remember that their works, labour, patience and intolerance of evil was **highly commended** by our Lord - it was for "his sake". The problem they had to deal with was the *loss of love* for what they were doing. It is not for us to use *the faults of others* to excuse ourselves from responsibility. Remember also that it is not for us to judge the *motives* of our brethren and sisters.

### LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM EPHESUS

Let us ask if the Master, looking at our ecclesias, could write to us in similar terms or would their standard of activity condemn us? Would he find an avoidance rather than an acceptance of toil, a love of ease and comfort rather than hard work? Would he find us ready to do the work which is seen of men and pleasant, and unwilling to accept the less obvious but equally necessary work of which few are aware? Would he find us willing to engage in the hard labour of Bible study - and it is hard labour if the result is to be profitable to the ecclesia - or would he see us hastily preparing an address a day or two before it is to be given? In an age of tolerance, would he find us rejecting those who would water down our beliefs and our way of life - perhaps trying to modify them to harmonise with modern thought? When we meet difficulties in the ecclesia or in the world, do we give up or do we face them with perseverance and fortitude?

There was, however, a serious fault at Ephesus. Endurance, unremitting toil and rejection of error are not all that the Lord requires. They are the means to an end: "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart" (1 Tim 1v5).

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, Letters to the 7 churches, p. 21)

 **■ NOTES** 

"thou canst not bear them which are evil" -

The Lord Jesus Christ also could not bear those who were evil (see verse 6).

This ecclesia had obviously heeded the warnings of the Apostle Paul in **Acts 20v28-30** where he said that "grievous wolves (will) enter in among you, not sparing the flock." These problems were foreseen by Paul in his Letter to Timothy where this is of obvious concern to him right in the first chapter of his first letter. (See particularly 1 Tim 1v6-8,19-20). There were true apostles who were "messengers of the ecclesias" (2 Cor 8v23) and there were "false apostles" who were "deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Cor 11v13).

The first letter to Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul who was in Ephesus. Only *some* would leave the truth however.

Paul realised that the apostasy was on the rise He is really devastated here in his words to Timothy. The letter to Ephesus is now being written 25 years later.

**2 Tim 2v16** "But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodlessness. And their word will eat as doth a canker..." (a canker is gangrene).

### PAUL'S WARNINGS TO TIMOTHY IN EPHESUS

Paul had urged Timothy to stay in Ephesus that he might "charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine nor to occupy themselves with myths or endless genealogies" (1 Tim 1v3-4). Timothy is also warned that "in later times some will depart from the faith" (1 Tim 4v1), "will not endure sound teaching... and wander into myths" (2 Tim 4v3-4). Timothy was, therefore, instructed to guard the deposit (1 Tim 6v20; 2 Tim 1v14), "the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me" (2 Tim 1v13) so that he could hand this on inviolate. Coupled with this, Paul exhorted Timothy to hard work - the word means "labour to weariness" (2 Tim 2v6) - so that Timothy might be "a workman who has no need to be ashamed" (2 Tim 2v15). "Endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4v5). "Take your share of suffering (RV hardship)" (2 Tim 2v3). Quotes from the RSV

(summary by Bro W.L. Bedwell, The letters to the 7 churches of Asia, p.18)

### Verse 3

"And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

"...and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary" (NASB)

"and thou hast patiently endured and hast suffered on account of my name, and thou hast not been weary." (Diaglot)

This verse is really emphasising the verse that went before. They had continued to toil over a long period of time and had not given up. The reason they had endured was for Christ's sake, indicating that he was a powerful motivation in their lives. To not have "fainted" is to have heeded the exhortation of **Heb 12v3** to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds".

 **■ MOTES** 

The Greek word translated here as "fainted" is only found 2 other times in the New Testament, being **Heb 12v3** (translated as "wearied") and **James 5v15** (translated as "sick"). On the basis of these 2 passages, weariness can be overcome through concentrating on the example of Christ and also prayer through him. They certainly were to be commended for their perseverance, but tragically, the love they had at first had waned (**v4**).

### "patience" -

The Greek word translated "patience" is used 7 times in the Apocalypse (**Rev 1v9, 2v2,3,19, 3v10, 13v10, 14v12**) and indicates *"endurance and constancy"* (Strongs). The saints of all ages are required to have "patient continuance in well doing" (**Rom 2v6-8**). See also **James 1v3-4**.

Despite the obvious problem in **verse 4** that this ecclesia has lost their first love, they are definitely commended in **verses 2-3** for earnestly contending for the faith. There is no doubt that their patience and good works came from good intentions and motives. They had done it for Christ's sake. However, after years of fighting error, their love began to wane.

### **VERSE 4: The Lord's disapproval**

### Verse 4

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

"....you have abandoned the love you had at first" (RSV)

It is sometimes interpreted that the ecclesia had lost its original zeal and enthusiasm. This cannot be correct because of the commendation given in **verses 2-3**. The love that they had lost was "agape" love, a self sacrificing love. This is used of the love Yahweh has for His Son and that they both have for us.

John 13v34-35 "Love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

It was also said of Israel that they had lost "the love of thine espousals" (**Jer 2v2-3**). Yahweh is speaking to the children of Judah here through the prophet Jeremiah. They had also lost their first love.

Look at **Acts 20v34** – The people of the city were chanting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" - this is what the world is chanting today! The gods may be different, but the gods are still all out there. The world's media is trying to make us love the things of the world rather than God. Are we just going through the motions of ecclesial life for the sake of it, while our heart is not in it? This is clearly the problem there was in Ephesus.

- Think of how this can happen today. Is it possible to keep doing the things that we know are right without really wanting to do them? Do we just go to the meeting on a Sunday morning because we have always done it or do we really feel like we have a need for it? Do we involve ourselves in preaching work because it is on the program or because we *really want to save people*? Is the Truth our greatest joy in life?
- If the love of the Truth is not the greatest joy in our life, then how can we develop this love so that it is?

 **■ NOTES** 

This is obviously the problem that was confronting this ecclesia.

Paul wrote 14x in the letter to the Ephesians about "agape" love compared with only 4x in Galatians, 4x in Philippians, and 4x in Colossians. Consider the following:

**Eph 1v15** "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints."

**Eph 4v1-3** "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

☑ Love is only genuine if there is **lowliness**, **meekness** and **longsuffering**.

**Ephesians 5** is one of the best chapters on love....

**Eph 5v25-28** "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."

The definition of love comes out very strongly in these verses. This is a spirit of giving up our own selfish desires for the good of others. We need to develop the spirit of *wanting to give up* our time to help others. It comes as a response for the love God has shown us. Love develops when we are thankful for what God has done for us through Christ.

We should also love the Ecclesia, despite their faults. Look at John 21v15-17:

- v15 "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, **lovest thou me** more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs**."
- v16 "He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep."
- v17 "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

Feeding the ecclesia is one important aspect of love. Do we really want our brethren and sisters in the Kingdom? Do we really care?

# ☑ KEY POINT: Why was the promise of the tree of life (v7) given to the ecclesia in Ephesus?

Because trees of life feed and heal others – this is what true love is all about. The connection with **Rev 22** is *so important*. We also need to feed the ecclesia of God. We need to do it out of love. This is what we will be doing in the Kingdom - "feeding" the mortal population. This is what Ephesus needed to learn - true love is about healing others. Those that develop their characters now, will have them perfected in the kingdom age. See the notes on **verse 7**.

 **■ MOTES** 

1 John 4v20 "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him. That he who loveth God loveth his brother also."

- 1 John 3v18 "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."
- Sometimes when people speak about love they do so in the context of complaining that "there is no love in the ecclesia" or such like. Complaining like this has nothing to do with true love. True love is about self sacrifice for the good of others. It is all about giving our time to care for others and nurturing others in the Truth. Complaining that we are hard done by because others have a lack of love has nothing to do with what the Scriptures say about agape love. It is easy to talk about love. But true love is seen in ACTIONS done willingly and joyfully.
- How willing are we to give our lives for the good of others rather than just satisfying ourselves? How can we develop this true love within us that makes us automatically want to help others?
- How often do we put ourselves into the shoes of others and really feel what it would be like to be in the other person's position? This is what Jesus Christ did every day of his life. Consider the following quotes...

**Isaiah 53v4** "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows..."

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing."

Despite all that we may do in the ecclesia, if we do not do these things in love, then WE ARE NOTHING.

The ecclesia were commended for their diligence. However, they appear to be doing these things now purely through a sense of duty. They needed to realise that the reason for their diligence in the ecclesia is through love for others.

Think about it. How much do we really want our friends to be in the Kingdom? How much do we really want those outside to come to know the Truth? Do we pray earnestly for our friends? **Do we really care?** 

This was a real problem in the Jewish ecclesia in the times leading up to AD70. Consider the words of Christ in the Olivet Prophecy:

Matt 24v11 "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And <u>because iniquity shall abound</u>, the love of many shall wax cold."

To "wax cold" means to cool down slowly. It is just like blowing on your hot bowl of soup to cool it down. This is what the world is like today. The world can have an adverse affect on our minds on a DAY BY DAY basis. A lifetime is made up of many individual days - It may contribute to the development of a character which is worldly rather than Christ-like, and without us even knowing it (eq. Rev 3v3,17).

#### 

How could the abounding iniquity in our world today cause us to lose our first love? Do you think this is happening today in ecclesias? What is the solution to this?

It is the love of Christ that should motivate us to action: Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words..." (John 14v23).

- Think of the way we approach Bible study and Bible readings. Do we do this out of love for God and for Christ? Do we really love to read the Bible because it is our Heavenly Father speaking to us, or is it a chore? Think of ways in which we can develop a love for God's Words.
- If daily Bible readings, Bible study and ecclesial meetings are a chore, then we have lost our first love just like Ephesus. If the Truth is not something we really love deep down in our hearts, then the exhortation to this ecclesia is for us. To help us in developing a love for our God, read comments in the Study tips and Introduction on pages 4-5 of these notes.

### WE NEED TO BE LIVING EXAMPLES OF JESUS CHRIST

How far does this love control our personal, ecclesial and communal lives? How much do we as individuals show these qualities of love in our lives? Do those with whom we come into contact in our daily work, or in other ways, see them in our lives so that they recognise us as followers of Jesus not only because we talk of him but by our manner of life? Do they see his love in our lives, in patience, in kindness, in courtesy and in the absence of jealousy, of self-conceit, irritability, and resentment? Do wives see these qualities in their husbands? Do our brethren and sisters see them in us in our communal life? These are vital questions because the absence of love among this people, in his ecclesias, the Lord will not pardon.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, The letters to the 7 churches of Asia, p.27)

### **VERSE 5: Exhortation**

### Verse 5

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent"

There is always something that can be done in all these ecclesias, despite their situation.

The 3 things that needed to be done were...

- 1. Remember
- 2. Repent
- 3. Do the first works

The works should have been done because of their love for God. It is just like a small child responding to their earthly fathers. No parent wants their children to respond purely through sense of duty. A parent wants their child to respond to them because THEY WANT TO.

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place - unless you repent." (New American Standard Version)

 **■ NOTES** 

The Diaglot translates "repent" as "reform", indicating one aspect of the word. What is the full Scriptural meaning of "repentance"?

### "repent and do the first works" -

See the notes on repentance in the letter to Thyatira, in Rev 2v21.

The "first works" are surely those which came as a result of their first love.

Bro Brian Luke comments in his notes as follows:

"To 'love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength' is the *first* commandment (**Mark 12v30**). To 'love thy neighbour as thyself' is the practical expression of this (**v31**, cp. **1 John 4v20-21**). The former is the "first love" and the latter is the "first works"."

### John 6v28-29

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God**, that ye **believe** on him whom he hath sent."

### Eph 2v8-10

"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. For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Our actions therefore should not be done just for the sake of it, or because we think we can be saved by them, but as a result of love for God. It should come as a result of Christ's character working in us. James speaks a lot about this:

### James 2v14-16

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

### "remove thy lampstand out of his place" -

The "candlestick" is the 7 branched lampstand of **Rev 1v13,20**. For important comments on the lampstand refer back to the notes on these verses.

Their patient endurance would all be lost if they did not return to their original motivation for their work, a warm-hearted emotional response towards Christ and the Father.

When Nebuchadnezzar was to come down against Judah, Jeremiah says the following:

### Jer 25v10

"Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of millstones, and the light of the candle."

In Jer 52v19 it also says that the lampstands were taken away from Judah.

The Diaglot says "I am coming to thee" indicating that "quickly" is not found in the original text.

 **■ NOTES** 

The taking away of the lampstand may indicate some sort of judgement that would come upon the ecclesia. What he is saying is that without love, there is no use continuing as an ecclesia.

### **VERSE 6: The ecclesia again commended**

### Verse 6

"But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."

"But you have this in your favour: You hate the practises of Nicolaitans, which I also hate." (NIV)

**IMPORTANT:** This letter is the only one of the 7 letters in which commendation is actually added after the warning. Why would this be? Bro Bedwell suggests the following:

"It is because the Lord did not wish them to draw the wrong conclusion from his rebuke. They were right to hate the works of the Nicolaitanes and he did not wish the ecclesia to desist from so doing, or from testing "the spirits to see whether they are of God" (1 John 4v1). Love must not reduce their hatred of error or immoral behaviour." (page 33).

These Nicolaitanes are obviously the ones spoken of in verse 2.

Bro HP Mansfield comments:

"the word, "Nicolaitanes" is formed by the conjunction of two words: *nicosvictory*, and *laitos - the people*. The word therefore signifies *vanquishers of the people*."

The first part of the word "Nicolaitanes" is the Greek "nikos" meaning to vanquish or overcome. It is the same word as "overcometh" in Rev 2v7,11,17, 26; 3v5,12,21. These Nicolaitanes had obviously overcome and destroyed people in the ecclesia in some way. These were people who obviously called themselves "Brethren in Christ" (ie. Christadelphians) but were not. Verse 2 says that they "say they are apostles, and are not."

They also had wrong doctrine (see **Rev 2v15**). This had been forewarned by the apostle Paul in **1 Tim 6v20-21** and **2 Tim 2v16-18**. What was the cause of this? Ephesus was the centre of Greek culture and pagan worship, which included the temple of Diana, God of the Ephesians. This philosophy is indicated in **Acts 17v18**. This may have been a contributing factor, but we cannot be sure.

Notice that in this verse, it is the works or *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes which were hated whereas in **v15** it is their **doctrine** which is hated. There is nothing specifically said about what these Nicolaitanes actually believed in or what they were promoting. They obviously had wrong doctrine and practise, out of which we know developed the Apostasy (**2 Thess 2**). See further notes on **Rev 2v15** on the letter to Pergamos.

These men may well have been the "grievous wolves" (Acts 20v29) that Paul warned of in 1 Tim 6v20 ("O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called") and in 2 Tim 2v16 ("shun profane and vain babblings").

**IMPORTANT:** It is recommended that we read the notes on pages 18-20 about the development of Apostasy in early Ecclesias.

Read the interesting comments by Bro Thomas on the Nicolaitan Apostasy in Eureka Vol. 1 pages 197-204

### **VERSE 7:** He that overcometh

### Verse 7

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear..." - To hear is to "hearken" (Rev 1v3; 3v20) and "give heed". Therefore, a practical application is involved! This is emphasised in all 7 letters to the ecclesias (Rev 2v7,11,17,29; 3v6,13,22). The only other place this phrase is stated in the Apocalypse outside of the 7 ecclesias is in Revelation 13v9. This is in the context of judgement upon the Roman Catholic apostasy. This apostasy was the end result of that "mystery of iniquity" found even in these first century Gentile ecclesias (2 Thess 2v1-11).

How then do we have an ear that hears? By the diligent day-by-day reading and study of the Word of God. There is no secret formula: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom 10v17) We need to approach God's Word like a child that loves to listen to his father. Every day we need to ask the question, "What does my Father want me to learn today?" We need to develop a LOVE for God's Word. We need to develop a LOVE for Yahweh and His Son. It all depends on our attitude to Bible readings and Bible study. This is what Ephesus needed to turn back to. It was their FIRST LOVE that was missing. This is important for everything we do in the Truth.

We must therefore develop a mind which really feels **a need** for God's Word. The result is that we can then encourage others. This is the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ:

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." (Isa. 50v4).

To have ears that hear means that we must direct our ears *towards* the Word. This means directing our ears *away* from worldly distractions. So long as our ears are tuned in to the world, we will never take in the Word. Yahweh has revealed to us His glorious future Kingdom in the words of the Apocalypse. Are we thankful for this? Are we willing to take up the challenge?

"And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear... And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." (Mark 4v9,11)

### "He that overcometh" -

Refer to notes in the Introduction (Part 3) on overcoming the world, pgs. 28-31.

Highlight this phrase in your Bibles - once for each of the 7 ecclesias.

### "in the midst of the paradise of God" -

The phrase "in the midst" is omitted in the original. **Isaiah 35** tells of the glories of nature in the Kingdom where the desert will be made like a garden. In fact this is what the word means in the Greek - Strong says it means "a park, an Eden" (Str. #3857). This is the same as found in **Luke 23v43 & 2 Cor 12v4**.

Bro Mansfield indicates that the same word is found in the Septuagint Version (Greek Old Testament) in **Gen 2v8, Neh 2v8, Jer 29v5, Eccl. 2v5, Song 4v12**.

This is the paradise Jesus spoke of on the cross (**Luke 23v43**). Jesus had a clear vision of the kingdom even in his darkest hour.



Trees symbolise the saints in God's Kingdom

### 

### "the tree of life" -

See notes on Genesis and Revelation at the top of page 11. This tree gives eternal life and was prohibited in the garden of Eden (**Gen 3v22**). Wisdom is said to be as a "tree of life" (**Prov 3v18**). Trees also symbolise the fruit of the righteous (**Prov 11v30**), the fulfilling of a desire (**Prov 13v12**) and a wholesome tongue (**Prov 15v4**). Consider the following key points about the tree of life:

This is an allusion to **Gen 2v9** but with a significant difference. In Genesis the phrase is literally "the tree of the lives" - one tree capable of imparting life to many (see *Elpis Israel* p.70-71). In **Rev 2v7**; **22v2,14**, it is literally "trees of life" or "wood of life": many trees possessing the one life (see *Eureka*, Vol 1 p.207-209). The word translated "tree" in these instances is *xulon* and is the same as the word "wood" in **Rev 18v12**. It is a different word from that translated tree in **Rev 7v1,3**; **8v7**; **9v4**. This word is *dendron* and is correctly rendered as "tree". This understanding of the word *xulon* explains how, in **Rev 22v2**, a "tree" can be on both sides of the river and is therefore better translated as "wood".

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the ecclesias, p.17)

### **□** KEY QUOTE: REVELATION 22

The vision of the tree of life is found in the final chapter of the Bible:

Rev 22v1-2 "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

### THE VISION OF THE TREE OF LIFE - REVELATION 22

The vision in **Revelation 22** is similar to what Ezekiel saw in his Temple vision, however it is more symbolic. **Ezekiel 47** shows this literal river of water flowing from the altar (**Ezek 47v1-9**). See the picture over on the next page. Soothing waters are used to describe the Word of God:

John 4v14 "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The same thought is also given in **John 7v37-39**. The nations are also symbolised as waters or sea (**Isa. 57v20**, **Rev 17v15**). The water of the Word will purify the sea of nations and the "waters shall be healed". This is similar to the literal waters healing the waters of the dead sea in **Ezek 47v8-9**. This is why it says, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea" (**Isa 11v9**). In **Isaiah 33v20,21** the rivers and streams symbolise Yahweh and His power in the day of Zion's "quiet habitation". Yahweh is the "fountain of living waters" (**Jer 17v13**). See also **Isa 45v8**.

These waters are said to "proceed out of the throne of God and the Lamb". This is the throne referred to in **Rev 4v2,3**. In the symbolic sense, waters will proceed from the ruling power of the Kingdom age. Jesus Christ and the Saints will physically manifest Yahweh in the Kingdom age. Living waters also flow from the literal city of Jerusalem in the age to come (**Zech 14v8, Joel 3v18**). This is what Ezekiel saw in his Temple vision (**Ezek 40-48**).

The throne of Yahweh will be set in Jerusalem. This is called the "throne of David" and is described in Isaiah 2v2-4; 11v12; 24v22,23; 51v3; 60v15; 62v3; Jer 3v17;31v10; Joel 3v17; Micah 4v7-8, Zech 8v8; 14v16-17 etc.

Bro Thomas makes the following comments in Eureka Vol. 5, p.357:

"Ezekiel saw the Dead Sea in two states - without any living soul in it; and afterwards teeming with life of every kind. John saw the thing in its spiritual significance - the sea of nations dead in trespasses and sins; and the same sea full of nations walking in the light of the New Jerusalem. Ezekiel saw that it was the stream effluent from under the altar that gave life and health to the Dead Sea; and John saw that it was the stream issuing from the throne that gave to the leaves of the tree the power of imparting health and life to the world."

The "tree" in **Rev 22** is the Greek word "xulon", meaning a wood or forest of trees. There is obviously more than one tree because they are found on both sides of the river. The vision of **Rev 22** is only symbolic, whereas Ezekiel saw a literal forest of trees along the river banks in **Ezek 47v12** which "shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed..."

Trees are used in the Scriptures to symbolise rulers, while the leaves symbolise individuals (**Dan 4v20-22**; **Job 13v25**; **Isa 1v30**; **64v6**). The saints will be rulers in the age to come (**Rev 5v9-10**). There is <u>one</u> "wood" but <u>many</u> "trees" (ie. many in one). This is confirmed by **Psa 1v3** "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season..." and **Psa 92v12** "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Christ himself was known as "the branch of God's planting.." (**Isa 60v21**, see also **Isa 11v1-5**, **53v2**). In the kingdom, Yahweh says, "the days of a tree are the days of my people..." (**Isa 65v22**).

Remember that the water flowing from the Christ altar is what the trees depend on for growth. All life given is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read Eureka Vol. 1, p. 209-218 by Bro Thomas on the "tree of life".

What makes this vision of the Kingdom real for us personally?

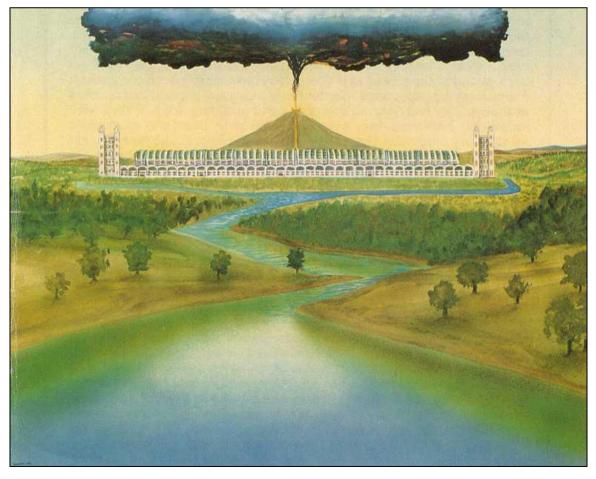
It says of the trees in **Rev 22** that they "bare 12 manner of fruits, and yielded (their) fruits every month" indicating again the importance of the number 12 (as also in **Ch's 7,14,21**). The number 12 specifically relates to the hope of Israel and therefore so too do the fruits. **Gal 5v22** speaks of the Fruit of the Spirit of which there are 9 parts. The fruits growing on the trees only grow because of the "pure river of water of life" which provides nourishment for the trees.

We read in **Rev 22v2** that "the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations" indicating that the saints are there for the purpose of helping the mortal population come to a knowledge of God and His Truth. The saints will be fulfilling a priestly role in the Kingdom age - bringing others to God (see **Rev 5v10**). The saints will be able to say, "This is the way, walk ye in it..." (**Isa. 30v21**).

The word "healing" is the Greek "therapeia" meaning "to attend to" or "cure" (see Strongs). The same word for "healing" is translated as "household" in Matt 24v25 & Luke 12v42 to describe God's ecclesia. It is similar to the English word "therapist" which is a medical term for those who heal wounds and sicknesses. This is what the saints will be like in the Kingdom age. This is what the household of believers should be doing today! A love for healing others is what the brethren and sisters at Ephesus needed to regain.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

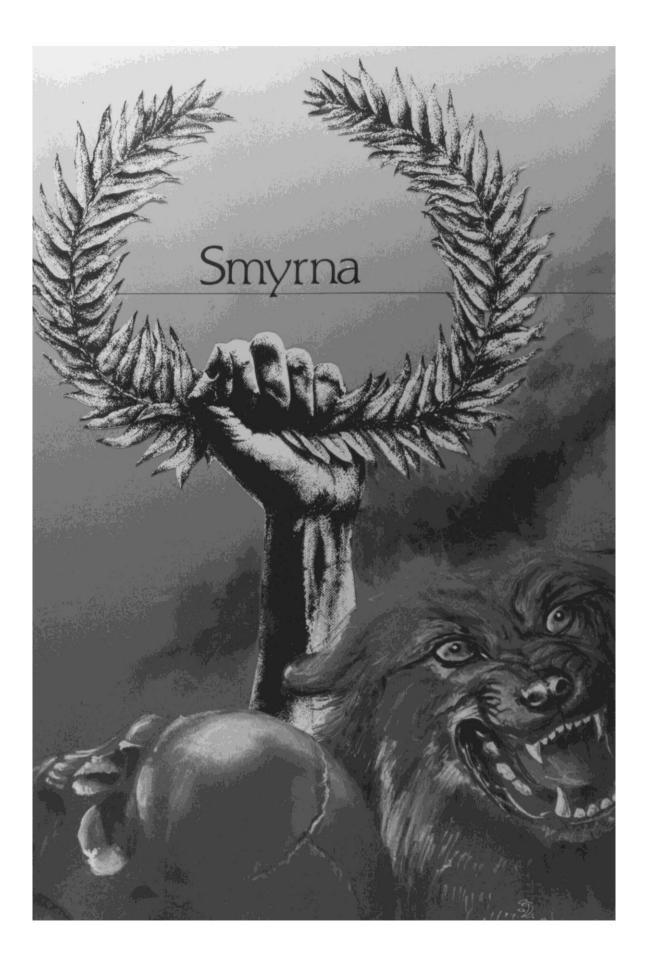
Revelation 22v14



The vision seen in Ezekiel 47v6-9

# **NOTES**

# **NOTES**



- This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- oxdots This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

# Revelation 2v8-11 LETTER TO THE ECCLESIA AT SMYRNA

Eureka Vol 1, p. 219-265

☐ Old Testament Background: Isaiah 41,44,48

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

(Rev 7v14-15)

Smyrna was one of the most prosperous and wealthy cities in all Asia Minor. Ironically, it is here that we find the poorest of ecclesias in respect to worldly possessions. Whilst poverty stricken, the ecclesia was spiritually rich. They were persecuted, jailed and even killed for their beliefs. Not only did they suffer persecution from the Roman authorities, but also from Judaising blasphemers. The ecclesia at Smyrna symbolised those ecclesias throughout the ages who would suffer under the brutality of Rome, both Pagan and Roman Catholic. There are ecclesias like Smyrna even today. In some countries, Brethren and Sisters are persecuted and thrown into prison for Christ's sake. Many of our ecclesias overseas are materially poverty-stricken, but are rich in faith.

In Australia today, we are living in the most prosperous era ever, in one of the most wealthy countries in the world. There is much to learn therefore from this faithful remnant. We will no doubt stand with these Brethren and Sisters at the judgement seat of Christ. Is there any way in which we can relate to this ecclesia? Is there any fellow feeling we have with the faithful in Smyrna? These are vital questions for us to consider. There was one however who did have a fellow feeling with them - Jesus Christ. It is he who was killed but is now alive forevermore.

### THE CITY OF SMYRNA

Smyrna was not a large city in the days of the apostle John and not nearly as significant as Ephesus. It was 45 miles north of Ephesus and stood at the end of a long arm of the sea. It was, in fact, very beautifully situated and it was said that no city could rival Smyrna's picturesque setting. It was called the ornament, the flower, the crown of Asia! This last expression arose from the sight of a ring of temples and noble buildings that surmounted the city on the Pagos, a hill behind the city and harbour.

Smyrna also had an interesting *history* and this seems to be clearly reflected in the words of Christ. For centuries it was related to the Ionian kings but around 600BC it was taken by the powerful king of Lydia and utterly destroyed. Lydia was a contender with Assyria and Babylon at the time and it was not until Cyrus of Persia routed its capital city of Sardis, that this strong and resourceful kingdom lost its dominance over the western half of the territory that we call Turkey. However, Smyrna remained "dead" for nearly 400 years until, as it is said, Alexander the Great instigated its rebirth. It was then *rebuilt* on new and well-considered lines by Lysimachus, the Greek. So Smyrna was a new city that had been "dead but was alive again."

Another significant quality of Smyrna was its fidelity to the Roman people. Well before the Roman Empire had cast its borders far and wide, Smyrna had sought alliance with Rome and had never wavered in its patronage to the great city. Cicero, the great Roman writer and orator, described Smyrna as "the city of our most faithful and most ancient allies."

<u>Today</u>, Smyrna is called Izmir and is the largest city in Asiatic Turkey, a bastion of Muslim teaching with hundreds of mosques and has virtually no remnant of its early Christianity. It was no doubt during Paul's first 2 years in Ephesus, when he used the school of Tyrannus as his base, that the gospel spread to the inhabitants of Smyrna (see **Acts 19v10**).

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 21)

NOTES

### THE CITY OF SMYRNA - A FAITHFUL SUPPORTER OF ROME

As the Roman Empire grew, so did the fortunes and importance of Smyrna. During the reign of Tiberius, the reputation of the Smyrneans for ardent loyalty was so unsullied that on account of this alone they obtained permission to erect a Temple to the emperor and Senate, on behalf of all Asiatic cities. This loyalty to Rome continued, causing succeeding emperors to confer special privileges on the city and its citizens. In return, emperor-worship (as a deity) was compulsory among its citizens to show their loyalty to his authority and rule. In fact, the city's importance grew so much that some of her coins defined her rank as "First of Asia in Beauty and Size". From New Testament times until the present day, Smyrna has remained one of the largest and busiest centres of trade and commerce in the region.

(summary by Bro David Evans, Logos, July 1989, p.296)

### **Summary of the Letter to Smyrna:**

- v8 Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ
- v9 The Ecclesia commended
- v10 Exhortation
- v11 He that overcometh

### **VERSE 8: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ**

### Verse 8

"And unto the angel of the ecclesia in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive;"

"The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this..." (NASB)

The word "Smyrna" in the Greek is derived from "myrrh" meaning bitter (eg. John 19v39). Myrrh is used in Scripture to symbolise bitterness and suffering - It is resin from a plant used in the holy anointing oil in Exod 30v30. This was used to anoint the High Priest and the Sons of the High Priest. The Lord Jesus Christ is the High Priest, and he was going to be anointed by the faithful at Smyrna. Remember that the vision of Chapter 1 is a similar scene to the High Priest in the tabernacle walking in the midst of the lampstands.

### "the first and the last, which was dead and is alive" -

This is a title of Jesus Christ himself. See notes on **Rev 1v4**: "from him which is, and which was, and which is to come" (page 39) and **Rev 1v8**: "I am Alpha & Omega" (page 47).

The title is also taken however from the Son of Man vision in **Rev 1v17-18**. Read the notes at the bottom of page 67. It is simply stating that God is revealed FIRSTLY in Jesus Christ, and SECONDLY in the Saints.

There is a slight change however compared with **Rev 1v18**. There he begins with "I am he that <u>liveth</u>, and was dead, and ...am alive for evermore." However in the letter to Smyrna he says that he "was <u>dead</u> and is alive..." He is the "Lamb as it had been slain" who is now risen. Likewise, those in Smyrna who were to be killed would follow in the Lord's footsteps.

This title is highly relevant to their situation. They were told in **verse 10** to be "faithful unto death", indicating the amount of persecution they were suffering. The basic theme of this letter to Smyrna is therefore VICTORY OVER DEATH. To the ecclesia at Smyrna, life and death were real issues.

The Lord is in effect saying to them, "Don't worry about those who might kill you now - they also killed me, but now I am alive!" They were being exhorted to follow the example of Jesus Christ:

- Acts 26v23 "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."
- **Rom 8v29** "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be **the firstborn** among many brethren."
- **Col 1v18** "And he is the head of the body, the ecclesia: who is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

The resurrection of Christ is therefore the guarantee of their resurrection.

What does it mean in 1 Cor 15v23 when Paul states that Christ is the "firstfruits"?

### ☐ OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND: Isaiah 41,44&48

The introductory title "first and the last" indicates the way in which Yahweh reveals himself - firstly in Jesus Christ, and finally in the saints. The title is taken from Isaiah 41,44&48.

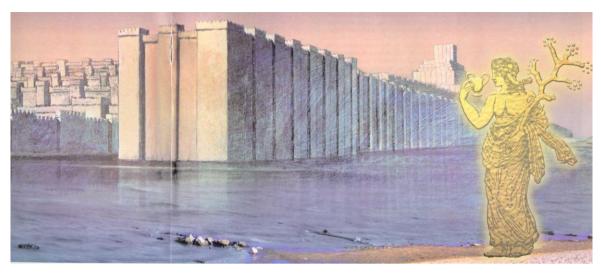
It is important that we read through these chapters. If we are not familiar with Isaiah, it may help to read them firstly with a version such as the NIV.

These chapters are all about comfort and encouragement for the true believers. They are also all about the constancy and everlasting nature of Yahweh. These chapters of comfort were very relevant to the ecclesia in Smyrna. The unchangeable nature of Yahweh is revealed in **Isaiah 41,44&48**.

The title "first and the last" is given to Yahweh 3 times in Isaiah (Isa. 41v4; 44v6; 48v12). These quotes indicate that Yahweh is firstly manifest in His Son, Jesus Christ, and secondly in His adopted sons, the Saints of the future age. Isaiah 41 is all about the destruction of Babylon by Cyrus the Persian. This chapter typified (in a final sense) the Lord Jesus Christ destroying Babylon the Great (Rev 17-19). We also read of Babylon's demise and Israel's redemption in Isaiah 44v21-28;45v1-4. These verses describe Babylon's destruction by Cyrus. Isaiah 48 is also a chapter about Israel's deliverance from Babylon. There are many latter-day overtones in these chapters, indicating that Israel will one day be given victory over their persecutors - Babylon the Great.

For further reading on the latter-day aspect of Babylon in Isaiah's prophecy, read *Rome & Jerusalem*, by Bro Graham Pearce (pages 9-18).

Notice that "10 days tribulation" is indicated in this letter to Smyrna in v10. This is an obvious allusion to Daniel and his 3 friends who refused the meat and wine of Babylon in Daniel 1. The brethren in Smyrna were in effect doing exactly the same thing. They refused to offer incense to the Roman idols in that city. The title of the "first and the last ones" is therefore used for the ecclesia at Smyrna as comfort and consolation. In alluding back to Isaiah 41, 44&48 and Daniel 1, Christ is guaranteeing that Yahweh is with them. He is assuring them that as Yahweh destroyed Babylon in Daniel's day, he will also one day destroy Rome. There are many historical records which show that early Christians believed Rome to be the Apocalyptic Babylon.



**Babylon on the Euphrates** - Just as Yahweh brought judgement against Babylon in Old Testament times, He will likewise destroy Babylon the Great. Despite Babylon's huge walls and defences, it fell in one hour (**Isa 14, 24, 41, 44-45, 48; Jer 50-51**). Likewise Rome will also be destroyed (**Rev 14v7**, "for the hour of his judgement is come..."). This is the encouragement given to Smyrna.

#### **■ MOTES**

**KEY POINT:** Yahweh has already destroyed Babylon on the Euphrates. Likewise He will destroy the great harlot system of Babylon the Great (**Rev 14,17-19**). It was the Roman Catholic apostasy that has persecuted the true believers for so many centuries. **Smyrna typified those brethren and sisters who suffered for centuries after them.** Think about it. Who were the persecutors of the ecclesias in the Dark Ages? Exactly the same powers....

- The Roman Catholic Church The priests were just like the Judaising blasphemers in Smyrna. Roman Catholicism came out of Judaism (**Zech 5**).
- The Roman Authorities these were in league with the Catholic priests to throw them in prison and destroy them.

The introductory title of Christ alluded to Scriptures of comfort and consolation, which they would have really taken to heart.

How often when we write letters do we include spiritual upliftment which is highly relevant to those who will receive it? How often do we think to write cards to those of our friends who are in difficulty (or even those brethren and sisters who we don't know so well)? Will we think to do this even this week? Will we aim to help someone with some kind words, to encourage them towards the Kingdom? This is what Christ is doing in these letters.

### **VERSE 9: The ecclesia commended**

### Verse 9

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

To be in "tribulation" means that they were under pressure. See the notes on **Rev 1v9** at the top of page 48. These are the ones who inherit eternal life:

Rom 5v3-5 "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us."

Consider the following challenging words...

**2 Tim 3v12** "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

If these words of Paul are true, how do we receive persecution today?

This tribulation indicates endurance under pressure...

Rev 7v13-17 "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.... They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.... For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

### "and poverty, (but thou art rich)" -

Unlike Laodicea, this ecclesia was materially poverty stricken. **Luke 12** speaks about those who are rich in the goods of this world. Consider **verses 20-21**:

"God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God." (NIV)

Look at what the Lord says to this ecclesia compared with Laodicea. In what ways can we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven rather than treasures on earth? How do we become "rich toward God"?

Bro Bedwell makes the following comments in his book on the 7 ecclesias:

"The coupling of tribulation and poverty makes it more likely that their poverty was aggravated by, if not wholly due to, rampaging mobs who plundered their goods in the tribulation which had come on them (**Heb 10v34**)." (p. 38)

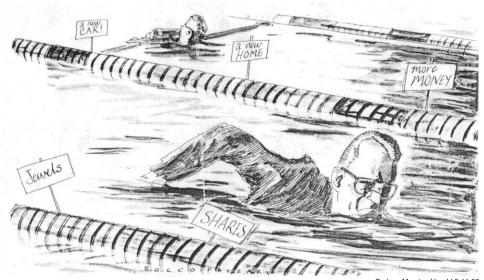
The brethren and sisters at Smyrna were just like the faithful spoken of in **2 Cor 6v10**: "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Consider also...

- **Isaiah 66v2** "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is **poor and of a contrite spirit**, and trembleth at my word."
- Matt 6v19-20 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
- Many workplaces are putting more and more pressure on us to work longer and longer hours, for more and more money. In many cases, the opportunity to earn lots of money is really tempting, particularly when a great amount of overtime is offered. It is becoming more difficult to say no to longer work hours, whether through the pressure of employers or due to the temptation of overtime. This inevitably leads to lack of time for Bible readings and study, as well as commitment to our families and the ecclesia. The quest for more money and more possessions is like a big whirlpool which catches anyone who gets too close. As the return of Christ gets closer and closer, the whirlpool is getting bigger and faster.
- M How can we possibly get out of the whirlpool, once we have been caught?
- How can we avoid being caught by the whirlpool in the first place?

 **■ NOTES** 

☑ It is really difficult to relate to the situation faced by those in Smyrna, given our prosperity in Australia. Society is in a continual race for more and more money and status, but it can never get enough. Where will it all end? The following cartoon is taken from a newspaper article which really sums up the situation today. Are we able to see this pointless race for what it is?

# Caught in the consumer arms race



Sydney Morning Herald 3.11.99

The truth is that most of us would prefer to work less - but not if it meant taking home less money. And particularly among professionals and other white-collar workers, we see plenty of cases of people working long hours in the hope of a promotion or a pay rise. So, although I don't doubt that bosses are cracking the whip harder these days, I don't think they are meeting much resistance from the troops.

What's more doubtful is whether it's worth it - whether working longer to make more money is doing much to make our lives more satisfying. Conventional economics assumes that the more our incomes rise, the more goods and services we're able to consume, the more satisfied we feel. And what is true for the individual is true for society as a whole - for "the economy". But, as Robert Frank of Cornell University tells us in his book *Luxury Fever* (published in the US by the Free Press), there is surprisingly little evidence to support this assumption....

The intriguing question is why our ever-increasing income and consumption are doing so little to increase our satisfaction....The trick is that we adapt to improvements in our circumstances as easily as we adapt to our setbacks. It isn't long before we take our increased affluence for granted....

Another deeply ingrained human characteristic is our pre-occupation with status and position. We care deeply about our position in the pecking order and most of us would like to improve our position, or at least avoid slipping back.... This incorrigible human pre-occupation with our relative position probably does much to explain why - although we don't like admitting it - so many of us are willing to work such long hours to increase our incomes (including, of course, the bosses themselves).

....When others retaliate by seeking to raise their own status, we get locked in a kind of consumers arms race. We all spend a lot of money trying to keep up, without any of us permanently ahead. So why do we keep playing this pointless game? Because we can't see that it's pointless.

(Ross Gittins, Sydney Morning Herald, 3.11.99)

Now we have compared the situation today with that in the ecclesia at Smyrna, we will now see that poverty was only the beginning of their problems....

### "blasphemy" -

This is the same word "blasphemy" as in **Rev 13v1,6**; **17v3.** However, the Greek word translated "blasphemy" actually means "to injure by speech" or "vilification" (Strongs). Bro Thomas says that "to blaspheme is to hurt one's good name, to speak ill, or to prejudice, of one." The blasphemy of saying we are Jews, when not, is defamatory and injurious to the name of Christ." (*Eureka* Vol. 1 p. 229) To blaspheme is to speak evil one against another (eg. **Eph 4v31**; **Matt 15v19**). Their words caused injury in some way to the believers. Could it have been that their opposition was taken up by the authorities, as described in **verse 10**?

### "of them which say they are Jews and are not" -

These are those who were Jews in name but who weren't spiritual Jews "inwardly" (Rom 2v28-29). True believers are called "Israelites indeed" and the "Israel of God" (John 1v47; Gal 6v16). True believers in Christ follow the faith of Abraham and walk after his ways (John 8v39; Rom 4v12,16).

Read **Acts 14v1-19**. This was a classic example of Judaisers who said they were Jews but they were not. True Jews are spiritual Jews.

It is suggested by some commentators that a specific group of brethren had removed themselves from the ecclesia, as indicated in **1 John 2v18-19**. Other commentators however believe that this group were actually Jews by descent, but who were not spiritual Jews. Whatever the case, these people were enemies of the true ecclesia.

It is possible to call ourselves "Christadelphian" while being the opposite. We always need to remember what it means to be "Brethren in Christ."

There is historical evidence to show that the Jews of Smyrna were very numerous and actually urged on the authorities to destroy the true believers. In one case, the Jews actually tried to forward on the execution of a Christian despite this "profaning" their Sabbath day.

# The "Synagogue of Satan"

The true hope of Israel (**Acts 28v20**) is a hope centred in the resurrection of the dead at Christ's return and one which does not seek for present power or wealth (**Acts 23v6**; **24v141,5**; **26v6-8**). There was constant endeavour on the part of some to impose the Law of Moses on Gentile converts (**Gal 3v2,3**), attempting to establish justification by works of Law. Such were blasphemers and perverters of the Gospel, enemies of the cross of Christ (**Phil 3v18**). Whatever was the exact nature of the doctrine that they were promulgating in Smyrna, one thing is certain: they were opposed to the true brethren, whose hope was in future glory at the resurrection, and compromised the Truth by not practising the things for which they claimed to stand.

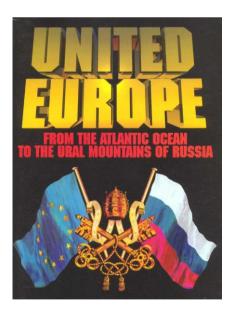
The term "Synagogue of Satan" is strongly suggestive of the fact that they were a "judaising" element, although in the symbology of the Apocalypse, it may not necessarily imply that they were advocating a return to the Law of Moses, but rather that they were having the same divisive effect as Judaisers had in places like Galatia, Ephesus, etc. which prompted Paul to write to them.

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, p. 19)

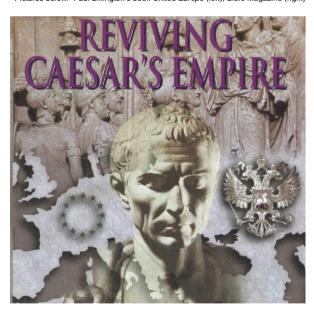
## "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life'



The letters to the 7 ecclesias are typical of all ecclesias during the "times of the Gentiles." The ecclesia at Smyrna is obviously typical of those faithful brethren and sisters who suffered under the persecution of the Papacy. The false religious leaders of the Apostasy allied themselves with the Roman authorities to put true believers to death. Believers were cast into prison, tried and given tribulation, yet they remained faithful unto death. Who would have thought that these 4 verses in **Revelation 2** would have been so highly relevant for so many centuries? The above picture is taken from Bro Alan Eyre's book *The Protestors*, and shows Brother Michael Sattler being thrown into the flames during the 1500's. This was a common sight in those days, as it had been in Smyrna in earlier times.



Pictures below: Paul Billington's book *United Europe* (left), Bible Magazine (right)



Another Holy Roman Empire in Western Europe and the expansion of the Church in Eastern Europe & Russia represents the modern-day revival of BABYLON THE GREAT. This is the same Roman power which put our brethren to death during the dark ages. The Papacy and Eastern Church are coming together in an unholy alliance. They will be pitted against Jesus Christ and the Saints at Armageddon (Rev 16v16) and its aftermath in the abyss of Europe (Rev 17-19). At this time, the brethren of Smyrna and those who followed in their steps will witness fulfilment of the Divine title "the first and the last" (Isaiah 41v4; 44v6; 48v12). The cry will go out from the Saints, "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans..." (Isaiah 48v20; Rev 18v4).

# The treachery of the Jews

The consistency of this wicked performance with their behaviour at the trials and crucifixion of the Christ (when their hatred of the Son of God overrode all their religious, legal scruples) leads one to believe that they were very likely of the same vicious and treacherous nature in the days of the apostle John. The apostle Paul informs of the intense zeal and persecution by the Jews of Ephesus (see Acts 19v9,13,33 [1 Tim 1v20; 2 Tim 4v14]; 20v19; 21v27). We may well imagine that bitterness would be extended to their fellows in other cities like Smyrna when the apostle visited them, just as had occurred in the neighbouring province of Galatia several years before (Acts 14v19).

We can picture the scene in Smyrna. In a corner of the city we have a small, poor, but courageous ecclesia, faithfully proclaiming the Truth despite the despotic persecutions heaped upon them by the envious Jewish synagogue. These people knew the Scriptures indeed, and resented bitterly that "unclean" Gentiles were proclaiming a message from *their* oracles! (Rom 3v1-2). When Jewish proselytes were persuaded by the gospel, and even some of their own Jewish members, their feelings rose to violent levels. No doubt in Smyrna as in so many other places they then consorted with the authorities or intrigued with the "crude fellows of the baser sort" to stir up persecution against the faithful and harmless brethren of the ecclesia (cp. Acts 14v5; 17v5).

The Spirit looks down upon both these assemblies and commends the poor and oppressed for their faith and condemns the presumptuous oppressors; unrelated to God, they were, in fact, the synagogue of Satan! Such open declarations must have cheered the hearts of the brethren!

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, pgs. 24-25)

### "the synagogue of Satan" -

The synagogue of Satan literally means "the assembly of the adversary" (as it is translated in the Diaglot).

The synagogue of Satan are also found to be causing problems with the ecclesia at Philadelphia (see the notes on **Rev 3v9**). It appears that this group is completely separate to the true ecclesia because the word "synagogue" is used. This refers to "an assemblage of persons" (Strongs) and is elsewhere translated as "congregation" and "assembly" (eg. **James 2v2**). The word is used all throughout the New Testament to describe an assembly of Jews (eg. **Matt 6v2.5: 23v6.34: Luke 21v12**).

Satan is used approx. 54 times in the Scriptures and approx. 50% of the time with the definite article (eg. **Job** & **Zechariah**). It simply means *adversary*.

- What are some of the ways we receive persecution and testing from adversaries? What is the best way to approach this antagonism?
- It is not easy to make a confident stand at work or school, particularly if we are the only ones. Sometimes we have to even make a stand for what is right amongst our young people's group. This is exactly what Daniel and his 3 friends had to do (**Daniel 1**). It is so important that we stand up for our Lord, despite the accusations that may be against us (while at the same time remembering that we do this out of love for Christ and not in condemnation of others).

NOTES

# Jews and Money in the city of Smyrna

Because of its commercial importance in the Roman world as a city of trade, opportunities for merchants abounded. Hence, many Jews were attracted to the city to grasp these opportunities to make a living as merchants. Consequently a large Jewish community with their synagogues was established in the city. However, these Jews knew that their peaceful pursuit of business depended upon an unstrained relationship with a city whose religion was Rome and whose god was Caesar. They were prepared to seek the peace of these pagans at the cost of true service to Yahweh, thus striving to serve the God of Israel and Mammon - yet where conflict between the two arose, they sided with the Mammon of this world!

Such a community, though claiming to by Jews, were "blasphemers" (v9). Their claims were false, for in action they were prepared to deny their God. Hence, in his letter to the ecclesia, Jesus terms them "the synagogue of the adversary (Satan)" (Rev 2v9).

It was the faithless Jews who denounced the members of the true ecclesia before the authorities, calling them disloyal subjects of Caesar, and who encouraged the authorities to punish them for treason against Caesar.

Such denied Christ in order to enjoy the pursuits of worldly mammon. In the materialism of this age, we can easily repeat their example! Like them, some might criticise those who make a firm stand against this society for conscience sake and who refrain from engaging in the "idol" worship of this godless generation.

(summary by Bro David Evans, Logos, July 1989, p.297)

### **VERSE 10: Exhortation**

### Verse 10

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days...." (NASB)

To be "tried" means to be severely tested, as Jesus was by the Pharisees (eg. Matt 16v1), when God tested Abraham (Gen 22v1) and Israel (eg. Exod 16v4) and Hezekiah (2 Chron 32v31)

### "The devil shall cast some of you into prison..."

This "devil" is a *false accuser* (Greek "diabolos"). The devil here is obviously the power which had control over the prisons. At this time, this was the Roman authorities. In **Ephesians 6v11-12**, the Roman authorities are named "the devil". Nero was "the devil" who was "as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 **Pet 5v8**). The Roman government is described in **Rev 12v9** as "the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world..."

The "devil" in Revelation generally symbolises the Roman Empire in its various forms. Consider what we also read in **Revelation 12** and similar language used in **1 Peter** and **Ephesians**. These quotes indicate that the Roman authorities were false accusers or slanderers of the Brethren and Sisters.

 **■ NOTES** 

### **Revelation 12v4**

#### 1 Peter 5v8

"...the dragon stood before the woman... for to *devour* her child." "...be vigilant; because your adversary (Satan) and the **Devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he he may **devour**...knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in **your brethren**."

#### **Revelation 12v9**

### Eph 6v11,12

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the *Devil* and *Satan*, *which deceiveth the whole world...* for the accuser of *our brethren* is cast down."

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of *the Devil*. For we wrestle... against the *rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*" (Note: Margin, "in the heavenly")

Source: Paul Billington, Revelation for Christ's servants today (page 61).

Bro Roberts says that "this shows who the devil was in Christ's view of things. The authorities that wielded powers of imprisonment and death were, collectively, the devil." (*Thirteen lectures on the Apocalypse*, page 17)

We therefore have persecution and pressure being brought to bear not only from the Synagogue of Satan, but also from the Roman Authorities. It has been suggested by some commentators that there may have even been some collusion between the Jewish community and the Roman authorities to bring about persecution on the ecclesia. This appears highly likely.

- Where in the Bible is this word diabolos translated as "false accusers"?
- How could we ourselves be false accusers?

Bro Thomas records an incident in history of a man named Polycarp, a member of the ecclesia at Smyrna, who was put to death for his beliefs. The people demanded that he be brought to the stadium and slain because he would not denounce Christ and therefore call Caesar "Lord". It is recorded of others also who were taken away to be slain by wild beasts because they would not renounce their religion.

Read the moving account by Bro Thomas on the death of Polycarp in *Eureka*, Vol. 1 pages 251-253.

### "tribulation ten days" -

The "tribulation ten days" is obviously a symbolic time period. Based on the day for a year principle (**Num 14v34**, **Ezek 4v6**), there was a period of 10 years of horrendous persecution under the reign of Emperor Trajan (110-120AD). This period of persecution was around 15 years after Christ gave the letter.

### LESSONS FOR OUR DAYS

Young people, many thousands have actually died for the name of Christ, giving their life like their Master, refusing to deny his name or recant the faith.

How do you feel about your service to Christ? Do you think you can take a position alongside men and women like the apostle John and Polycarp? Do you think we are too soft in these very affluent days? Do you make criticism when the ecclesial outing is not perfectly organised or a meeting goes a little late or we have to fill in for another who may have forgotten his responsibility? Alongside the above example we really ought never to complain but in **thankfulness** for the great liberties provided by government for the wide and bold proclamation of the Truth, for meeting together without fear, and for the compelling signs of the times, for all these things and more, we should be always rejoicing in the work of God and faithfully upholding His Name. **Be positive**; resist and ignore the spirit of complaint and murmuring. Let Polycarp's example be an inspiration to us!

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, pgs. 24-25)

NOTES

## SMYRNA - CENTRE OF EMPEROR WORSHIP

In AD26 Smyrna successfully competed with the major cities of Asia, including Ephesus and Sardis, for the right to erect a temple to the god Tiberius, the reigning emperor. Emperor worship was at first frowned upon by the emperors, but they later realised the advantages which could accrue from it and by the time John wrote it was compulsory for all the subject peoples of the empire. Rome tolerated the many gods worshipped by its subjects provided they added the worship of the Emperor to that of their other gods. This they had no difficulty in doing. The benefit to Rome of Emperor worship was that it was the one thing all its subjects had in common and thus helped to unify the various races of the empire.

It had become a test of loyalty to Rome. People burned incense on the altar dedicated to the Emperor and called him "lord". Refusal to do so marked the person as a traitor or rebel worthy of death. Rome had exempted the Jews from this test but the Christians lost this immunity once Rome ceased to regard them as a Jewish sect. They could not burn incense on Caesar's altar and say "Caesar is Lord" because they called Jesus "Lord" and refused to give the title to any other man. For this reason, Christians throughout the empire were liable to persecution from the authorities. This was particularly so in Smyrna which, intensely loyal to Rome and a centre of Emperor worship, would be expected vigorously to apply this test of loyalty to Rome.... Informers, Jewish or Pagan, incited the authorities against the believers. This was especially true of Jews who, themselves exempt from this test of loyalty, could easily use it or incite its use against the brethren and sisters. Christianity in Smyrna was a dangerous profession often resulting in death by burning, crucifixion or wild beasts.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, The letters to the 7 Churches of Asia, pgs 35-36)

# ☑ We also have the opportunity to worship the "gods" of this world and call them "lord".....

At the time of writing, Australia has just won *another* major world sporting event, and the players are being lauded like "gods" in the media. It is so easy to get caught up in all this because we as Australians are competitive by nature and naturally "sports mad". Sport in itself is actually good for the body, and is a healthy activity of real value for a time (1 Tim 4v8). However, the continual worship of sportsmen and women is completely against what God is looking for in His Saints. A recent *front page* newspaper headline simply said "THERE IS A GOD" - with accompanying picture of Shane Warne. The world admits it. These days the football codes play Friday night, Saturday afternoon, Saturday night, and then 2 or 3 games on a Sunday, and even mid-week. When one game finishes, the next one begins. When the footy is finally over, the tennis begins, then the cricket overseas, then the early morning soccer. Many of us would have heard our workmates or those at school complain that there is no time to sleep any more at night because of the feast of sporting entertainment.

Because sport is not actually evil *in itself*, it is easy to get sucked in to the vortex of the sporting merry-go-round. So many today are spending night after night, day after day, and month after month watching sports and giving *hundreds of hours of time* towards a crown that *fades away*. Those in Smyrna were offered **a crown which never fades**. It is also easy to get caught up in the popular TV shows and movie stars which every night cause *"the love of many to wax cold"* (Matt 24v12). Instead, we need to develop in us *the love of Christ*, which is eternal.

Everyone seems to be baffled as to why so many of us are all "just so busy" and why it is increasingly difficult to talk together about the Word. Believe it or not, we will never become enthused about the Truth unless we give time to **prayerful Bible reading, study and meditation**. On the surface, it seems so simple, but because the "gods" of this world can take up so much of our time, God's Word is left on the shelf. If we were really honest we would admit that this poses one of the greatest challenges for young people today. How will we respond in the Kingdom when the brethren of Smyrna ask us what it was like to live at the time just before Christ's return, given the freedoms we have today?

#### "crown of life" -

The "crown of life" here is the Greek "Stephanos" or the wreath of victory. This crown was also promised to the ecclesia in Philadelphia. For very important comments on this wreath see notes on **Rev 3v11** and a picture of the wreath.

There are many important similarities between the ecclesias of Smyrna and Philadelphia. For an interesting summary on this, refer to notes on **Rev 3v7**.

#### Bro Mansfield comments:

"To obtain that crown requires personal discipline (1 Cor 9v25), and respect for laws set down (2 Tim 2v5). The crown promised is fadeless (1 Pet 5v4), and relates to the future award (2 Tim 4v8; James 1v12), but it can be stolen (Rev 3v11)." (Apocalypse Epitomised, page 46)

In **Rev 14v14-16** we have a vision of the saints wearing the *golden crown* (*stephanos*) of victory. These verses give us a vision of the nations being reaped at the battle of Armageddon (cp. **Rev 16v16**, **Joel 3**). He who executes the judgement is said to be "like unto the Son of Man" (**Rev 14v14**). This is symbolic of the multitudinous Christ body - the very vision found back in **Rev 1v13-16**. This is the first phase of judgement upon Babylon the Great - the latter-day Roman power. It was Rome who was casting those in the ecclesia into prison. Yahweh promises Smyrna in this letter that the faithful remnant will be given VICTORY OVER ROME. This is symbolised by the *victory wreath*.

# JUDGEMENT UPON THE ROMAN 'EARTH



painting by Bro Simon Sawell

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

(Rev 14v14-16)

 **■ NOTES** 

"be thou faithful unto death ... " -

**FAITHFULNESS IS A KEY ISSUE.** There is a deliberate comparison here with the letter to Laodicea (**Rev 3v14-22**). Jesus describes himself to the Laodiceans as "the faithful and true witness" (**3v14**). He is described in **Rev 19v11** as he who is "called Faithful and True". Laodicea had been an *unfaithful bride*, and much of that letter is based on the book of **Hosea**. In this respect, see the notes on **Rev 3v14**. Consider Christ's earlier words...

Matt 17v25 "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

### **VERSE 11: He that overcometh**

### Verse 11

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias, He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

The first comment is given at the end of all 7 letters to the ecclesias - See the notes on **Rev 2v7** at the top of page 87.

"He that overcometh" - Refer to important notes in the Introduction (Part 3) on overcoming the world, pages 28-31.

"not be hurt of the second death" -

This second death is that described in **Rev 20v6**. Those who suffer the second death are those who die for the second time after being rejected at the judgement seat of Christ:

- Rev 20v14 tells us that the second death is the lake of fire.
- Rev 19v20 tells us that in the lake of fire is the Beast and the False Prophet.
- Rev 21v8 tells us that all those who are evil are cast into this lake of fire.

From these verses, it appears that those who are rejected at the judgement seat will be cast into the darkness of Catholic Europe where the Papacy suffers the fiery judgements of Yahweh. The destruction of Sodom typifies the destruction of Babylon the Great. The Beast symbolises the Holy Roman Empire in Western Europe, while the False Prophet symbolises the Papacy. This False prophet system is also symbolised in **Rev 17** by the great harlot.

To be *not hurt of the second death* therefore means that those in Smyrna will be given eternal life at the judgement seat of Christ.

Why does Christ talk about the "second death" here rather than just say that they will be given eternal life? Because many in Smyrna would be sentenced to DEATH by the Roman authorities. Also, the allusion to Babylon's destruction in the title of **verse 8** would give them confidence that Yahweh would also destroy Rome. The very power which was persecuting them would likewise be destroyed at the time of "the second death".

The Lord Jesus Christ is guaranteeing those in this ecclesia that if they were faithful unto death, then they would be granted immortality:

1 John 4v16-17 "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement..."

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die...."

(Jesus's words to Martha in John 11v25-26)

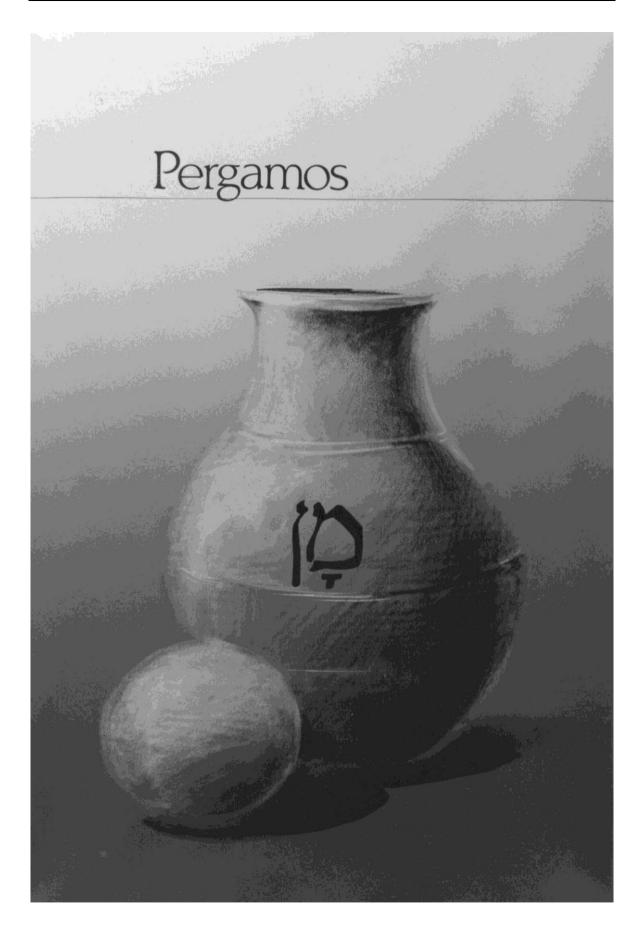
# **NOTES**



Painting by Bro Simon Sawell

The "second death" indicates eternal death (Rev 20v6). The Beast and the False prophet are thrown into this fiery abyss (Rev 19v20). The false religious systems will be destroyed at the beginning of the Kingdom. The dragon however is "bound" for 1000 years at this time (Rev 20v2-3). The dragon symbolises the military power of Rome. The dragon has gone through many different phases during history. You can destroy a religious system but you cannot destroy serpent aggression until human nature is completely destroyed. All who possess human nature have this potential within them. The dragon is released again at the end of the 1000 years. Again, the military power of the dragon will come from the areas of Gog and Magog, just as it had done 1000 years before (Rev 20v7-8). At the end of the 1000 years, the dragon will be destroyed (Rev 20v10).

# **NOTES**



- $\operatorname{\mathscr{L}}$  This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- ☐ This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

# Revelation 2v12-17 LETTER TO THE ECCLESIA AT PERGAMOS

**Eureka Vol 1, p. 265-316** 

**☐** Old Testament Background: Numbers 22-25

# PERGAMOS - The place of Satan's throne



Above is a symbolic depiction of **Pagan Rome** through the eyes of the Apocalypse. The Roman Empire is here symbolised by a **Great Red Dragon**, styled in **Revelation 12v9** "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan". It was just another phase of Daniel's 4th Beast (**Dan 7v7-8**). This beast was fierce and it devoured the faithful (**1 Pet 5v8**; **Rev 2v13**). Its 7 heads represent the 7 hills of Rome (**Rev 17v9**). The 10 horns = 10 kingdoms into which it would eventually break up (**Rev 17v12**). Pergamos was the headquarters of the Roman Empire for many years before the time of Christ. The importance of the city continued on through to the time this letter was written. (Painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

**Pergamos** was one of the most spectacular cities in Asia Minor in the first century. It boasted imaginative town planning, and a tradition of cultural patronage. Its theatre was world-renowned, and its ruins still remain to entrance the traveller and to recall days of former glory. From about BC 280 until BC 133, Pergamos was the seat of an independent kingdom, but its days of greatest importance began with the reign of Attalus I (BC 241-197) whose pro-Roman policies were continued by his successors.... The last king, Attalus III (BC 138-133) bequeathed his kingdom to Rome - and from thence Pergamos served as the capital of the Roman province of Asia; but the golden age of the city had passed. Because it was not located on any trade route, it enjoyed little commercial importance.

It was the centre for important pagan worship, which, with the emperor worship established there, made the city a notable headquarters for religious devotions. Rev 2v13 refers to Pergamos as "where Satan's seat is." The old Babylonish sorcery and worship found ready acceptance by the populace. At a time when paganism ruled, participation in emperor worship was made compulsory, and became a test of a citizen's loyalty to Rome. Refusal to participate therein was often the reason for persecution and martyrdom. Christians from any northern area of the province were usually brought to Pergamos for trial. The Truth struggled in Pergamos.

(summary by Logos Magazine, March 1989)

# Summary of the Letter to Pergamos

v12 Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ

v13 The Ecclesia commended

v14-15 Wrong doctrine condemned

v16 Exhortation

v17 He that overcometh

# **VERSE 12: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ**

# Verse 12

"And to the angel of the ecclesia in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;"

This is a dramatic opening. He "which has the sharp sword with 2 edges" is Jesus Christ himself, who is finally revealed in a perfect body of believers. The title is drawn from **Rev 1v16** and is *highly relevant* to the situation in Pergamos as we will see. Pergamos was an ecclesia burdened down by a group within their number who encouraged fornication and the eating of things sacrificed to idols.

There are 2 types of swords mentioned in the Greek New Testament. One is a long sword and the other is a short sword.

The *long sword* (Gk. *rhomphaia*) is used here in **Rev 2v12** and also **v16** as it is also in **Luke 2v35**; **Rev 6v8 & 19v15,21**. It is this sword that is used to *execute judgement upon the nations*. This is why it is used in the context of destroying the Papacy in **Revelation 19**. Bro Thomas therefore often translates this sword as being a "sharp double-edged longsword."

The **short sword** (Gk. *machaira*) is used symbolically (or metaphorically) in **Eph 6v17** & **Heb 4v12**. This sword represents the powerful teaching of the Spirit Word. It is a short sword because it is one which is used at close quarters. We have to deal with sin in our own nature. Sin is a moral problem, not a physical one. The problem we all face is *the devil within*, not a supernatural devil external to us. "The devil" *without* symbolised the Roman authority in these letters, not a supernatural monster.

It is not really correct to use these 2 words for "sword" interchangeably, however there is a link between them. The *machaira* (symbolising the Word of God) helps us to discern between that which is fleshly and that which is spiritual (eg. **Heb 4v12** cp. **Heb 5v13-14**). This is what the Word does - it enables us to see the world from God's viewpoint compared with man's viewpoint.

☑ The Saints will only be given authority to judge nations with the *rhomphaia* if they have used the *machaira* on themselves previously. When Christ sets up his Kingdom, there is no way we can destroy the ways of the flesh if we enjoy indulging in the flesh now. We cannot love the things of this world now and destroy them in the Kingdom. Clearly this would be nonsense.

The destruction of evil will only be done by those who hate evil. Ironically, the act of destroying evil in the Kingdom age will be done by the meek and gentle followers of Christ who love purity. This is why at first it may be in our mouth as sweet as honey but in the execution it will be bitter (**Rev 10v9**).

- **1 John 2v15** "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
- Psalm 11v5 "The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth."

**Phil 4v8** "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true... honest... just... pure... lovely... of good report... if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

☑ The world today gains great *enjoyment* out of violence and immorality. Yahweh however hates violence and immorality. The Saints will be given the role of destroying this evil in the Kingdom. We therefore need to develop a character which is as close as possible to Yahweh's character. Only those who work towards this goal can be given immortality in the Kingdom Age. The Word of God reveals Yahweh's character. This is why it is said of Christ that "his name is called the Word of God" (Rev 19v14) and on this basis he smites the nations (Rev 19v15).

Christ will have *authority* to judge because he is Son of Man. See the notes on this in **Rev 1v13**, at the bottom of page 55.

The sword of judgement (the long sword) is often found in the Hebrew Old Testament and is the equivalent to the Greek *rhomphaia* (eg. **Gen 3v24**).

In **verse 16** it is says that Jesus Christ will "fight against them with the sword of (his) mouth". This means that he will bring judgement upon the Apostasy.

# **VERSE 13: The Ecclesia commended**

## Verse 13

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."

"even where the adversary's seat is" - The Kingdom of Pergamum was the centre of Rome's power in Asia Minor. It is possible that Antipas was slain by the Roman authority. This word "seat" is found also in Rev 13v2, 16v10 to represent the throne of Roman government (Strongs says that this word means "...a throne, by implication power"). Elsewhere in the New Testament, this "throne" refers to Yahweh's throne. The Kingdom of men however had set up their own throne of government.

There appears to be a similarity with the Ecclesia at Smyrna here, where the Roman authorities persecuted the believers.

# "thou holdest fast my name" -

This word "hold fast" also occurs in **Rev 2v1,14,15,25; 3v11; 7v1; 20v2**. The Greek indicates might and strength in the same way as one would hold on to something very tightly, not letting go.

To hold fast to "the name" of Jesus Christ is to understand the purpose of God revealed in that name (**John 17v3**). The name of Jesus is really the Yahweh name (**Exod 3v14**) because he perfectly manifested the character of his Father. "Jesus" is the Hebrew "Yahshua" (Joshua) meaning "Yahweh will save". His name means **Yah** ("He who will be") **will save** ("Shua"). The Saints are those who have responded to Christ's prayer to be "at one" with God, even as he is with his Father (**John 17**). The Saints are called out of the Gentiles to be "a people for his name" (**Acts 15v14**).

See further notes on "the name" under Rev 3v12 in the letter to Philadelphia.

How can we "hold fast to the name" today?

#### NOTES

# "hast not denied my faith" -

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom 10v17). We therefore develop faith from the application of our minds to God's Word. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the assured expectation of things unseen (Heb 11v1). We are saved by grace, through faith (Eph 2v8). Our faith is revealed by our works because faith without works is dead (James 2v17-18). By faith, believers are moved to action (Hebrews 11). They see the importance of a future city rather than the present world (Heb 12v22).

How can we apply this lesson in our lives today?

# "Antipas was my faithful martyr" -

The name of "Antipas" means "against all". This was either an individual or a group of brethren who were against all the adversaries because of their beliefs.

In **Acts 22v20**, Stephen is also described as a "martyr" or a "witness". Antipas followed in the path of Jesus himself who is "the faithful witness" (**Rev 1v5**). The word "martyr" is translated "witness" in that verse. See the notes on the importance of witnessing in **Rev 1v9** (pages 48-49). See also notes on **Rev 3v14**.

# **VERSES 14-15: Wrong doctrine condemned**

# Verse 14

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

Christ disapproved of this ecclesia having fellowship with "them that hold the doctrine of Balaam" because of their corrupting influence (see **Rom 16v17-20**). Christ is speaking here to many of the faithful in the ecclesia who were nevertheless mistaken for allowing this doctrine in their meeting.

**2 John 2v9-10** "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God... If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Balaam's name means "waster of the people" which is exactly what he did.

# **□** OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND: Numbers 22-25

Why is this corruption called "the doctrine of Balaam"? We need to go back and read **Numbers 22** very carefully to get the full story. There we read the story of Balaam and how he perverted the Word of God to his own advantage (**v21-22**).

Balak was the King of Moab (**Num 22v4**). Balak summoned this Balaam to put a curse upon the Israelites:

"Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed." (Num 22v6, NIV).

Balak promised Balaam money and riches if he would curse Israel (v16-17).

A careful reading of **Num 22v20-21** indicates that while God agreed that Baalam could go to Balak, it was *only on one condition:* "if the men come to call thee..." The next morning Balaam rose up to go to Balak *without* the men coming to call him. He thus went ahead and did what he wanted to do, despite God's command to him. Deep down he knew what was right in God's eyes but he was money hungry. Bro Thomas says, "he professed a zeal for the word of Yahweh his God, while he was anxious to please the worshippers of Baal for reward... His points of character were covetousness, perverseness, presumptuousness, unrighteousness, a beguiler of unstable Israelites, and apostasy from the right way."

Balaam then "taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." He was not able to cast a curse upon the nation because he knew they were a blessed people (read **Num 23-24**). However, he knew how to bring **God's curse** upon them. He told Balak to send the Moabitish women down there and commit whoredom with the children of Israel (**Num 25**). As a result, God's curse came upon the people.

Read **Numbers 22** and see the application of this to the Ecclesia in Pergamos:

- · The ecclesia is symbolised by the ass
- The Balaamites are pushing the ecclesia in a way it doesn't want to go
- The ecclesia is being weighed down by Balaam
- The ecclesia sees Jesus Christ standing with the sharp sword
- Because of this vision, the ass talks and says to Balaam "Why?"
- Balaam's eyes are opened and he sees the drawn sword

The story of **Numbers 22** is therefore like a parable of what we see in the ecclesia at Pergamos. Jesus Christ is standing there with the sword of judgement, just like that angel was in **Num 22v31**.

Bro Thomas has a really good summary of this story on pages 288-290 of Eureka, Vol. 1. This is highly recommended reading.

# The "Doctrine of Baalam"

Balaam found it impossible to defeat the counsel of God in relation to Israel, but devised a means to bring the Divine curse upon the people. He taught Balak (whose name means *Waster*) to lure the Israelites from their separateness, by the seductive appeal of Moabitish women (see **Num 31v16**; **25v1**). The temptation was camouflaged under the guise of religion: "they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods" (**Num 25v2**), and so incurred the anger of Yahweh. The antitype of this is the teaching that the end justifies the means; and that it is legitimate to remove barriers of separateness from the world to win adherents to the truth. Thus the influence of Balaam was both lasting and disastrous.

(Bro HP Mansfield, Apocalypse Epitomised, page 49)

Therefore, in Pergamos, those who held these doctrines followed after the pattern of Balaam who was prepared to compromise with the world and seduce those who had the Truth.

- How could we twist the Word of God today to suit our own fleshly desires?
- How could some in the ecclesia today cast a stumbling block in the path of others, to tempt them to eat things sacrificed to idols and then "commit fornication"?
- How can we positively overcome this problem today?

NOTES

The events of **Numbers 22** are taken up by **Peter** and **Jude** in the context of false teachers that were entering into the ecclesia:

2 Pet 2v1,3 "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction... And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of vou..."

2 Pet 2v15-16 "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Baalam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with a man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet...."

"Woe unto them! for they have ● gone in the way of Cain, and end of the in the gran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and end of the perished in the gainsaying of Core."

Notice the increasing intensity of words used here by **Jude**. Cain was a murderer. Balaam was money hungry. Korah was power hungry.

**IMPORTANT:** It is highly recommended that we read the notes on pages 18-20 about the development of Apostasy in early Ecclesias. Look at the chart on page 19 showing that *the way of Cain* set the scene for all history.

"to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" -

See the notes on this in **Rev 2v20**. The doctrine of Balaam was actively taught and put into practise in Thyatira.

Paul says in **Colossians 3v5** that covetousness is idolatry and selfishness. In **Malachi 1v6-8** the people offered polluted bread upon God's altar. To "eat things sacrificed unto idols" symbolises believers being enticed to do things against their conscience (read **1 Corinthians 8**).

Fornication in **Num 25v1-2** is associated with the religious worship of the Moabites. This whoredom motivated Phineas to do away with 2 people who were blatantly defying God (**Num 25v11-18**). The symbol of "fornication" is used by James to symbolise indulging in the things of the world (**James 4v4**). The Apostate Church is symbolised by a harlot in **Rev 17v2** because she has engages in spiritual fornication with the world.

Baalam's actions certainly caused a *wasting of the people* because 24,000 of them were slain at Yahweh's word because of their wickedness (**Num 25v9**). Read **Numbers 25** and see the result of what Balaam had done. There was one man however who turned Yahweh's wrath away from the children of Israel - the faithful man Phinehas (**Num 25v10-13**).

We can learn from Phinehas's example today. We obviously are not called upon to cast a javelin through 2 people, as God is the one who will judge, as Jesus taught Peter (John 18v10-11). We are however responsible to save our fellow young people from the evil influences of the world. In our young peoples group there are many examples where the doctrine of Balaam may be encouraged and could even be practised. Who has the courage to stand against this evil, despite what may be said about us? The reason we need to stand up for what is right is because we love our Lord and we want our fellow young people in the Kingdom. Notice the reason why Phinehas was blessed by Yahweh:

"Because he was zealous for his God, and made an <u>atonement</u> for the children of Israel." (Num 25v13).

In other words, he did it to save his fellow Israelites. He did it because he loved them. We also need to have this attitude.

- What are some practical examples of occasions where we need to be a Phinehas today?
- How can we *positively* stand up for the Truth in very adverse circumstances, without being judgmental to our fellow young people?

# PAGANISM AND THE BELIEVER

The Balaamites rejected the need for absolute separation from such a society. They argued, as some in Corinth had a generation earlier, that an idol had no real existence and therefore a Christian's presence in its temple. even if he performed a formal act of worship, did not mean that he accepted the idol as a real god, even if his pagan host saw that as an act of compromise. And how could something that had no real existence make the flesh of an animal offered to it in sacrifice unfit for eating? disregarded the restrictions placed on Gentile believers by the apostolic council (Acts 15v20,29) and ignored Paul's warning that they could not "drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons" nor "partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Cor 10v21). They ought to have acted so that whether they ate or drank, they did all to the glory of God (10v31). This required them to "shun the worship of idols" (10v14). But this was not the only criterion by which they should have judged their actions. The liberty they claimed could "become a stumbling block to the weak", causing them to be destroyed (1 Cor 8v9-11). And so Paul wrote that if food caused his brother to stumble, he would refrain from eating meat.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, Letters to the 7 Churches of Asia, p.57)

☑ The issues confronting Pergamos are very real today. The media and entertainment industry knows that to attract attention, the essential ingredients are violence, immorality, coarse language and lewdness. Advertising is made to shock. Pornographic material on the internet is providing a terrible temptation for so many young people today. The Apostle Paul describes our last days as "perilous times" (2 Tim 3v1). We really need to be AWAKE to the reality of the evil influences that threaten us all. Tragically, those in Pergamos were not awake to these influences. This is one of the great lessons to be learnt from the letters to the 7 ecclesias. Jesus Christ sees the world as it is, despite what may go on behind closed doors.

We need to find positive solutions so that we can be amongst those in the ecclesias who **OVERCOME**. See notes on 'overcoming' on pgs. 28-31.

# THE SOLUTION?

Gal 5v16 "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"

**2 Tim 2v22** "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

- What are some of the *positive* activities we can involve ourselves in today, that help us overcome these evils by "walking in the Spirit"?
- What are some leisure activities that help us spend time with our fellow young people, and also give us an appreciation for God's creation?

# Smiting of the Baalamite Apostasy



"Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God."

(Rev 19v15)

# Verse 15

"So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate."

See notes on the Nicolaitanes in **verse 6**. Pergamos had a similar problem to Ephesus. The words "which I hate" are found in **v6** but are not in the original text in **v15**.

Whatever the reason for toleration, there had obviously been a lack of leadership in the ecclesia, the members of which should have been told that such evil teachers could not be allowed to remain in the ecclesia. This mistaken leniency was endangering the ecclesia and hence the command to the brethren and sisters who had not embraced the erroneous teaching was clear and unequivocal. "Repent then" - literally "Repent thou therefore"; cease as an ecclesia to tolerate these teachers as Ephesus had done. The ecclesia had the example of Israel at Peor, where drastic action was needed to avert God's anger. If the ecclesia failed to act, Jesus would come to the ecclesia quickly. The words "I will come to you" are the same as those to Ephesus in verse 5 but here "quickly" is added. The resolution of the problem brooked no delay. Jesus would come quickly to the ecclesia and war against the evil teachers with the sword of his mouth.

The different reactions to the Nicolaitanes at Ephesus and Pergamum show how difficult it was then to combine ecclesial discipline with love and understanding and the same is true today. But it is an ideal which we must strive to attain.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, Letters to the 7 Churches of Asia, pages 63-64)

# **VERSE 16: Exhortation**

# Verse 16

"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

Strong renders "quickly" as "shortly, i.e. without delay, soon, or (by surprise), suddenly, or (by implication) readily". The plea that Christ would come "quickly" is found 7 times in the Apocalypse (2v5,16, 3v11, 11v14, 22v7,12,20)

The "sword of my mouth" is the penetrating sword from the mouth of the "One like unto the Son of Man" (see notes on **verse 12**). Because the sword protrudes out of his mouth, it is symbolic of his destruction of the Papacy in **2 Thessalonians** and at the end of **Revelation**. This was an apostasy that developed from within the Truth itself....

2 Thess 2v7-10 "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives..." (NIV)

Rev 19v20-21 "And the beast was taken and with him the false prophet what wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

Rev 14v20 "And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of 1600 furlongs." (indicating Divine Judgement!)



'Blood to the horse bridles' (painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

# **VERSE 17: To him that overcometh**

## Verse 17

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

The first comment is given at the end of all 7 letters to the ecclesias - See the notes on **Rev 2v7** at the top of page 87. Also see the notes on **Rev 3v22**.

#### "He that overcometh" -

Refer to important notes in the Introduction (Part 3) on overcoming the world, pages 28-31. See also **Rev 2v7,11,17,26, 3v5,12,21** & **21v7**. At the end of all the exhortations to the ecclesias, there is the comment, "He that hath an ear...." See the notes on this in **Rev 3v22**.

# "THE HIDDEN MANNA"

The record in **Exodus 16** reveals 4 main stages in the giving of the manna in the wilderness:

- 1. Israel saw the glory of Yahweh appear in a cloud as they looked toward the wilderness. **v10**.
- 2. In the evening they received flesh to eat, v12-13
- 3. In the morning, after the dew had gone up, the bread from heaven appeared on the ground and the Israelites said "What is it?" (Heb. *mannah*, **v13-15**).
- 4. They beheld the glory and received the bread for 40 years until they came to the land of promise, **v35**

These events were types recorded for our admonition (1 Cor 10v1-11). They saw their fulfilment when the "true bread from heaven" appeared in the personage of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6v32).

- 1. Israel looked towards the wilderness and there they saw the fore-runner of the "true bread" declaring that the Glory of God was about to be revealed (John 1v23: Isa. 40v3-8).
- 2. In the "evening time" of the Mosaic age the "Lamb of God" or the "Word made Flesh" appeared to take away the sin of the world (**John 1v14;29**).
- 3. On the resurrection morn ("after the dew had gone up" Isa 26v19 see page 45), the true bread was revealed as that which giveth life unto the world (John 6v30-35). The one who was styled the "Word made Flesh" was now spirit nature and has showed the way that others should follow. The hidden manna is that life which is now hid with Christ in God (Col 3v3) but will be revealed after the resurrection.
- 4. A life-time of probation (40 years) partaking of the Living Word will bring a believer to "the promised land" ie. an end to the pilgrimage in the wilderness of life and an entry into the glories of the Kingdom.

The doctrine of Balaam caused many to fall in the wilderness as it did also in Pergamos but he that overcometh will be permitted to eat of the hidden manna. Those, in the wilderness, who saw the significance of the bread from heaven, would have resisted the Balaamites because the Word of God enabled them to discern the corrupting influence of the doctrine of Balaam. They did not perish by the Sword of Yahweh but were permitted to enter the land. The anti-type of these events is seen in the letter to Pergamos.

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, page 23)

 **■ MOTES** 

These points summarise the discussion by Bro Thomas on pages 309-314 of *Eureka*, Vol 1 on the "hidden manna". This section in *Eureka* is highly recommended reading.

**Exercise:** The above summary includes some key quotes that are worth marking in our margins for future reference. One way we can do this is to summarise the points in the margin at **Exodus 16**, then at each of the connecting quotes, write "refer to Exodus 16".

The "hidden manna" therefore symbolised eternal life...

**Deut 8v3** "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."

John 6v48-51 "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

# THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM IN PERGAMOS

Herein lay THE ANSWER to every problem in Pergamos. They needed to get back keenly to the Word of God, to the mind of Christ, that they might be able to overcome. Those who overcame, in this fashion, were therefore promised the "hidden manna", the GOAL of all their daily gathering and assimilating of the Word of God.

To mark the eternal life to which daily partaking of the "bread of life" pointed forward, a day's supply (ie. an omer) of manna was placed in a golden pot under the mercy seat within the Ark of the Covenant (**Exod 16v32-34**). To preserve the idea of immortality to which daily eating of God's Word would bring the saint, the manna within the golden pot never corrupted - it was "kept for your generations" (**Exod 16v33**). It spoke of eternal life. It was related to that which they daily partook yet was continually preserved of God. As day by day they laboured for the manna upon the ground, a faithful Israelite must have wished for that manna that was permanently within the Most Holy Place, in the presence of God.

He knew of it only by faith for no one, not even the High Priest, ever saw the golden pot of manna or the other items (Aaron's rod that budded and the tables of the Law - **Heb 9v4**) once they were deposited within the Ark of the Covenant. Sitting in the Ark and under the Mercy Seat, this manna was "hidden" in a little pot of gold for hundreds of years.

The meaning was beautiful. The Ark spoke of the presence and glory of God, of which Christ in glory was the fulfilment (John 1v14; James 2v1). He is also the "mercy seat", the "propitiation" (Heb 9v5; Rom 3v25). If one was ever to partake of the "hidden manna" (immortality) then he should have to go via the mercy seat just as there is "no other name given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4v12). "God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son (1 John 5v11; John 5v26). In faith we partake of it now but in reality only when faith is realised (the golden pot opened) and "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (Jn 6v51,63; 1 Pet 1v7; Lam 4v2). This 'eating' shall "change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil 3v21; 1 Cor 15v49; Psa 17v15). That life is yet concealed, but when the Lord returns we shall sup with him in immortality (1 Jn 3v2; 1 Cor 13v12; Rev 19v9; Lk 22v16).

(Bro Brian Luke, Sydney Youth Conference Notes 1987, page 39-40)

# "and I will give him a white stone" -

There appears to be no particular reference to the "white stone" in the Scriptures except for **Acts 26v10**, which Bro Mansfield suggests that the original Greek is "...I paid my *pebble* against them" or as the Diaglot says, "I gave my *vote* against them". It describes a vote as being *guilty* (a black stone) or *not-guilty* (a white stone). This comment may have been of real significance to the brethren such as Antipas would have received a black stone in the courts of the Roman Empire indicating their death. This is where we get the saying today that someone is "blackballed".

#### "a new name written" -

This is the name given to those who sing the new song (**Rev 5v9-10**). It is therefore not new in the sense of never having heard it before, but it is new in EXPERIENCE. To experience Yahweh's name means to partake of the Divine nature, both physically and mentally.

This promise is also given to those at Philadelphia (**Rev 3v12**) who had not denied Christ's name. Likewise in Pergamos, they had held fast to the name. They were therefore promised "a new name written" in this stone. This is the name engraved upon the foreheads of the Saints in the Kingdom age (**Rev 14v1**).

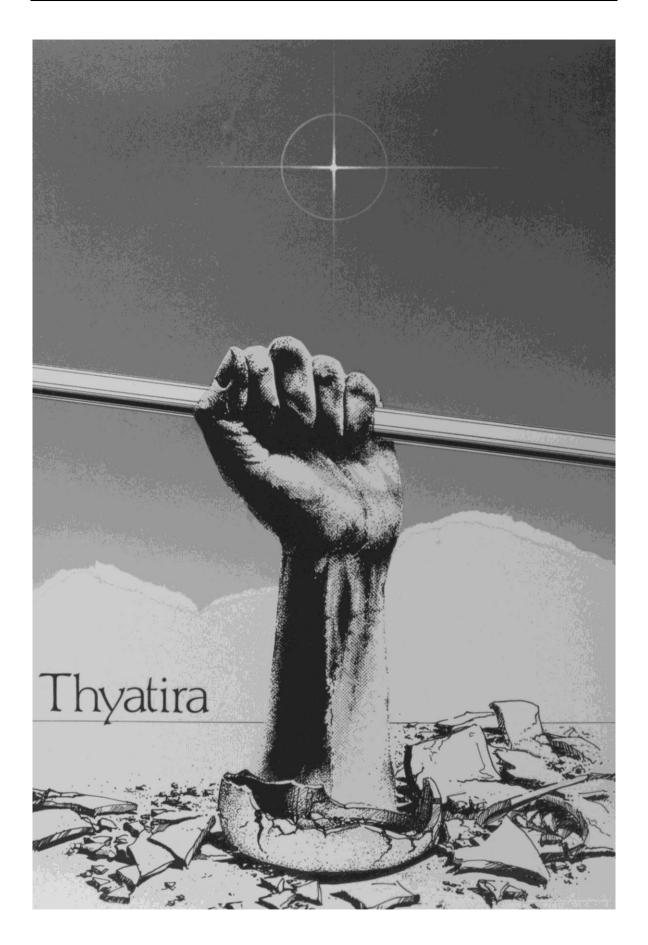
See further notes on "the new name" in Rev 3v12.

"With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

(Isaiah 11v4)

# **NOTES**

# **NOTES**



- This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- ☑ This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

# Revelation 2v18-29 LETTER TO THE ECCLESIA AT THYATIRA

Eureka Vol 1, p. 317-351

☐ Old Testament Background: 1 Kings 16-19,21; 2 Kings 9; Psalm 2

# THE CITY OF THYATIRA

Thyatira was probably the least notable of all the seven to whom the letters were sent. Furthermore, historians record almost nothing about the city in the previous two centuries before the receiving of the Apocalypse, so there are probably inferences within the letter that are lost to us in these days.

However, it was originally founded as a military fortress in the days of the Greek empire, not because it had any natural eminence but because it stood in the centre of a vale (the Lycus) which ran north and south and connected the very important valleys of the Hermus and Caicus Rivers. Nature has marked out this road, a very easy path, for the large tide of communication and trade between these two valleys. Hence, though the city was difficult to defend, a garrison was essential to stop the flow of the enemy, especially during the times of the Greek kings.

Thyatira was 80 kilometres east of Pergamos and was strongly linked to that city being a guard post to slow down invaders heading for Pergamos. The archaeologists have found much evidence of trade guilds, one such being the Guild of the Dyers, for which Thyatira was famous (cp. **Acts 16v14**). It seems that every skilled worker was a member of a union, and, as today, was expected to support his association. This feature may well have created a tendency to compromise the Truth, an attitude the Lord condemns in this letter.

## JEZEBEL - THE MAIN PROBLEM IN THIS ECCLESIA

Looking at the letter before us, we see that in the ecclesia at Thyatira, there were two women, the chaste virgin of Christ made of the faithful Lydia class (2 Cor 11v2) and the profligate followers of "Jezebel" who were obviously numerous and noisy and determined to adulterate the ecclesia in their worldly ways.

We see a real advance in apostasy in this letter. Ephesus was valiantly continuing the battle, Smyrna was clean, Pergamos had a minority within the ecclesia but in Thyatira the heretics had gained the upper hand and the faithful were unable alone to deal with the situation. So strong and determined was their influence that the Spirit borrows from the Old Testament the name of the most powerful and effective influence for evil that is ever found in the history of Israel, Jezebel, the Sidonian princess. The character and attire of Jezebel are so similar to that of the painted harlot of **seven-hilled Rome** that clearly this Apostasy in Thyatira was seen as the prototype of the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth that has plagued the Truth and its people since the days of Constantine (AD312).

The use of Jezebel as a type of this class in the ecclesia is fitting, for Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, gained power in Israel because of a mixed marriage (1 Kings 16v31). The daughter of King Ethbaal, she was a Sidonian princess, and a profound worshipper of Baal, and she succeeded in seducing Ahab to that worship (v32-33;21v25-26). Not only so, but she attempted to destroy all of Yahweh's prophets (18v4,13), and when Elijah succeeded in destroying instead the prophets of Baal (18v40) she determined to take *his* life (19v1-2). Elijah fled 'for his life' (v3), was sustained in the wilderness by angelic intervention (v4-7), and came to Horeb, the Mount of the Law, where in the significant events that occurred he was instructed that there remained 7000 true worshippers in Israel, and for this reason he was to return and continue to fight for the Truth. Once again, as is always the case, there was war between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen 3v15).

At the time when Christ directed this letter to the ecclesia in Thyatira, the Truth had degenerated to the point where the faithful class were confronted by a gaudy, power-drunk Jezebel-class. There must be war!

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 45,46)

#### NOTES

## **Summary of the Letter to Thyatira:**

v18	Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ
v19	The Ecclesia commended
v20-23	Disapproval - Jezebel tolerated
v24-25	Exhortation

v26-29 He that overcometh

# **VERSE 18: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ**

# Verse 18

"And unto the angel of the ecclesia in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;"

It is in Thyatira that Lydia was converted by Paul - she was most likely the first convert from this city:

Acts 16v14,15 "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptised, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."

This ecclesia now however appears to have 2 distinct classes of believers within it, those with the works of faith (v19) and those who were of Jezebel (v20-24). The Apocalypse was written 35 years later and much had developed in that time.

# "These things saith the Son of God" -

It is interesting that the Lord Jesus Christ is now referred to as the "Son of God" rather than Son of Man. This very much a new title to consider here. It is the only time in the Apocalypse that Jesus is styled the Son of God. He is the "Son of Man" in **Rev 1v13-16** & **Rev 14v14** because he is seen as overcoming the flesh. He now has received "authority" to reign because he is Son of Man. He has the "power" to reign because he is the Son of God.

John 5v25 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the **Son of God**: and they that hear shall live."

**John 5v27** "And hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the **Son of man**."

Matt 26v63,64 "And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Jesus was the true high priest. Here was the false high priest Caiaphas rending his clothes in the presence of the true high priest.

See the notes on Christ as "Son of Man" in Rev 1v13 (pages 54-55).

# "These things saith the Son of God"

"It has been seen in these previous verses (Rev 1v13-16) that the title is expressive of the multitudinous Christ in militant manifestation. In the vision of chapter 1 he is styled the Son of Man because this describes the qualities which fitted the man to partake of Divine nature. He had "overcome" or "obtained the dominion" over the flesh (Psa. 8, John 5v27 etc.) because having "overcome" he is vested with power from on high by which he will rule the nations (Rev 2v26,27). "Son of God" therefore, is expressive of the power and authority vested in Jesus Christ and his redeemed brethren, whereas "Son of Man" is descriptive of the same group, but drawing attention to their fitness to act as kings and priests. Consider the following comparisons of these 2 titles: Matt 16v13 with v16; Matt 26v63 with v64; John 1v49 with v51; John 5v25 with v27."

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, p.25)

Jesus Christ is also referred to as the SON OF GOD because he is the heir. Consider that 3 times in the letter to Thyatira, the Spirit refers back to **Psalm 2**. This Psalm is all about *inheritance*. Under Jewish law, when a father was going to give away his inheritance it would always go to the eldest son (eg. **Gen 27v4**). Jesus Christ is called the *firstborn* (**Col 1v18**, **Heb 1v1-6**, **Gal 4v4**). It is he who is the heir:

- **Heb 1v2** "In these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed **heir** of all things..."
- Heb 1v4-5 "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" (quoting Psalm 2)

The son gains the inheritance - he is the heir. That is why Jesus Christ is referred to in this letter as being the "Son of God" rather than just "Son of man" - it all has to do with inheritance! This is why **Psalm 2** is quoted so extensively:

Psa 2v1,2,6-8 "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed... Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them in pieces with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

What is the point? Jesus Christ is saying to those at Thyatira that he is the one who has been given the inheritance. He is the SON OF GOD. He is heir of all his Father's things. If they overcome he will give it all to them! There is a problem though - Jezebel is trying to take away their inheritance!! Just like Jezebel did to Naboth - She took away Naboth's inheritance.

#### □ OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND: 1 Kings 21

It is vital to read this as a background to the letter to Thyatira. Naboth would not give his vineyard away to King Ahab: "And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." (v3) Ahab was not real happy about this. Jezebel didn't have a problem though. To her it was simple. You just kill Naboth and his sons. This fixed everything as far as she was concerned. Likewise in Thyatira, they had Jezebel who was trying to take away their inheritance.

A vineyard is a pursuit that takes time and effort over many years. Israel is likened to a vineyard in Isaiah 5. It has taken thousands of years for Yahweh to work in this vineyard. In Mark 12 Jesus gives the parable of the vineyard in response to the question by the chief priests, scribes and elders, "By what authority do you do these things?" (Mark 11v27-33). It may have appeared that Jesus totally avoided their question, but he didn't. The parable of the vineyard was supposed to tell the Pharisees that Jesus was THE SON OF GOD! Therefore it is by Yahweh's authority that he did these things! Jesus was the "wellbeloved", the son of the vineyard's owner. Jesus Christ is the heir because it is Yahweh's vineyard! That was the answer to their question. Jesus Christ therefore reveals himself to Thyatira as the Son of God, who is heir to the inheritance. The question those in Thyatira should have been asking was, "Are we going to have our inheritance taken away by Jezebel? - NO WAY!"

In contrast, Jezebel has her own wine (Rev 17v2; 14v10,18-20). The vine of the earth is shown in **Deut 32v32**; **Joel 3v12-13**; **Isa. 63v2-3**. The wine of Babylon the Great will be crushed. That is why the Nazarite was not to take of the fruit of the vine. It symbolised the wine of this world. This is Babylon's wine.

- We have had many fathers over the years who have tended Yahweh's vineyard. They have faithfully and courageously put prayerful time and effort into building up the Brotherhood. Are we going to sell that inheritance?
- In what ways could some in the ecclesia today try and take away the inheritance of our fathers? How can this be overcome?

## "eyes like a flame of fire, feet like fine brass" -

Again the title is taken from the Son of Man vision in **chapter 1**. This vision was the Multitudinous Christ Body in a phase of judgement on the wicked. Eyes of fire indicates Divine anger and wrath, whereas feet like fine brass indicates a treading down of the wicked (see notes on **Rev 1v14-15**). This comment must have some bearing on what follows, particularly **v20-24**. It is a very fitting title given what happened to Jezebel in **2 Kings 9v33**.

**Ezekiel 8v18** says, "<u>mine eye</u> shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them." Israel's iniquity was clearly seen by Yahweh.

**2 Kings 9v33** "And he (Jehu) said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he **trode her under foot**."

The vision of the cherubim in **Ezekiel 1v18** reveals that "their rings were full of eyes round about them four." The saints of the future age will be "the eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth" (**Zech 4v10**) in the same way the angels have been the eyes of Yahweh in past times (**2 Chron 16v9**, **Gen 11v5**; **18v21**). The saints do this work in the kingdom - "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (**Heb 2v7**) The fire represents anger, firstly at Bozrah (**Isaiah 30v27**, where "the name of YAHWEH cometh from far, burning with his anger...his tongue as a devouring fire"). The Rainbowed Angel of **Rev 10** has "feet as pillars of fire" (**10v1**). The MAN of the ONE in **Daniel 10v6** has "feet like in colour to polished brass". All these visions represent Jesus Christ and the saints in different aspects of judgement.

**Malachi 4** is particularly fascinating. This chapter speaks of the Son of Man coming with "healing in his beams" (v2). But look at the context: "For the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up" (v1).

And what is the role of the saints? "And ye shall tread down the wicked...." (v3) This is Jezebel! Trodden down like Jezebel of old.

And what do the next verses say? "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant... BEHOLD I SEND YOU ELIJAH!" Here is the victory of the Elijah class and the destruction of the Jezebel class - in the context of *treading down* the wicked.

For a detailed exposition on God Manifestation and the "feet like in colour to polished brass", see *Phanerosis* by Bro John Thomas, pages 118-126.

Judgement by fire is common in the Apocalypse. Refer to the following quotations: Revelation 10v1, 11v5; 13v3; 14v10,18; 15v2; 16v8; 17v16; 18v8; 19v12,20; 20v9,10,14, 15; 21v8.

The feet like unto fine brass treads down the great Jezebel power at the time of the end. In **Revelation 19** we have the Lord Jesus Christ with the saints treading under foot the Roman Catholic Apostasy, the anti-typical Jezebel. Christ and the saints are riding horses just like Jehu (**2 Kings 9v33**). We are told in **Rev 19v14** that the saints are with him, "clothed in fine linen, white and clean." No longer are they the ones trodden down.

Rev 19v11-12 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True (cp. Laodicea - 3v14), and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire (cp. Thyatira - 2v20), and on his head were many crowns..."

Rev 19v15 "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

The winepress of the great Jezebel is trodden down by the anti-typical Jehusee also **Rev 14v20**. For 1260 years and more, the saints had been "trodden under foot" (**Rev 11v2**) by the Jezebel apostasy in the same way as Naboth was. The time is coming when *she* is trodden under foot.

# **VERSE 19: The Ecclesia commended**

# Verse 19

"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."

"I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first." (NIV)

They are obviously a diligent ecclesia in many ways.

Here is a commendation of the ecclesia, that despite the presence of Jezebel there were many who had a practical application of the Truth. They had *agape* love as exhorted in **1 Corinthians 13**. They had faith in the Truth as did the worthies of old (**Heb 11**). They had patience like the Ecclesia at Ephesus (see notes on **v2-3**) but they had not left their first love as Ephesus had.

Notice that their "works" are repeated in this verse. The Diaglot renders the last phrase as "....thy last works to be more than the first." This seems to indicate that their diligence was continual and on the increase, and despite the evil mentioned in **verses 20-24**.

Consider the following verses which show the virtue of many who were in the Thyatiran ecclesia:

- 1 Cor 15v58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." WORKS
- **1 Cor 13v4,8** "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not, love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up…beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." **LOVE**
- Heb 11v6 "But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." FAITH
- 1 Cor 16v15 "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such..." SERVICE
- James 1v3 "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience, but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." PATIENCE
- Look up at least one other quote for each of the above virtues. How can we practically apply these qualities in our ecclesia today?

# **VERSES 20-23: Disapproval - Jezebel tolerated**

## Verse 20

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."

"...she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." (NASB)

"Because thou lettest alone the woman Jezebel..." (Diaglot)

"You tolerate that woman Jezebel" (NIV)

The Greek omits the phrase "a few things".

An excellent background to Jezebel is found in the Bible dictionary quoted by Bro John Knowles on page 27 of his notes.

There are 2 women in the Apocalypse: the bride and the harlot. The harlot is found in Rev 12v1 & 17v1-6. The bride is the one found at the marriage of the Lamb in Rev 19v7-8 & the perfected body of Christ in Rev 21v2. In Thyatira, there are both classes.

Jezebel means "chaste" (Heb. Str. # 348) or "without co-habitation" (Gesenius). How ironic. Maybe there is an appearance of this on the outside. That is why so many are deceived. The story of the harlot is given in **Proverbs 7**. This chapter is about those who are "simple" and "void of understanding". There must have been those amongst the ecclesia here in Thyatira who were like this, despite those in the meeting who had "works, love, service, faith and patience." Notice that it is styled "that woman", not just "Jezebel". A woman is often used to symbolise a religious community (**2 Cor 11v2**).

**IMPORTANT:** It is highly recommended that we read the notes on pages 18-20 about the development of Apostasy in early Ecclesias.

**Gen 2v18** Woman is made to be a help for man. She was taken out of man. The woman was created to draw out of man the latent characteristics of mercy. She was to be "an help, meet for him" (Roth. "counterpart"). Woman was able to draw out of man, with her emotions, God's merciful character.

**2 Cor 11v3** "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Here the woman Jezebel represents an apostate religious community. The apostle Paul said in **2 Cor 11v2**, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as *a chaste virgin to Christ*."

"Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

**IMPORTANT:** The background to Jezebel is in 1 Kings 16- 22 & 2 Kings 9: It is important to emphasise again that we need to become well acquainted with these chapters. Particularly look at her scheming and brutality in 1 Kings 21.

1 Kings 16v31 "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he rared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria."

**The problem with Ahab is that he tolerated Jezebel**. It is exactly the same in this ecclesia. They were wrong to fellowship this evil Jezebel group.

She now sat as a queen, just like the mother of harlots in Revelation 18:

Rev 18v7-8 "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

Jezebel is the obvious extension of the Balaamite class in Pergamos. She really put into practise the Balaamite attitude. Cain didn't take God at his word. Balaam said he can change God's word to make a profit. Korah openly defied God. There is a real progression here, one evil leading to another (**Jude v11**). Likewise, this Jezebel is the end result of evil creeping into the ecclesia. Ephesus leaves her first love, Smyrna then has to contend with a rival who breaks away from them - the synagogue of Satan, Pergamos then has the Baalamites, now Jezebel puts all this into practise... and then TEACHES it!

This Jezebel group were not working behind the scenes. They were actively TEACHING the ways of the world. Education was the secret to her success. Jezebel of old had 850 prophets who taught her ways to Israel. Her daughter Athaliah married the heir to Judah's throne, Joram, who was equally influenced by Baalim. A house of Baal was actually even built in Jerusalem (2 Kings 11v18).

The apostle Paul exhorted the brethren to flee idolatry and avoid the idol's temple and practices (1 Cor 10v15-22). Eating things sacrificed to idols may have caused many to go against their conscience in their relation to the world. Bro Mansfield comments: "The excavations of archaeologists suggest that every skilled worker was a member of a union, and as such, was expected to support his association. The tendency, therefore, would be to compromise religion to that end, and it is this spirit of compromise that Christ condemns in his letter to the Ecclesia." (*Apocalypse Epitomised*, p.51)

NOTES

How could we cause others to "eat things sacrificed to idols" today?

Jezebel taught and seduced God's servants to commit fornication in the same way as how "those who had the doctrine of Balaam" had done in v14. Jezebel had her "prophets of baal" (1 Kings 18v40) and likewise, this Jezebel group had their own prophets (v22 "Them that commit adultery with her"). Bro John Knowles summarises by saying, "What the Balaamites taught as doctrine in Pergamos, Jezebel taught and practised in Thyatira." (p.26)

- How could ecclesias today be affected by this Jezebel influence?
- Is it possible that we could be influenced without even knowing it?

**IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND:** Over a period of hundreds of years, the Gentile ecclesias under rule of the Roman Empire became corrupted by Paganism. It was the evil influence of those such as the Jezebel class in Thyatira (and others) which brought about the Apostasy ("falling away") in Yahweh's Ecclesia. The ultimate result of this was the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. So when this evil woman styled BABYLON THE GREAT rides the beast in **Revelation 17**, the Apostate church is in a position of great power, dominance, and - like Jezebel of old - **confidence**. This system came out of what was the true ecclesia.

In **2 Kings 9v22** Jehu condemned Jezebel for her "whoredoms...and her witchcrafts". She turned the true believers to false religion. Her characteristics are summarised as follows, noting the parallels with the Roman Catholic Apostasy - Babylon the Great:

- 1) A king's daughter (cp. Rev 17v2, 18v3)
- 2) She possessed outstanding intellect and ability (cp. Rev 17v3,17)
- 3) She was a zealous idolater (cp. Rev 9v20, 18v12,13,16)
- 4) She was a dominating wife (cp. Rev 17v6, 18v24)
- 5) She was a treacherous schemer (cp. Rev 13v14-17, 17v4)
- 6) A woman of no fear or repentance (cp. Rev 9v21, 16v11, 18v18-19)
- 7) A woman of pride who loved personal adornment (cp. Rev 17v4, 18v16)
- 8) She refused to acknowledge her widowhood (cp. Rev 18v7)
- 9) She was trodden under foot by horses (Rev 18v10; 19v11-16)
- 10) She killed the prophets and believers of God (cp. Rev 17v6, 18v24)

The apostate church eventually became involved in the political affairs of the Roman Empire. This apostasy eventually became the religion of the empire, and later even became the government itself. It is important that we realise the origins of modern "Christianity". It all began with the merging of true Christianity with the pagan philosophies of Greco-Latin culture.

In *Eureka* (Vol 1, p.329), Bro Thomas summarises this as follows:

"Jezebel still lives and she lives in sin. In the days of John she was without political sovereignty; she was the daughter of Ethbaal the idolater; but she had not been married to the Greco-Latin Ahab. The Judaizing and Gnostic Clergy were actively working the Mystery of Iniquity into authority; they had organised it into a synagogue and were privately insinuating it into the elderships, but they had not yet succeeded in allying themselves to the State. Instead of slaying every deceiver in communion with her, as he had Ananias and Sapphira, he gave her time. That time has not yet expired; for Jezebel lives, but has not repented; but instead thereof, "sits as a woman drunken with the blood of saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus" (Rev 17v6)

Refer to Eureka Vol. 1, pages 323-330 where Bro Thomas shows clearly that the Jezebel doctrines were superimposed onto Christianity, the end result of which is seen in "Christianity" today (so called).

# Verse 21

"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."

"And I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality." (NASB)

The challenge of Elijah and the obvious power of Yahweh on Mount Carmel did not cause Jezebel to repent (1 Kings 18). God gave Jezebel ample opportunity to repent, as He has done with the Roman Catholic system. Nevertheless there is no repentance (look up Rev 9v21, 16v11). God always gives opportunity to turn back to him. He is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet 3v9)

This "repentance" is a key point!! It is really emphasised in the letter to Thyatira here in **v21** and in **v22**. A similar exhortation was given to those in Ephesus (**Rev 2v5**), Pergamos (**2v16**), Sardis (**3v3**) and Laodicea (**3v19**).

- ☑ The judgement which God brings upon men is for the purpose of changing them. God does this with so many Bible characters and he does this for us too. Do we respond to God working in our lives? The final pleas of our Lord to the ecclesia in Rev 16v15 addresses this urgent subject of repentance.
- If God is continually seeking repentance from us, should not we also keep the door of opportunity open for our fellow brothers and sisters? This is what we always learn from Scripture:
- Matt 18v14-15 "Even so it is not the will of your father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother...

# Verse 22

"Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds."

"Behold! I will cast her, and those committing adultery with her into a bed - into great affliction; unless they reform from her works." (Diaglot)

Not only did they have wrong doctrine, but their deeds were evil also, as a direct result of their doctrines! She would be punished in the very place of her sins, just like Jezebel of old:

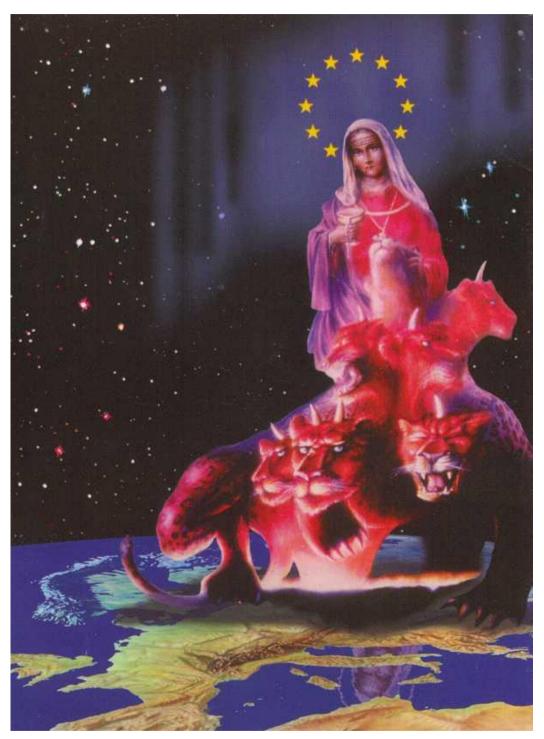
**1 Kings 22v19** "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

Jezebel's son Ahaziah was cast into a bed because of his sickness, and was condemned to die there (2 Kings 1v1-8). God had given him opportunity to repent but he sought Baal instead. The fire from heaven sent by Yahweh at the word of Elijah was to warn Ahaziah (v18), but following in the steps of his mother, there was no repentance. Also see 2 Chron 21v11; 22v7 where Jezebel's grandson was given "destruction" (Heb. "treading down").

Our Lord is pleading for us to forsake wrong doctrine and to repent of false religious practises. The lesson of all this is found in the words of Jehu, in the lead up to Jezebel's death:

**2 Kings 9v22** "And it came to pass, when Joram (Jezebel's son) saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?"

# THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL



Woman riding the European Beast (Painting by Bro Simon Sawell, background graphics by Bible Magazine)
Note: It is always said of the Roman Catholic system that it "deceives". The woman in the above picture may appear
to be Mary, but it is not. This is how the Papacy depicts itself - it sees itself being symbolised by "the Madonna" supposedly Mary. But this is not Mary. The deceptive woman is Jezebel. He who has an ear let him hear.

"They that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. And <a href="here">here</a> is the mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."

(Revelation 17v8-9)

How could the false religious *practises* of the churches influence the brotherhood today?

How can we positively turn this around before it is too late?

The "great tribulation" is yet future. While some form of judgement may have come upon those individuals in Thyatira, Jezebel is still alive and well today, and in fact is increasing in power. Jezebel's great tribulation is well documented in 6 of the final chapters in the Bible: Revelation 14-19. The fall of Babylon is documented in detail in Revelation 18. In this respect, consider the following comments by Bro John Thomas in Eureka. While the language he uses may appear extreme, all of it is actually taken straight from Scripture itself:

# Jezebel's "Great Tribulation"

When this time arrives, the "bed" will have been prepared for Jezebel, and she will then be "cast into it;" and not she only, but with her them that commit adultery. This bed is the "great tribulation," or "sorrow," in which the antichristian apostasy is to be destroyed at the apocalypse of Jesus Christ in "the Hour of Judgement;" when Babylon, the Great City, falls because of her having prostituted and debauched all the nations with her blasphemies and abominations. The ecclesiasticism of the earth and of the whole habitable, with all the clerical orders by which it is upheld, will be utterly abolished by the wrath of the Deity poured out without mixture, which they will be compelled to drink with great torment in the presence of Jesus and the Saints - Rev 14v7-11; 18v2. Into this bed of tribulation Jezebel is at length cast, with all her antichristian and clerical adherents, who, in the text last quoted, are typified by "demons", "foul spirits", and hateful birds"; for the Thyatiran Jezebel is but the germ of that Babylon...

Now this "great tribulation", which is yet antitypically to come upon "Babylon, the Great, the Mother of Harlots," was typically poured out upon the Thyatiran Jezebel previous to the taking of the pagan hierarchy out of the way, which prevented the manifestation of the Lawless One, who would be set up as the head of Jezebel, and as a substitute for Christ upon earth. As Christ is the Head of the true Woman, the body of the faithful; so the Pope is the present Head of Jezebel, the Mother of Harlots, and of all her family. But, before Christ appears in power, his woman passes "through much tribulation to enter into the Kingdom of the Deity" - Acts 14v22; and so, before Antichrist (the power which set up as Christ's substitute, and is now incorporated in the chief styled "the Pope") appeared in power, the Thyatiran Adulteress was made to pass through a "great tribulation" ere she could enter into the kingdom of this world; and mount the scarlet coloured beast; and "sit a Queen, and no widow;" and, intoxicated with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus, say with complacency, "I shall see no sorrow."

(Bro John Thomas, Eureka Vol. 1, pgs 331-332)

The judgements of God were sent to change people, but as with Jezebel of old, there has been no repentance:

Rev 16v10-11 "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

The first 5 vials of **Revelation 16** were accomplished in the French Revolution and wars of Napoleon, where great judgements were poured upon Catholic Europe for their iniquities. These judgements almost resulted in the bankruptcy of the Roman Catholic Church. There was no repentance however, so the sixth and seventh vials require direct intervention by Jesus Christ and the saints to bring about the "great tribulation" referred to here in **Rev 2v22**.

## Verse 23

"And I will kill her children with death; and all the ecclesias shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

In 2 Kings 10v7 the sons of Jezebel were slain. See also 2 Kings 1v16-17; 9v21-27. All Jezebel's descendants and followers were cut off (2 Kings 10v20-27), except one who would continue the line of David (2 Kings 11v2). In Rev 17&18 the harlot daughters are with the whore when great judgements come upon her. This is an incredible exhortation to Thyatira and to us when we look at the harlot daughters today.

Jehoshaphat joined alliance with Ahab's house (2 Chron 18v1), by marrying his son Joram to Athaliah, Jezebel's daughter (2 Chron 21v4-6). This union resulted in the introduction of false worship, thus causing "the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto" (2 Chron 21v11). Yahweh therefore brought judgement upon Jezebel's descendants (2 Chron 22v7-10, 23v13-14).

☑ The entertainment industry today is one of the most obvious examples of JEZEBEL TEACHING AND SEDUCING God's servants to commit fornication. Violence and sexual immorality are so common that hardly anyone even blinks an eyelid. Yahweh is going to destroy the entertainment of this world. We all really need to wake up to this and honestly face the facts. Yahweh hates the violent movies and video games that are corrupting our society. Do we?

"I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts" - Consider the language of Paul's letter to the Hebrews:

**Heb 4v12-13** "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intent of the heart."

Jer 17v10 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

Look up Jeremiah 11v20 & 20v12 ("the reins and the heart"). Also look at John 8v6 where Jesus Christ alludes to this section in Jeremiah (Jer 17v13). Jeremiah 18&19 are all about the potter's vessel and how God is able to smash the nations like a potter's vessel. Israel were an adulterous generation. This is why he tells the Pharisees "he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8v7) as he was "writing in the earth" (cp. Jer 17v13).

The judgement that would come upon the Jezebel class would demonstrate to all that the penetrating eyes of the Son of God sees beyond the facade of hypocrisy to motives within (v18). He is able to search that which is hidden from normal sight: the *reins* are the kidneys, which normally separate and expel the poisons from the body. They are considered as the seat of longing and desire, of emotion and affection. They were always offered in sacrifice (Lev 3v4), because the longings, desires, emotions and affections should always be towards Yahweh and His truth. The reference before us seems to be a citation of Psalm 7v9, and this verse should be compared with Heb 4v12-13 which speaks of the penetrating vision of he who is described as "The Word of God." The heart was considered as the seat of intellect and reason. Christ searches both feelings and intellect with penetrating vision that sees beyond all shams and disguises."

(Bro HP Mansfield, Apocalypse Epitomised, p.53)

 **■ MOTES** 

# **VERSES 24-25: Exhortation**

## **Verses 24-25**

"But unto you I say, and many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come."

"Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you)" (NIV)

"...who knew not the depths of the adversary, (as they say)..." (Diaglot)

These words are spoken to the faithful in Thyatira (those in **v19**) These faithful are equivalent to the 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal in the days of Jezebel's persecution (**2 Kings 19v18**).

Satan are obviously a group of people, being styled "they". These "depths of the adversary" or "the adversary's deep secrets" were only "so called" and they may have comprised of "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim 6v20). See also 2 Tim 2v17 and 1 John 4v1.

# "The depths of Satan"

"Here the phrase "the depths" is quoted from the mouth of the Satan - a teaching plurality consisting of the Balaamites and the Jezebelites. They spoke of their views as "the depths", by which, of course, they would mean that their ideas were advanced and profound as compared with the elementary propositions of the gospel with which the simpler members of the congregation were content.... The real state of the case is defined by Paul when he says that "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Rom 1v22) Their notions are the mere vagaries of speculation: their pretentious language is the gibber of ignorance in its worst form: ignorance that thinks itself informed: shallowness that thinks itself profound. The true philosophy is in the Bible: the true depth in its simplicities."

(Bro Robert Roberts, Thirteen lectures on the Apocalypse, p.19-20)

There was no other burden to be imposed except that Jezebel be cast out. A burden means a "weight". This is a direct reference back to the Jerusalem Conference in **Acts 15**, and to the language in **2 Kings** - Jezebel's destruction:

- Acts 15v28-29 "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than those necessary things; abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well."
- 2 Kings 9v25 "Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him (Joram, the son of Jezebel) in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him; Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD...."
- ✓ The "depths" of this world's learning is foolishness with God (1 Cor 1v20-21). Philosophies taught by the world's education institutions can often be imposed upon the Truth because they sound impressive on the surface.
- Mow can the humanistic teachings of the world be influential in the ecclesia today? How can we possibly answer the challenge?

# "Hold fast till I come"

We are not granted the ease of indifference when there are ecclesial problems about us. We cannot draw off into a little corner as "the remnant", in a separate fellowship or community, and let the winds of satan blow havoc in the ecclesia. True shepherds will contend with the wolves and strive with great courage "to hold fast till he come" (2 Thess 2v15; 1 Cor 11v2; Col 1v23). We were never promised an ecclesial history where everything goes the way we want it to. The apostolic epistles make it clear that it was never so even in their days. Their lives were full of valiant contention even as they were bringing in thousands of new members from a pagan world... The epistle shows the balance required, on the one hand in contending with the errorists and removing them if necessary (ie. not "suffering" them) and on the other hand strengthening the faith of the ecclesia.

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p.52)

"Hold fast till I come" is a similar exhortation to that in Rev 3v2, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die."

# **VERSES 26-29: He that overcometh**

#### Verse 26

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:"

"He that overcometh" - Refer to notes in the Introduction (Part 3) on overcoming the world, pages 28-31.

To "keep Christ's words unto the end" is to have "patient continuance in well doing, seeking for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." (Rom 2v7) We need consistency in our lives, just as our Lord Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Heb 13v8)

- Heb 3v5-6 "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant.... But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."
- ☑ Those who will have power over the nations are only those who have brought "into subjection" their own bodies (1 Cor 9v27). These are they who have the "whole armour of God" and who fight a spiritual warfare (Eph 6v11-18).
- How can we "overcome" the influence of Jezebel in the ecclesia and in our own lives?
- Mow then can we maintain a consistency in our lives?

To have "power over the nations" means to have "authority" (Str. #1849) over them. The time is coming when the nations of Europe will "receive power (Gk. 'authority') one hour with the beast" (Rev 17v12). They will "make war with the Lamb" but "the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen and faithful." (Rev 17v14) The saints will be with Christ when he comes to judge that great Jezebel harlot system. The events of Revelation 17v12-14 are parallel with the events of Psalm 2.

# Verse 27

"And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."

"and he shall **shepherd** them with a sceptre of iron,- as vessels of earthenware are dashed in pieces:- as I also have received from my Father." (Rotherham)

"he shall rule them with an Iron Sceptre; (as the earthen vessels it is breaking them together;) as also I have received from my Father." (Diaglot)

We learn from **Psalm 2v9** that the one who rules with a rod of iron is Jesus Christ and his saints: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

It is Nebuchadnezzar's image which is ground to powder "as the vessels of a potter...". Iron is strong. Clay is brittle. Clay and earth in the Bible are often used to symbolise common man (Job 33v6; Isa. 1v2,10; 64v8; 1 Cor 15v47). The potter's vessel is found in Jer 18v2,36; 19v1,11. Jeremiah was commanded to smash this potter's vessel as a symbol of God's judgements which were to come upon Israel.

"even as I received of my Father" - Inheritance is the important issue here. Consider again Psalm 2v8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Jezebel killed Naboth because he refused to give up his inheritance of his fathers, a vineyard (1 Kings 21v3). In Thyatira, Jezebel was trying to take away their inheritance.

Again, here is the exhortation for Christ's brethren that only "he that <u>overcometh</u>... even as I also overcame" (**Rev 3v21**) can attain to the prize that Christ has won. The Lord Jesus Christ has already received of that power from his Father (see **Matt 28v18**)

"rule them with a rod of iron" - This is the rod of inheritance...

**Psalm 2v9** "Thou shalt break them with **a rod of iron**; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

This Psalm had an initial fulfilment in the life of Christ (Acts 4v25-31; 13v33; Heb 1v5; 5v5). Psalm 2 also has a latter-day fulfilment however, because of the words in verses 6&9 indicating the judgements of Christ when he reigns as king in Jerusalem.

The final fulfilment of this Psalm is set in the time after Armageddon, when the world has suffered desolation, and when Jesus Christ and the saints are establishing rule from Zion. The Papacy and Catholic nations rebel, thinking that the Jewish Messiah is actually Antichrist - "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against His anointed." (v1-2). But as Rev 17v14 says, "the Lamb shall overcome them..." The anti-typical Jezebel will be smashed by those of the Thyatiran class who "overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end.." (Rev 2v26). This Psalm (v9) is quoted in Rev 19v15 because the events are the same.

Jer 51v19-20 "The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name. Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms...." v24 "...and I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD."



Nebuchadnezzar's image (Daniel 2): Artwork by Bro Simon Sawell

# "As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers..."

The breaking to pieces of the gold, the silver, the brass, the iron, and the clay together, is consequent upon its being smitten by the **STONE-POWER** upon its clayey feet (**Dan 2**) - its clay-vessels, or ten Horn-kingdoms confederated with the Eighth Head (**Rev 17v11**) in the hour of their breaking in pieces, and becoming the kingdoms of Yahweh and of His Christ (**Rev 11v15**).

The remnant among the *Thyatirans*, and the *Pergamean* Antipas, and the *Smyrnean* "rich" in faith, and the *Ephesian* labourers for the Spirit Name, and the few names in *Sardis*, and the *Philadelphian* keepers of the word of his patience - these all, with Christ at the head of them, are the New Testament constituents of the Stone-Power.

**Authority will be given to them** to break in pieces the political fabric of the world of nations as established in church and state. The operation is a conjoint one. It is to be effected, not by Jesus alone, not by his joint heirs in his absence; but by all in concert. They follow him whithersoever he goeth - **Rev 14v4**; and therefore accompany him in all his wars of "the Great Day of the Almighty Deity" - **Rev 16v14**: so that, when he encounters the Ten Horns, they are with him as "the called, and chosen, and faithful" - **Rev 17v14**; and when the worshippers of the Beast are tormented, it is in their presence as "the holy messengers" with the Lamb - **Rev 14v10**; and when he judges the Italian Harlot they reward her as she rewarded them, and double unto her double according to her works - **Rev 18v6,8**; and when he goes forth to smite the nations, they follow him as the war-clouds of the heaven, **clothed in fine linen, white and clean**, which is representative of their righteousness in him - **Rev 19v14,8**.

(Bro John Thomas, Eureka Vol. 1, pgs 347-348)

 **■ MOTES** 

Jeremiah 50 & 51 are all about the fall of Babylon. This was fulfilled to some extent in the fall of Babylon on the Euphrates. These are the events detailed in Daniel 5. However you will note that many of these verses are still unfulfilled. For instance just look at Jer 51v19-24. Never before has Yahweh used Israel to break in pieces the nations. This certainly wasn't fulfilled at the fall of Euphratean Babylon. The vast number of quotations and allusions to Jeremiah in Rev 17 & 18 indicate that the Babylon which will fulfil these final events is Babylon the Great ie. the Roman Catholic apostasy (see also Isa. 14v1-4; 48v10-20; 51v22-23; Zech 2v7 etc.) Israel will have victory over Babylon at the time of the end. Natural Israel is also Yahweh's rod by which He will smite the nations. This inheritance has been promised to the Thyatiran class who cling to their inheritance like Naboth did.

#### Ezek 20v37

"Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to **pass under the rod**, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."

Under the hand of Elijah (Mal 4v4-6), many of the saints will be given opportunity to aid in the redemption of the Jewish people: Jer 3v15 "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." The scattered Jews will be brought through the fire in the wilderness of the people (Ezek 20v35 cp. Rev 17v1-3,15). They will pass under the rod in the same way the saints have done over the ages, in the depths of Europe where the darkness of the Papacy has control. The rebels will be purged and they will be brought back to the land of Israel where they will meet their Messiah.

#### Rev 11v1

"And there was given me a **reed like unto a rod**: and the angel stood, saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

This rod was a "rhabdos", a rod of correction and affliction. It is the same word for rod as that found in Rev 2v27 and hence the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word "rod" in Psalm 2v9. It is the rod that is used for the trying of faith and the disciplining of sons (cp. Prov 13v24; 10v13; 22v15; 29v15; Heb 12v6-11 "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth...") The "Holy City" represents the true believers (cp. Rev 21v2) who were certainly loved by their God. Their faith was tried like gold passing through the fire (1 Pet 1v7 - "though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing ("Apokalypsis") of Jesus Christ"). The saints were trodden under foot by the Apostasy for centuries. The time is coming however when the saints will tread under foot their persecutors.

#### **Rev 12v5**

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to **rule all nations** with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

To cut a long story short, **Revelation 12** is speaking of the false religious system of rule set up by Constantine in Constantinople around 312-325AD. This eventually led to the rise of the Man of Sin in Rome. The man child was Constantine himself. He took upon himself the mantle of Messiah, ruling the false kingdom of God on earth. Thus the symbology of **Psa. 2v9** & **Rev 2v27** is taken to contrast the false system with the true.

 **■ NOTES** 

#### **Rev 19v15**

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall **rule them with a rod of iron** and he **treadeth** the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

This verse has been discussed earlier, but simply this is the Jezebel system's last stand. The false kingdom of God is replaced by the True Kingdom. Rome sinks into the abyss while the Jewish nation is restored under Jesus Christ with the scattered Jews coming back under the hand of Elijah. When the Roman Catholic Apostasy is trodden under foot by Jesus Christ, the saints are with him (v14).

#### **Verses 28-29**

"And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

Jesus Christ himself is the morning star, as he tells us in **Rev 22v16**. The "bright and morning star" is a reference to Venus, shining in the heavens to herald the coming of a new day.

Num 24v17 "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."

The angels of heaven are described as morning stars in **Job 38v7**: "Who laid the corner stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" The saints are spoken of in **Dan 12v3** as "shining as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Stars represent rulers (**Dan 12v3**, **Isaiah 14v12**, **1 Cor 15v41**, **Rev 8v10**, **Rev 12v1**), of which Christ will be the chief in the Kingdom age. The heralding of a new day will see the sun of righteousness rising with healing in his beams (**Mal 4v2**). This will be "a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (**2 Sam 23v4**).

Jesus says in **Matt 13v43** that in the Kingdom "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (clearly alluding to **Dan 12v3**). Then look at the comment at the end of **Matt 13v43**: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

What makes this vision of the Kingdom real for us personally?

"He that hath an ear, let him hear..." - To hear is to "hearken" (Rev 1v3; 3v20) and "give heed". Therefore, a practical application is involved! This is emphasised in all 7 letters to the ecclesias (Rev 2v7,11,17,29; 3v6,13,22). The only other place this phrase is stated in the Apocalypse outside of the 7 ecclesias is in Revelation 13v9. This is in the context of judgement upon the Roman Catholic apostasy. This apostasy was the end result of that "mystery of iniquity" found even in these first century Gentile ecclesias (2 Thess 2v1-11).

IMPORTANT: Read further comments about having an ear and hearing in the notes on the letter to Ephesus in **Revelation 2v7**.

"And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear... And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."

# **NOTES**

# **NOTES**



- $\operatorname{\mathscr{L}}$  This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- oxdots This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

# Revelation 3v1-6 LETTER TO THE ECCLESIA AT SARDIS

**Eureka Vol 1, p. 351-372** 

#### ☐ Old & New Testament Background: Exodus 32; 1 Kings 19; Matthew 24

This was one of the wealthiest cities in the world because of the gold which abounded in the area. Much wealth came from gold in the sand in a river traversing around the city. Sardis was situated on a tall mountain. You could not scale this mountain - it was a very much like Masada. The only way you could get up was on the south. You only had to guard the south, and even so, with only a few soldiers. The city certainly had an appearance of being impregnable. There were however 2 conquerors of Sardis in the past, these being Antiochus the Great (in BC 214) and Cyrus the Persian (in BC549). They were able to get up through the crevices in the rock. These invasions however were freakish. In both situations, armies took the city because it was overconfident and unprepared.

Does this invasion of Cyrus the Persian back in BC 549 typify the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the ecclesia in our days? Cyrus is a type of Christ (see **Dan 5**; **Isa. 44v27-28**; **45v1-2**) and his invasion of Babylon typifies the future fall of Babylon the Great. But what about the ecclesia at the time of Christ's return? Are we asleep like Sardis? Are we just trying to live up to a good name outwardly without being awake to the days in which we live? (1 **Thess 5v1-9**). Will Christ come upon us like a thief as the armies of Cyrus came upon the city like a thief so many years before? The language used by the Lord to this ecclesia has prophetic echoes for our day. There is an uncanny similarity here to all the prophecies of Christ's second coming.

#### THE LETTER TO SARDIS IS VITAL IN OUR DAYS:

In our Lord's final plea before Armageddon (**Rev 16v15**), *he refers to his letter to Sardis*. He is saying in effect, "Go back to Sardis and learn the lessons from that letter, because that is what the ecclesia may well be like in the last days." He is also referring us back to Laodicea, as we will see. Consider the links between the letter to Sardis and **Rev 16v15**:

Revelation 3	Revelation 16
"I will come on thee as a thief" (v3)	"Behold I come as a thief!" (16v15)
"Be watchful" (v2) "If therefore thou shalt not watch" (v3)	"Blessed is he that watcheth" (16v15)
"have not defiled their garments" (v4)	"and keepeth his garments" (16v15)
"the same shall be clothed" (v5)	"lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (16v15)

The city of Sardis had certain notable characteristics which reflect the cities of our days:

Few cities could boast a heritage so glorious in splendour, wealth and importance as Sardis. Not only had the city gained its **wealth** and **importance** from the productivity of the fertile valley surrounding it, but, being the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia, and situated on the main highway from the Aegean Sea to the heart of Asia and the East, it was a city of great **commercial importance**. Here, the caravans of East and West met, and traded; merchants sought the wares of a city whose fame had spread far and wide.

And, if all this had not guaranteed the importance of the name of this city, **gold** was found in abundance in the alluvial soil that washed down from the mountain ranges in the Hermus River. So wealthy did the city become in the days of the Lydian King Croesus, that his riches became proverbial. Even today, there is an expression concerning a wealthy person that "he is as rich as Croesus." Because of its wealth, the city gained its place in history as the first city to mint gold and silver coins.

(summary by Bro. David Evans, Logos, April 1989, p.198)

#### IMPORTANT BACKGROUND TO THE CITY OF SARDIS

From the earliest of times, an estimated BC 1200, Sardis had been a **proud city** and virtually an **impregnable fortress**. The capital of the great kingdom of Lydia, Sardis had a history marked by frequent wars. In it was focussed the whole policy of a warlike kingdom. To fight against Lydia was to fight against Sardis. The master of Sardis was the master of Lydia. Thus in those early centuries, Sardis stood out in the view of the Greek cities as the Oriental enemy on whose action their fate depended.

Most of them became involved in war with Sardis and fell one by one beneath its power. It was the great, the wealthy, the impregnable city, against which none could strive and prevail....In the immemorial struggle between Asia and Europe, Sardis represented Asia, and the Greek colonies of the coastlands stood for Europe. Sardis was the one great enemy of the Ionian cities: it learned from them, taught them, and conquered them all in succession.

Among the impressionable Greeks, a reputation like this lived long. Sardis was fully justified in inscribing its coin with the proud title, "Sardis the First Metropolis of Asia, and of Lydia, and of Hellenism." Sardis, which came into existence to meet the designs of a world less civilised when cities were often nests of robbers or centres of brigandage rather than trade emporiums, lost most of its usefulness when Roman control blanketed the world with peace, and its fortunes had to be turned to the spoils of commerce rather than the spoils of war.

Thus, even as the letters to the ecclesias were being written, Sardis as a city, was suffering from a great and incurable wasting, a sickness which could only have one result - death; and today, the proud metropolis which once bound within it the fortunes of the mighty kingdom of Croesus, king of Lydia, is no more. A few majestic pillars, relics of a long forgotten age, but that is all. Sardis is no more.

In the days when Sardis had its greatest glory, when the Ionian cities of the coastal plain spoke of it with awe, **it was a natural fortress**. Situated on a plateau **on top of a hill** that joined the mountains of Temolus on the south, it had an almost sheer drop on all sides except the south. And even there, where access was possible, it was by a steep path that was easily defended. Throughout Sardis' history, it had been considered that the cliff faces on the north, east and west were unassailable, and there was therefore no need for fortifications, since even a child could destroy a climbing enemy by dropping a stone on him!

Only the south needed defending, and it was here that Sardis erected its defences and placed its watchmen. The rock formations of the perpendicular cliff face, however, were of a crumbling type that developed cracks, not necessarily perpendicular, up which an experienced climber could ease himself to the top provided there was no opposition. And, so it happened. Croesus, king of Lydia, determined to attack the Persian monarch, Cyrus, in BC 549. He did so, only to receive a crushing defeat. But this was only from a first army, and he retired to Sardis, determined to raise a more powerful force the next year. Cyrus, however, followed him up and besieged Sardis. Croesus, **confident in the impregnable nature of his fortress-city** and believing that the armies of Lydia that were being massed would assist him to crush the insolent invaders, retired that evening to rest; and was awakened to find the Persians in control of his fortress and all was lost!

A fault in the rock of the seemingly perpendicular cliff face had apparently developed, but without adequate inspection by the Sardians, or repair, the fault had gone unnoticed by the defenders. The invaders, however, determined to exploit every weakness of their enemy, were quick to notice the defect and, under cover of darkness, they had gained access to the fortress where no watchmen were posted, and had overcome the sleeping defenders... Sardis, the invincible, had been conquered. It had **believed that it was inaccessible** and it had failed in 2 ways:

- (a) it had failed to regularly inspect its defences for defects, and to repair them;
- (b) it had failed to keep watchmen on all parts of its defences.

This, then, was the local background against which the letter to Sardis was sent\*. Every Sardian knew the history of the city. The things we have described were encrusted with legend. They were household words. Everyone knew them. The morals to be drawn from them were so obvious...

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 57-58)

<sup>\*</sup> a very similar situation occurred in BC 218 also, when Antiochus the Great overthrew the city. The walls had been left largely unguarded.

The ecclesia of Sardis does not appear to have false doctrine, false brethren, immorality or idolatry. The problem however was that while everything looked good from the outside, inwardly they were dead.

#### **Summary of the Letter to Sardis:**

- v1 Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ & his immediate disapproval
- v2-3 Exhortation
- v4 A few in Sardis are commended
- v5-6 He that overcometh

# VERSE 1: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ & his immediate disapproval of many in Sardis

#### Verse 1

"And unto the angel of the ecclesia in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Bro HP Mansfield indicates that "Sardis" means "escaping ones".

The one who has the 7 spirits and holds the 7 ecclesias in his hand is Jesus Christ himself, with whom we can be at one (**Rev 1v13-16**).

"the 7 spirits of God" - This is expressive of Yahweh's spirit and is taken from Rev 1v4 where they are found to be "before his throne" (Gk. "which IS before the throne"). They are again referred to in Rev 4v5; 5v6. The number 7 symbolises completeness. The 7 ecclesias for instance are representative of the complete ecclesia of God (Rev 22v16). They represent ALL ecclesias. The 7 spirits therefore represent ALL God's power. The Lord Jesus Christ has ALL God's power at his disposal now he is immortal:

- **Col 2v9-10** "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."
- Matt 28v18 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

#### Think about it: Why would Christ use the symbol of seven spirits here?

The Lord is saying that he has perfect vision and that he can see everything that is going on. He therefore has the power to bring the ecclesia back to him - if they want to take up this opportunity. The <u>key verse</u> here is in **Rev 5v6**:

Rev 5v6 "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

#### Therefore:

The 7 spirits = the Lamb with 7 horns (represents power) & 7 eyes (all seeing).

Horns are always representative of POWER (eg. **Dan 7v21**; **8v6,9**). Eyes represent the ALL SEEING power of God (eg. **Ezek 1v18**; **2 Chron 16v9**)).

#### NOTES



The symbolic "7 spirits before the throne" - Painting by Bro Simon Sawell

This title of the Lord Jesus Christ therefore has to do with the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is "all seeing" (see the notes on page 40). His discerning eyes are able to see within the hearts of individuals and their ecclesias. Likewise the saints will be all powerful and all seeing as the overseers in God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh:

**Heb 4v12** "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Look up the following quotes and think carefully about these:

2 Chron 16v9 The eyes of Yahweh run through the world

**Heb 1v15** The angels of Yahweh are "ministering spirits"

Heb 2v5 The world to come is to be in subjection to the saints (see also Luke 20v36). The saints will therefore be the "7 spirits" in the

Kingdom age!

Matt 28v18 All power is given to Jesus Christ. The 7 spirits are therefore committed to Christ. This is the same as saying that Christ was given "the 7 spirits of God"

So why is this symbol of the 7 spirits used for Sardis? To all other ecclesias Sardis looked good, but Jesus Christ was all seeing, therefore he knew the real story. He could see that they were dead even if others could not. He also has God's power and is therefore able to bring about the promise.



#### "the 7 stars" -

These represent the elders. The elders were in effect the 7 spirits to this ecclesia because they were spirit gifted. There was a real problem with the elders, or angels (messengers) of the 7 ecclesias (**Rev 1v20**).

"thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" - JB Phillips translates this as, "a reputation you have for being alive, but in fact you are dead." Moffat translates as "You have the name of being alive, but you are dead."

 **■ MOTES** 

**James 2v26** indicates that if you just had works you would be dead. If good works were not motivated by faith you were a hypocrite. See **1 Tim 5v6** where it indicates that it is possible to be dead when actually alive.

Look up the following interesting cross references:

**Luke 15v24** The Prodigal son was just like Sardis. This son had been "dead" but was now "alive". There was a need for Sardis to wake up and be ALIVE.

**Luke 15v22** The father welcomed his son and "put on him the best robe" - this was the promise to Sardis! - "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment..." (**Rev 3v5**). Sardis was just like the prodigal son, with the exception that they had an outward appearance of being righteous, whereas really they were dead. They needed to return unto their heavenly Father.

**Matt 23v27** There were people in the days of Jesus Christ who also had a reputation. They were the Pharisees and they were hypocrites. They appear beautiful on the outside but inside they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. They had a name which they lived, but they were dead.

**Rom 6v12-13** Our old lives are spoken of here as being dead, but we are then raised to life. We need to be dead to our sins. We need to be alive, as if we were risen from the dead!

### Sardis and the danger of over-confidence

To an ecclesia in a city with all its greatness rooted in past history; to a city which, even in its greatness had failed to fulfil its promise, because its watchmen had failed to keep watch, or because (more aptly) it had failed to keep watch over those parts where it felt most secure; nothing could have been more salutary than the admonition here: "Be watchful!"

It is as though the Eternal Spirit were saying: "You think yourselves secure. You are wrong. The enemy has climbed up the wall at a point where you did not expect. You are about to be overthrown."

If ever there was a city whose history blazoned forth the uncertainty of human fortunes, the weakness of human strength and the shortness of the step that separates over-confident might from sudden and irreparable disaster, that city was Sardis. It was a city whose name was synonymous with pretentious unjustified, promises unfulfilled, appearance without reality, confidence that heralded ruin. Reputedly impregnable, it had repeatedly belied its reputation. Carelessness and failure to keep proper watch, rising from over-confidence in the apparent strength of the fortress, had been the cause of this disaster, which put an end to Sardis' dominance and to the Lydian Empire. The walls and gates guarding the southern approach to the city had been as strong as art and nature combined could make them. The hill on which the citadel stood was steep and lofty. The only orthodox approach to it was so carefully fortified as not to give any chance to an assailant.

But there was **one weak point**: in one place (not known to the defenders) it was possible for an **active** enemy to make his way up the perpendicular sides of the lofty hill, provided the defenders **stood idle** and **permitted him** to **climb** unhindered.

It is a sad story, because apparently not until the ecclesia received this letter (and then it was almost too late) would it have ever questioned its own sincerity, or examined its own motives. And the trouble is, that this very security, this sense of well-being, that we sometimes feel, can be the very thing that puts to sleep our spiritual responses; that part of us becomes toughened, calloused, unable to respond to the touch of the Spirit-Word, while all the time, underneath, we are very, very, sick. And some of us are dead. And others are ready to die..."

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 60,61)

 **■ MOTES** 

This ecclesia looked good to others. But were the organisers only doing the work because they had to? Were the speaking brethren only doing the talks because they were on the list? It is easy to be like this in ecclesial life. We need to have the motivation in our hearts rather than doing the work because it has to be done. We need to **be eager** to prepare studies for ecclesial classes, do the daily readings together, talk to each other about the Word, help those who are weak or sick, speak to the elderly in the ecclesia etc. This is how we enliven an ecclesia.

#### **VERSES 2-3: Exhortation**

#### Verse 2

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God."

There was obviously a downhill slide in this ecclesia. The things that remained were "about to die." There was a form of religion, but the power of the truth was denied (2 Tim 3v5). Watchfulness means to be "alert" to events around us. It is used in the context of Christ's return in Rev 16v15 & 1 Thess 5v6 which is a time of apathy in the lead up to Armageddon. Watchfulness is particularly about being alert to temptation through prayer: Weymouth translates this phrase as "Rouse yourself and keep awake." To "watch" means "to keep awake" (Str. #1127) and is far more than being aware of the signs of the times. NASB translates this as "wake up".

Bro HP Mansfield summarises this in the following 7 points:

Believers are exhorted to be watchful:

- Because they know not the time of the Lord's coming (Matt 24v41; 25v13; Mark 13v35,37)
- In order to guard against temptation (Matt 26v41; Mark 14v38)
- So as to recognise error (Acts 20v31)
- 4 In prayer (Col 4v2)
- In view of prophetic signs (1 Thess 5v6)
- To obtain a blessing (Rev 16v15)
- To receive a reward (Luke 12v37-38)

Matt 26v40-41 "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

In the context of the letter to Sardis, "watchfulness" means to be ALL SEEING. There is a definite link here to the 7 spirits of **verse 1** (with 7 eyes cp. **Rev 5v6** - all seeing). Those in Sardis are in effect being exhorted to be like the 7 spirits. There was an important need for them to be ALL SEEING and AWAKE to what was really going on in their ecclesia.

**Q** OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND:

Matthew 24v36-51; 25v1-30; 1 Kings 19.

There is an obvious allusion to the Olivet Prophecy here in the letter to Sardis:

Matt 24v42-45 "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a ❶ faithful and ❷ wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

The goodman of the house is he who looks after the household. The word "household" here is the Greek word "therapeia" (Str. # 2322) meaning in effect a healer or "therapist". It is translated as "household" in Matt 24v25 & Luke 12v42, but is translated "healing" in Rev 22v2. It is similar to the English word "therapist" which is a medical term for those who heal wounds and sicknesses. This is what the saints will be like in the Kingdom age. We need to be preparing for the Kingdom age NOW. It is our role to provide therapy and healing for the household today. The word "ruler" simply means "one appointed" and is a different Greek word to that referring to a ruler as one in government.

**Rev 22v2** reveals the tree of life whose "leaves were for the healing of the nations" indicating that the saints will help the mortal population come to a knowledge of God and His Truth. The saints will be fulfilling a priestly role in the Kingdom age (**Rev 5v10**). The saints will be able to say, "This is the way, walk ye in it..." (**Isa. 30v21**). They will be healers.

The obvious problem in Sardis is that they were not doing this. They were not strengthening the ecclesia in due season.

**Watch!!** We really need to read the whole of **Matt 24v36-51** as a background to Sardis. As in Noah's day, THEY KNEW NOT that judgement was coming! (**v38**). They didn't even know that they had a problem. Sardis is just like this.

The lamps are a symbol of the mind, which has the capacity to take in the oil of the Word. The oil is the Word of God. The light represents the Word of God COMBUSTED. The light is the word of God put into action!

We need to have oil in reserve! It is no good just studying the Word when the need arises, such as to prepare for a speaking appointment. We need to have a continual, daily intake of the Word to keep our store of oil replenished. Remember, this is our Heavenly Father speaking to us!

Notice that those who don't watch are appointed with the hypocrites! (v51) This is Sardis!! The parable of the 10 virgins in **Matthew 25** is therefore a highly relevant Scripture for Sardis.

#### **The question** arising from **Matt 24v42-45** is:

WHO then is a.... **1** faithful, and

**2** wise servant...?

The answer is given for us in the parables of Matthew 25:

Wise: Matt 25v1-14 Those with oil in their lamps - God's Word alight!Faithful: Matt 25v15-30 Those using their abilities diligently in the ecclesia

#### THE WISE SERVANT:

Matt 25v3,4,10,13 "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps... And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut...Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

#### THE FAITHFUL SERVANT:

#### Matt 25v20-21

"And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and **faithful servant**: thou hast been **faithful** over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

#### **■ NOTES**

Sardis had an appearance of these attributes on the outside, but really they were dead. The oil was rapidly running out. Their abilities were not being used for the edification of the ecclesia.

Notice that in **Matt 25v8**, the margin indicates that the meaning is: "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are **going** out." This is exactly the problem in Sardis: "strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die" They were on a downhill slide so to speak - they hadn't quite died yet, but they were in that process.

In the parable of the talents, it says that "the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." (v14) What are the goods? The goods are TALENTS: "And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability." (Diaglot, "to each according to his respective capacity") A talent means "that which is weighed out or apportioned to one, or a gift." The lesson is: Are we putting to good use what God has given us?

- How do we watch? By giving meat in due season. This is about helping and healing others in the Ecclesia. This all about feeding the ecclesia with the meat of the Word. This is what the faithful and wise servant does. The letter to Sardis has so many allusions to the latter day ecclesial situation. It is almost a prophetic letter for our days.
- What are some ways in which we can personally contribute towards the **healing** of others in our ecclesia, or in the Brotherhood?
- following It is really important to have a good understanding of **Matthew 24 & 25**.

Recommended notes on the Olivet Prophecy and Parables are:

- The Week that changed the World (Bro Mal Bonner) 1998 Study Week notes,
- 2 The Olivet Prophecy (Bro John Knowles).

Who then is the classic example of a faithful and wise servant? Yahweh Himself! See 1 Kings 19v3: Elijah had just slain the prophets of Baal. Elijah then "requested for himself that he might die" (v4) Meat was then given to Elijah by the angel. He is then woken up! (v3-8). He then "went in the strength of that meat 40 days and 40 nights unto Horeb..." (v8) In v7, Yahweh takes on the role of a faithful and wise servant as the angel touches him and gives meat to Elijah.

- What is the lesson of all this? We need to strengthen each other with the meat of God's Word for 40 symbolic days, a period of probation, then we will be found to be faithful and wise servants.
- **1 Kings 19v18** There were still 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. So what is God telling Elijah here? Go back and be a faithful and wise servant!! Strengthen the things that remain. The "things that remained" in Elijah's time were the 7000!
- ▼ To "strengthen the things which remain" is all about working with what is already there in the ecclesia. That is the lesson Elijah had to learn. We should not complain about our ecclesial situation, but instead work with what we have.

**The virtuous woman** in **Prov 31**, typifying the ecclesia of Christ, is the classic example of providing meat in due season. This is what Sardis had to do.

Prov 31v15 "She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens"

 **■ MOTES** 

Remember that Christ rose up before the day broke to go and pray to his Father: "Rising up a great while before day... departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (Mark 1v35). The virtuous woman doesn't sleep in till 9:00am just because she doesn't have to go to work the next day. This woman is an organiser - someone who does not let things happen haphazardly. She cannot rise early if she has carelessly stayed up late the night before. She makes sure that everything is well for her husband and children for when they rise.

Remember **Psalm 63v1:** "O God thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is..." We are in the night of Gentile darkness today, and we are preparing for the millennial dawn when the Sun of Righteousness comes with healing in his beams (**Mal 4v2**). We are living right at the end of that time of darkness. There is a need to be organised - to give meat in due season to those who desperately need it.

#### "for I have not found thy works perfect before God" -

In **Rev 3v2**, the word "perfect" means "to make replete, furnish, execute, finish" (Str. #4137) and is translated "accomplish" in **Luke 9v31**.

The Diaglot translates this phrase as, "I have not found thy works fully performed in the presence of my God." Rotherham translates as, "I have not found thy works fulfilled before my God."

It is clear that they had nowhere near performed what God had required of them given their opportunities. Their work was only half done. Many things may have been planned for this ecclesia, but how many were actually being carried out? Because an ecclesial program and structure is in place, we can sometimes almost feel as if the work has been done just because the structure is in place.

☑ There is far more to preaching work than being a member of an ecclesia who does seminars and lectures. There is far more to Bible Study than to just sit in a talk where a speaker does the work. We need to be personally involved. Appearances mean nothing. That is the whole point of this exhortation to Sardis.

Remember that Sardis is an ecclesia that the Lord Jesus Christ alludes to in his words of **Rev 16v15**. These ecclesial circumstances are certainly relevant for our days, otherwise Christ would never have used the words he did.

- ☑ There was an appearance of this ecclesia being busy but when it came to actually carrying out the tasks, they were only half done. Nothing was ever properly accomplished. Study classes and preaching efforts may have ended up being cancelled due to waning interest or the speaker not preparing in time. Ecclesial activities that began with real enthusiasm may have started to lose their appeal over the months. Ecclesial life can sometimes be like this. It is one thing to have sudden bursts of enthusiasm, but another to patiently continue the work until the end. This is the real test upon one's character.
- Matt 10v22 "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
- Rom 2v7 "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour and immortality, eternal life."

One character in the Bible who was a classic example of enduring to the end was Hezekiah. In the Chronicles record, a continual reference is made to the fact that Hezekiah not only began the work, but that he FINISHED the work (2 Chron 29v17,27-28; 31v1,7). We need to be the same. Think about it: The Lord Jesus Christ's last words on the cross were, "It is finished!" (John 19v30).

#### **■ MOTES**

We also need to remain committed to our work in the Truth, and make sure we fulfil our responsibilities and *finish* the work.

We often feel enthused after a Study Week or Conference, with the best intentions of continuing the work. In what ways can we maintain this enthusiasm? How can we make sure that our efforts are *fulfilled*? If we haven't finished the study of **Revelation 1-3**, what steps can we take to make sure that we finish the work? If we have goals, how can we actively make sure that these goals are *fulfilled*? How can we help our fellow young people to do the same?

#### Verse 3

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

They were exhorted to remember their beginnings and how they were when they first received the Truth. Diaglot renders "hold fast" as "observe it..." Therefore, look at the past and learn the lessons! There is a great need for this in the Brotherhood today.

To "repent" is to "reform" (Diaglot). In other words, to change our ways. This is the consistent exhortation of **Revelation 2v5,16,21,22**; **3v3,19**.

To "remember how thou hast received and heard" indicates that the ecclesia may have had good beginnings. This may be the reason for the ecclesia's good name. The problem however is that their enthusiasm and motivation changed over time.

- How do you think this exhortation is relevant for us today?
- What are some of the attitudes destroying what our ecclesias originally "received and heard", and how can these be overcome? How can we positively make a change for the better?

"I will come on thee as a thief" - This could not refer to Christ's literal coming and it couldn't be that God changed his mind. The exhortation must therefore refer to Christ coming in Divine judgement in one way or another.

- How does the history and topography of Sardis make this exhortation so much more powerful?
- What are some ways in which we can "watch" today? How is this more than just watching the signs of the times?

#### "thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" -

As in Noah's day, **THEY KNEW NOT** that judgement was coming! (**v38**). They didn't even know that they had a problem. Because there was a *gradual* increase in wickedness, those who were not awake were not aware of what was happening. They just went with the flow. Even *many in the world* can see that this is the way society is heading. Consider the following assessment of this gradual increase in wickedness. This was a discussion about the adverse affect of electronic media, and particularly violent video games and movies upon the minds of children:

"It will get larger and larger and more pervasive and more engulfing and, in fairly short order, it won't be strange or threatening at all, <u>but just what we</u> do-just like the technology that facilitates the context in which we live."

 **■ NOTES** 

It appears that at the return of Christ there are many who DON'T EVEN KNOW that they have a problem. WHY? How then can we be awake and alert to these things? How can we develop a knowledge of what is right and wrong to apply in our own lives?

# The challenge facing a Sardis-like ecclesia today

Let us pause and **examine ourselves** in the light of the Lord's comments on Sardis. It is possible for a modern ecclesia to be in a position similar to that of Sardis...

We begin our career in the Truth with enthusiasm and zeal but the years pass, the response to our preaching is meagre, problems arise in ecclesial life and the Lord does not come. Imperceptibly our efforts may slacken and we tend to leave our work only partly done. Our toil, endurance and zeal, our love, faith and service alike diminish. Bible study becomes superficial, and preparation for an address is done a few hours before it is to be given. We do not base it on real Bible study because we have not left ourselves time for this. We become reluctant to undertake work for the ecclesia; such work takes many forms and there is something we can all do if we are prepared to give the necessary time. Our good intentions are so often not "filled up" because we become more interested in the new car we are hoping to buy, or in the latest hi-fi or video equipment or other hobbies, than in our Lord's service, and this reduces the time we have for that service which inevitably becomes half-done.

Is this a picture of our ecclesia? We must not become nominal Christadelphians, just keeping in touch so that our name is not on the absence list. Natural Israel failed to give God the best of their flocks but offered blind, lame or sick animals in sacrifice... The new Israel must not fail as did natural Israel; we must not allow our Lord's verdict on us to be that which he passed on Sardis. The Truth must not become a mere addendum to our other interests instead of life's main purpose and thus fail to bear fruit to maturity.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell - The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia, pgs. 86-87)

#### ☐ OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND: Exodus 32 & 1 Kings 19

"Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain... or I will come on thee like a thief" (Rev 3v2,3)

The Old Testament background to these words are in Exod 32 & 1 Kings 19.

In **Exodus 32**, Moses had been in the mount for 40 days and the children of Israel had rebelled - they worshipped the golden calf. Yahweh in **v7** said, "Go, get thee down!" In **Deut 9v12** it says "Yahweh said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly!" - similar to the plea "Behold I come quickly!" in **Rev 22v7,12,20**. What were the people then made to do? They were made to eat the gold which was placed in the river system (The city of Sardis also had gold in their river system). They had been made NAKED to their shame. They were unclothed. BUT - the Levites separated themselves. And what were the Levites given as clothing? WHITE ROBES! This is what Sardis was promised: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment" (**Rev 3v5**).

The events of both **Exodus 32 & 1 Kings 19** were at Horeb - they are closely connected!! That is why it says that Elijah "came thither unto THE cave" (1 **Kings 19v9** Heb.) It was a specific cave. That is why God says to Elijah, "What doest thou HERE Elijah?" (emphasis in the Hebrew is on the word "here"). He was in the same place Moses had been. Moses went there to make intercession on behalf of Israel (**Exod 32v32**). Elijah went there to make intercession against Israel (**Rom 11v2**). These events are very closely linked.

 **■ NOTES** 

If Sardis were to read both these accounts in **Exod 32 & 1 Kings 19** they would see the problem that they had. Moses was to come on them *like a thief*. Elijah was told to *strengthen the things that remain*.

In the case of Elijah, that work is predominantly future, when the children of Israel will be fed with knowledge and understanding (**Jer 3v14-17**, **Ezek 20v33-38**, **Mal 4v4-6**).

#### VERSE 4: A few in Sardis are commended

#### Verse 4

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."

The *garment* represents *forgiveness* through Christ. We are therefore *covered* by his righteousness. The garment brings our minds back to the Son of Man in **Rev 1v13** who is "clothed with a garment down to the foot."

The word for garments here is slightly different however. The Greek word for "garments" here in **3v4** is also translated "garments" in **Rev 16v15**. It is translated "white raiment" in **Rev 3v5,18**; **4v4**, and "vesture" in **Rev 19v13,16**. It is referring to the clean garment put on at our baptism.

- Look up the following quotations on garments and link them together: Gen 3v7,21 (Adam & Eve coats of skins cp. John 1v29-36); Exod. 20v26; Gal 3v27; Col 3v10; Matt 24v10-14; Jude v23.
- Refer to *Apocalypse Epitomised* (page 57) by Bro HP Mansfield for an excellent summary on the subject of "garments" in Revelation. Bro Mansfield shows that there are predominantly 3 main words in the Greek to indicate the clothing of saints in Revelation. These are summarised as follows:
- The garment of Rev 1v13. This is a garment covering the whole body from neck to foot. The word is used in the Septuagint (Greek O.T.) for the robe of the high priest (Exod 28v4), the "linen" of the angelic judge of Ezek 9v2, and the "change of raiment" of Joshua (Zech 3v4). There is an indication that the "One like unto the Son of Man" (Rev 1v13) has been subjected to a change in nature (Zech 3v4),and stands as a judge (Ezek 9v2) and a high priest (Exod 28v4).
- The second word is that translated "garments" in Rev 3v4 & 16v15. This speaks of an outer cloak or mantle, though the plural of the word (as in Rev 3v4;16v15) appears to indicate clothing in general. These garments are put on at baptism but completed at the judgement seat (Rev 4v4).
- The third word used in the Apocalypse is translated "white robes". This word represents a long garment over the top of outer clothing, completing the dress. This garment is more representative of the status of the one wearing it, thus it is found upon the saints in the kingdom visions of Rev 6v11; 7v9,13,14, therefore relating to their status in the age to come. These robes are said to be "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." (7v14). Bro Mansfield therefore suggests that these robes can be identified with the white linen gowns of Rev 19v8,14; 15v6.

There is an obvious connection with all of these, and **a process** whereby we first "put on" Christ so that eventually we might be "clothed with a garment down to the foot" and "arrayed in white robes".

 **■ MOTES** 

To "walk with him in white" refers to being perfectly clothed in purity with Christ in the Kingdom (see notes on Rev 1v14). The emphasis here appears to be in the WALKING with Christ. He is pure, so we also must be pure:

- Rev 7v13-14 "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
- **Rev 19v8** "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."
- **2 Cor 11v2** Paul says "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"
- **Eph 5v26-27** "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
- **Gal 3v27** "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have <u>put</u> on Christ"

"walk with me..." -

See **Amos 3v3**: "Can two *walk together*, except they be agreed?" Also **Micah 6v8**: "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to *walk* humbly with thy God?"

In practical day-to-day living, what does it mean to WALK with God? How does this then affect the way we live our lives? How does it affect where we go and the way we spend our spare time?

#### Of which 2 men did it say that they walked with God?

- Enoch
- Noah
- **Gen 5v22,24** "And **Enoch walked with God** after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.... and Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him."
- "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God..."
- Gen 6v9 "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."
- Heb 11v7 "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

The Jerusalem ecclesia to whom **Hebrews 11** was written was also about to be translated that they might not see death - they were to flee the city of Jerusalem before its desolation and therefore be saved from the Romans. They were prepared for the approaching Roman flood.

 **■ MOTES** 

Consider how Enoch & Noah are joined together in **Hebrews 11** by one verse:

- Heb 11v6 "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
- Enoch prophecied of coming judgement on an evil world:
- Jude v14-15 "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophecied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."
- **Noah** prophesied about the flood. This was a thieflike advent in their days:
- **Lk 17v26-27** "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man, They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all."

Maybe this is why Christ says to the ecclesia at Sardis, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief..." and for those who had not defiled their garments, "they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."

Bro Thomas summarises this in Eureka (Vol. 1, p.357):

"Their robes must be of moral and material whiteness. Their <u>character</u> being pure and unstained, their <u>nature</u> must be made to correspond."

- In what sense does Christ use the phrase "they are worthy"? How are we "worthy" now, even in our mortality?
- Why do you think that Christ would use so much of the language of Sardis in his exhortation to us in **Revelation 16v15**? How are the circumstances in Sardis specifically unique to these latter days?

#### VERSES 5-6: He that overcometh

#### Verses 5-6

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

"He that overcometh" - Refer to the notes in the Introduction (Part 3) on overcoming the world, pages 28-31. The Diaglot says, "The conquerer shall thus be clothed in white garments..."

Notice the connecting word in the Greek "thus" - implying that this verse should be read in close connection with the verses before.

"white raiment" - The clothing in white raiment refers to the change to Spirit nature at the judgement seat of Christ (1 Cor 5v1-4; Rev 19v8). The 24 elders in Rev 4v4 are found to be clothed in "white raiment" (same word in the Greek).

There appears to be a definite reference in **Revelation 4v4** back to Sardis and also Laodicea (**3v18**, "white raiment"). This is confirmed also because the saints are symbolised as 4 living creatures of the cherubim, being "full of eyes" (**Rev 4v6**). The saints will be all-seeing in the Kingdom - just like the Lord Jesus Christ in his introduction to Sardis (see notes on **Rev 3v1**).

The vision of **Revelation 4** is given as encouragement to those in the latter days who may be facing a Sardis or Laodicean ecclesial environment. Refer to the summary notes on Laodicea linking **Rev 4** & **Rev 3v14-22**.

So who are these saints, clothed in white raiment?

**Rev 14v4** "These are they which were **not defiled** with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

☑ Only those who are walking in white now will do so in the Kingdom.

"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" - This is referred to a number of times in the Apocalypse: Rev 13v8; 17v8; 20v12,15; 21v27. The book is spoken of by Moses in Exodus 32v32. The book of life is symbolic. Upon baptism, our names are inscribed in the book, while our sins are "blotted out" from Yahweh's remembrance (Isa 43v25). Those saints who remain faithful will have their names retained in the book. Those who are not faithful will have their names "blotted out" (Psa. 69v26-28). In the time of trouble such as never was, those saints written in the book will be delivered (Dan 12v1).

Mal 3v16 "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name." (cp. Phil 4v3)

There are also books which record the future destiny of nations (**Dan 7v10-12**, **Matt 25v32**).

Bro Thomas makes the additional comment:

"This is styled the scroll of the life in allusion probably to the custom of oriental monarchs, who, as they had several books for the record of things, so they had a peculiar book, in which they entered the names and actions of all those who did them any special service, that they might reward them in due time. See **Esther 6v1-3**, where it is styled "the Book of Records of daily affairs." (Eureka, Vol. 1, page 361)

"confess his name" - We are baptised "into the name" (Matt 28v19). Our daily way of life declares "the name" (John 17v6,26).

The Spirit's message to Sardis commenced with a warning that in the eyes of man they had a *name* that they lived but the eyes of the Spirit discerned that they were in fact dead. If they were to have their name confessed before the Father, then they must repent and hold fast the *name* (cp. Rev 2v13)

(Bro John Knowles, Here what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, p. 31)

That the names of true believers are confessed before the Father and the angels indicates that the angels are in attendance at the judgement seat. Similar words are spoken by Christ himself in **Matt 10v32**, **Luke 12v8** referring to our witness to the world.

Here is emphasised the importance of personal preaching. Do others at our work know about the return of Christ? Are we keen to speak to others about our hope?

#### NOTES

Jesus Christ will only confess our names to God if we have confessed his name to the world:

Matt 10v32 "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven."

**Luke 12v8** "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

# "I will confess his name before my Father"

What a magnificent consideration is this day of public confession! But why has the Lord expressed the blessing in this way in writing to Sardis? Clearly the few names were also obscure names, members not generally respected and appreciated in this self-congratulating, self-sufficient ecclesia. No-one prominent in Sardis ever sung the praises of the faithful few, one senses in this letter. In fact, their good may have been evily-spoken of amidst the worldly-wise of this meeting. How beautiful it is to hear the Master's reassurance to the careful, God-minded "few"; he would not overlook them! Rather he will surely lift up their names for acclamation and honour."

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear..." - To hear is to "hearken" (Rev 1v3; 3v20) and "give heed". Therefore, a practical application is involved! This is emphasised in all 7 letters to the ecclesias (Rev 2v7,11,17,29; 3v6,13,22). The only other place this phrase is stated in the Apocalypse outside of the 7 ecclesias is in Revelation 13v9. This is in the context of judgement upon the Roman Catholic apostasy. This apostasy was the end result of that "mystery of iniquity" found even in these first century Gentile ecclesias (2 Thess 2v1-11).

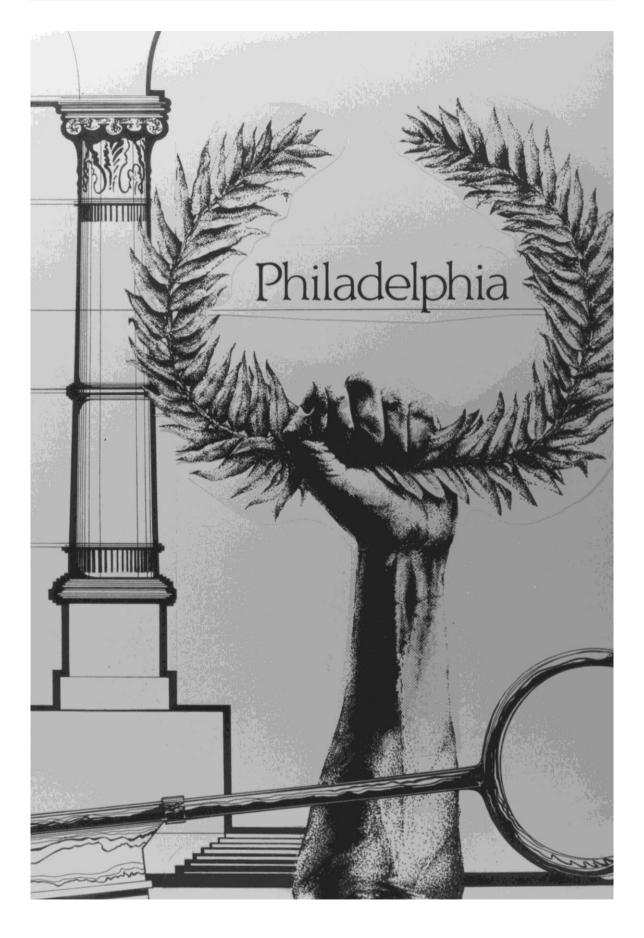
IMPORTANT: Read further comments about having an ear and hearing in the notes on the letter to Ephesus in **Revelation 2v7**.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

(Revelation 19v7-8)

# **NOTES**

# **NOTES**



- This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- oxdots This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

# Revelation 3v7-13 LETTER TO THE ECCLESIA AT PHILADELPHIA

Eureka Vol 1, p. 372-400

Old Testament Background: Isaiah 22

#### THE LETTER TO PHILADELPHIA IS VITAL IN OUR DAYS:

We have seen that the Letters to Sardis and Laodicea are particularly important for us in these last days because of the Lord's urgent appeal in **Revelation 16v15**. This is in the context of the nations being gathered for Armageddon. The Lord Jesus Christ is saying to us, "Don't be like Sardis or Laodicea!" The clear inference is that in the last days it will be easy to lapse into a Sardis or Laodicean type environment. This however is not the full story. Philadelphia is also important.

In **Revelation 22** - the very last chapter of the Bible - Jesus Christ repeatedly warns that *he is NOT coming slowly*. He says, as he did to Philadelphia, that **HE IS COMING QUICKLY**....

- **Rev 22v7** "Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."
- **Rev 22v12** "And **behold I come quickly**; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."
- **Rev 22v20-21** "He which testifieth these things saith, **Surely I come quickly**. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

This means that his return to the earth is going to be very sudden, very unexpected and very quick. These are exactly the words given to the ecclesia at Philadelphia:

**Rev 3v11** "Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

It was the nature of his coming that was important. It wasn't that Christ was coming in the days of Philadelphia. The saying "Behold I come quickly" therefore indicates the way in which Christ will intervene rather than the time that should elapse before it is performed. There does however appear to be a prophetic overtone to his words here. He is pointing forward to the words of **Revelation 22** in his exhortation to Philadelphia. We therefore need to know about this letter!

In this last gasp warning therefore, Jesus Christ is exhorting us to **BE LIKE PHILADELPHIA!** In other words, the way to overcome a Sardis or Laodicean way of life is to adopt the attributes that were notable to Philadelphia. We must therefore be diligent Bible students and "keep" the Word. We need to openly proclaim the Truth. We must have patient endurance to the end. These are the important characteristics of Philadelphia that are vital in our days!

Consider also the important promise made to Philadelphia and how this relates to us today. They were to be protected from the trials coming upon the world in the future:

**Rev 3v10** "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (trial), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

Compare this with the words of **Isaiah**. The believers are protected in the day of Yahweh's wrath:

"Your dead will come to life, their corpses will rise; awake, exult, all you who lie in the dust... Go into your rooms, my people, shut the doors behind you. Hide yourselves a little while until the wrath has passed. For see, Yahweh will soon come out of His dwelling, to punish all the inhabitants of earth for their crimes. The earth will reveal its blood and no longer hide its slain." (Jerusalem Bible)

Let us therefore take comfort and exhortation from the words to Philadelphia, because surely these are words for our days! Surely he is coming quickly!



The Lamb upon Mount Zion (painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

"I will write upon him the name of my God...." (Rev 3v12)

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty four thousand, having <u>his Father's name</u> written in their foreheads.... These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." (Rev 14v1,4)

#### **BACKGROUND TO THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

As a city, Philadelphia, which means "brotherly love", had been founded by Pergamos. It derived its name from Attalus II, B.C. 159-138, whose truth and loyalty to his brother Eumenes won him the epithet Philadelphus.

Philadelphia was in the heart of the kingdom (of Pergamos), and its formation therefore appears to have been more for the purpose of **education**, to consolidate and therefore regulate the central regions subject to the Pergamonian kings.

...In AD 17, an unusually severe **earthquake** destroyed twelve cities of the great Lydian Valley including Sardis and Philadelphia. Strabo says Sardis suffered most, but Philadelphia longest, the tremors continuing unto AD 20. The Emperor Tiberius came to the aid of the stricken cities, and Philadelphia assumed **the new name** "Neokaisareia" (the new Ceasar), but the new name disappeared from use about AD 42-50.

Thus Philadelphia's history was marked by certain features that find reflection in the letter to the ecclesia there. *First*, it was a city established for propaganda purposes, even as it was the function of the ecclesia there to *proclaim the name* of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Rev 3v8**). *Second*, its people lived in fear of earth tremors, even as the ecclesia faced a coming "hour of trial" (v10). *Third*, in its appreciation for an Imperial benefaction, it assumed a new and royal name, even as Christ had offered to write upon those who overcame, the name of the New Jerusalem (v12).

These (and probably other) features at once established historical connection between the city and those within the city to whom the letter was addressed.

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 67)

 **■ NOTES** 

This letter is a little different to most of the other letters, because there is no condemnation. Instead, they are exhorted to hold fast to their crown and are promised that they will be vindicated:

#### Summary of the Letter to Philadelphia:

v7 Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ

v8 The Ecclesia commended

**v9-10** Promise that Yahweh will protect them

**v11** Exhortation

v12-13 He that overcometh

#### **VERSE 7: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ**

#### Verse 7

"And to the angel of the ecclesia in Philadelphia write; These things saith 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;"

Philadelphia is obviously an ecclesia which has only a few left in it but who were holding fast to the true principles and practises of the Truth.

The title by which Christ introduces himself is taken from Isaiah 22v22.

#### "he that is holy" -

He that is "holy" is Jesus Christ, who has inherited this title of Yahweh through living a perfectly obedient life. The word "holy" simply means "holy one" (as in Diaglot) and is translated "saint" in **Rev 5v8**; **8v3,4**; **11v18** and many other places in Revelation. Holiness is referred to in **Rev 4v8**, **6v10**, **15v4**, **20v6**, **22v11**. To be "Holy" is to be "sacred or blameless" (Str. #40) and derives from a root word "to be clean" (Str. #53). It indicates that one is completely separate and set aside for God's use. We also have to be holy and true. To Laodicea, Christ names himself, "he that is faithful and true". It is apparent that Philadelphia were holy and true, unlike Laodicea and Sardis.

The "holy one" is a title used of the Saints in **Hab 3v3**. Yahweh is called the "Holy One" in **Hab 1v2** indicating that the call, "be ye holy even as I am holy" is heeded by these true believers. Yahweh is called "the Holy One" in **Ezek. 39v7** and in many places in Isaiah (Isaiah 1v4, 5v19,24, 10v17,20, 12v6, 17v7, 29v19, 43v3 etc.) The title is applied to Christ in **Psalm 16v10**.

#### "he that is true" -

Jesus Christ is also "he that is true" because this is what Yahweh is like (**Isa 65v16**; **1 John 5v20**, "The true God"). The following characteristics of truth are used in John's Gospel to describe Jesus Christ:

- 1) "The **true** light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." (**John 1v9**)
- "The true bread from heaven" (John 6v32)
   We know from this that the manna symbolised the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) "The true vine... ye are the branches" (John 15v1)

We should follow the example of Christ that we might be found to be "true worshippers (who) worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4v23). Jesus Christ is also the true tabernacle (Heb 8v2; 9v24).

#### NOTES

- The title "he that is holy, he that is true" is not taken from **Revelation 1**. Why not? Why would this title have been specifically chosen for Philadelphia?
- What does this title mean for us personally?

# Similarities between Philadelphia and Smyrna

There are obvious similarities between the position of the ecclesias in Philadelphia and Smyrna. They are the only ecclesias to receive unqualified praise from their Lord. They were free from heresy and moral failings despite the worship of Dionysus at Philadelphia which could have corrupted the brethren and sisters. Smyrna was poor and Philadelphia had but little power. Both faced active opposition from Jews who, unlike these ecclesias, were rich and powerful. Smyrna was about to suffer tribulation but Philadelphia had already been tested. He who died and came to life identified himself with those in Smyrna who would suffer death but receive the crown of life.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, Letters to the 7 churches of Asia, p. 94)

#### "he that hath the key of David" -

"The Key of David" is a direct reference back to the record of Hezekiah's time in Isaiah 22 and refers to the keys of the Kingdom of God. It is described in Isaiah 22v22 as "the key of the house of David". This is like saying you have "the keys of hell and of death" (Rev 1v18). He who has the key has total control as to who comes in and who goes out.

#### **□** OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND:

**Isaiah 22** is certainly the important background chapter for this letter to Philadelphia.

It is very important that we read the whole of Isaiah 22. If we are not at all familiar with this part of Isaiah it is good to read from another Bible version to start with, such as the NIV. Note down the parallels to our days. Note the parallels with Sardis and Laodicea. Think carefully about the chapter. It would also be helpful to read 2 Kings 18-20 as background to the times of Isaiah and Hezekiah.

**Isaiah 22** is set in the days of Hezekiah when the Assyrian was about to come down against the city. In this chapter, Isaiah prefigures two states of David's Kingdom by a the comparison between two of Hezekiah's officers:

- Shebna In control of Yahweh's house, but he was a proud man.
- Eliakim The one who Yahweh would set up to replace Shebna.

Hezekiah is reigning as king at this time. He has undertaken a great reformation and re-established the feasts. However the Assyrians were on the march and were taking one city after another. They were a real threat to the whole of Judah and particularly Jerusalem. A time of trial came upon the ecclesia in Jerusalem just like Philadelphia.

The historical background to Assyria's invasion and their defeat is found in **Isaiah 36-39**.

**Think about why this example is used for Philadelphia**. There were false Israelites known as the "Synagogue of Satan" (v9). It was them who appeared to have control over the house, but Christ is saying to Philadelphia that HE has the key.

Shebna was over Hezekiah's house (the house of David cp. **Zech 12**). He had a key - he was in control. He had a real problem with his pride however. In **Isa. 22v15-16** Shebna desired to set up for himself a big sepulchre for when he died. In **v17-18** we see a play on Shebna's name. His name means, "to be captive". He had the key, but was to have the key taken away. In **v20-22** we are introduced to the one who will be given the key. This is **Eliakim** whose name means "Ail shall set up". In other words, **God will do it**, whereas Shebna had been aiming to set himself up. We read in **Isaiah 22v36,22**; **37v2** that Eliakim was given control over the house of David. Jesus Christ is in effect saying to those at Philadelphia, "I am the Eliakim - I am the one who Yahweh will set up". Eliakim was "a servant" (**Isa. 22v20**). This was Jesus Christ! The key was to be given to him who served:

**Isa. 22v22** "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."

Hezekiah means "strengthened of Yahweh" and he is so typical of the Lord Jesus Christ. In **Psalms 120-135** we have the songs of degrees - Hezekiah's symbolic resurrection. It was a work of God. This was not his own doing. Look at **Psa. 127v1** where we learn that only Yahweh can build the house. There is no strength in ourselves. We can only try to do His will.

2 Cor 12v9 "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

#### SHEBNĀ & ELIĀKIM IN ISĀIĀH 22

**Shebna** was typical of those unholy and false Israelites who, claiming special relationship to God because of the Temple, would nevertheless go into captivity (see **Jer 7v3-7**). This kind was present in Philadelphia and described as false "Jews", in fact, "the synagogue of Satan" (**v9**). On the other hand **Eliakim**, though a "servant" (**Isa 22v20**) would be clothed with honour and glory and given authority over the house of David and inherit all the glory of his father's house! (**Isa 22v21-25**). What a remarkable prophecy!

When Jesus read the words of Isaiah he would have seen that their scope went far beyond the role of Isaiah's Eliakim, even to himself as Son of David and Son of God, and hence his employment of this beautiful quotation in the midst of these words to Philadelphia. Without an appreciation of the background of **Isaiah 22** and the days of king Hezekiah the full force of the Lord's words would never be appreciated. Clearly when the brethren in Philadelphia received this heavenly message they would have carefully scoured the record of Hezekiah to understand their Master's message; and equally clearly, the Lord Jesus Christ expected them to do so.

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, p.68-69)

It is very interesting to look at the language used in **Isaiah 22**. There are many indications that the people in these days were like Sardis and Laodicea:

"You saw that the city of David had many breaches in its defences; you stored up water in the Lower pool. You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago. The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die!" (NIV)

 **■ NOTES** 

This is very significant when we consider our days. The Lord Jesus Christ alludes to the ecclesias of Sardis and Laodicea in his words of **Rev 16v15**.

However he also alludes back to the ecclesia of Philadelphia in his words to us in **Rev 22v7,12,20**. Christ is in effect saying to us <u>today</u>: "Despite the times in which you live... Don't be like Sardis or Laodicea! BUT... Be like Philadelphia!"

This is exactly the situation of **Isaiah 22**! They were like the Laodiceans, numbering the houses of Jerusalem and strengthening their walls. They were building reservoirs to store drinkable water. They were saying, "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (v13). These were days of drunkenness and revelry (v2). Shebna, the man in charge of Yahweh's house, was making himself a Sepulchre on high, carved into the rock. He should have been the watchman on the walls so to speak. Shebna however was preparing a monument to himself for when he was dead, a monument high up in the rock (v16). He was trying to make a name for himself when he was dead!

Just like Sardis however, they would be taken away with a mighty captivity (v17). Why? Because they were *dead already*, despite appearing to be alive.

This is the ecclesia at Philadelphia. They only had a "little strength" (v8)! The ecclesia is promised that they will be made "a pillar in the temple of my God" (v12) because the temple is where God resides. The house of David will therefore be restored. In Amos 9 we read that the house had been broken down. Acts 15v11-12 quotes Amos 9. This chapter in Acts is all about the Jerusalem Conference where the big issue was on what basis to fellowship the Gentiles:

- Amos 9v11-12 "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this."
- Acts 15v14-17 "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

Yahweh is therefore saying, "I will set it up!" (ie. ELIAKIM whose name means "God will set up"). The Philadelphians were Gentiles not Jews. They were obviously in difficulty because of hostile Jews. The words of Christ in this letter would therefore be of comfort to them when he reassures them that he has the "key of David" and that he is going to give it to them!

**Zechariah 12v8** says that at the setting up of the Kingdom, "the house of David shall be as God". It is said in **Luke 1v32-33** that Jesus Christ will be given "the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

David is often used as a type of Christ (eg. **Jer 30v9**; **Ezek 34v23**; **37v24**). The promise to David of a future Messiah is outlined in **2 Sam 7v12-17**. The "house of David" is used in **Psalm 122v5** to represent those who inherit the Kingdom age in Jerusalem. See also **Isa. 55v3**.

Matt 16v19 "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

 **■ NOTES** 



**In Luke 11** we read how the Pharisees had taken away the key of knowledge. He who is given the key to a house has complete right of access to that house:

#### Heb 3v5-6

"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

**Jesus Christ** therefore has the key to this house. It is he who opens and shuts.

"he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" -

Look up the following interesting quotes:

**I Chron 9v27 -** David & Samuel gave to the priests the responsibility of keeping the doors of the house of God. These priests **opened** the doors!

2 Chron 28v24 - The days of Ahaz - He cut in pieces the vessels and **shut** the doors. This is the opposite to 1 Chron 9 where David had **opened** the doors.

But...

**2 Chron 29v3 -** It was Ahaz's son Hezekiah who then *opened* the doors! But... Hezekiah's son Manassah then *closed* the doors again.

Christ is now saying that he only has the key and he will open that temple!

**Matt 23v13 -** The Pharisees *shut up* the Kingdom of heaven! Jesus Christ hated those who were proud, as were the Pharisees.

**Rev 21v25 -** The gates are **opened** ALL DAY long. This temple is "New Jerusalem", the very promise given to Philadelphia. There is no night there the gates are always **opened**! The whole ecclesia at Philadelphia are now offered total acceptance into the Kingdom of God!

#### **VERSE 8: The ecclesia commended**

#### Verse 8

"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

"...because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my WORD, and didst not deny my NAME." (Diaglot)

Those in Philadelphia are now being told that they are like Eliakim. They are the ones who had big problems with the adversary - the Shebna class. Jesus Christ is certainly saying that *he* is the Eliakim, with the key. However, he is also saying that *they* can be like Eliakim, with an open door that no man can shut. They are being given the key to the house of David.

NOTES

# Hezekiah's Philadelphian character

The times of Hezekiah illustrate the thought very beautifully. Hezekiah's attitude was one of "brotherly love". He rekindled the religious zeal of the people and caused great joy in Jerusalem (2 Chron 30v26). He "spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of Yahweh" (v22) and prayed for those of the northern ten tribes that were legally unclean that Yahweh would overlook their deficiency - "The good LORD pardon everyone that prepareth his heart to seek God" (2 Chron 30v18-20). He opened the Temple and reformed the Temple services (2 Chron 29v25-29). Here was an outstanding man after God's own heart that opened himself to the work of God in a most inspiring manner! 2 Chron 31v20-21 beautifully summarises the life and spirit of king Hezekiah, a fitting example and exhortation to the Philadelphian brethren.

Yet in spite of all his zeal and devotion, it was revealed to him that he would die (Isa 38v1). Separated from the communion of Yahweh that he treasured so highly, he saw himself "cut off", bound by "the gates of the grave" (Isa 38v10) beyond "the land of the living" (v11). The echoes to Rev 3v7-8; 1v18 and Isa 22v22 are very clear. However, he was then promised that his sickness would pass and that he would be given an extension to his life of 15 years (Isa 38v5). This occurred on "the third day" (2 Kings 20v8) and so the door of the Temple was opened to him and he entered again into the house of Yahweh (Isa 38v20-22). What Hezekiah prefigured Jesus fulfilled when he rose the third day, no longer to die but to enter into life eternal; and this is the Saviour that provides this same opening for the faithful of Philadelphia.

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 ecclesias, p.69-70)

#### "thou hast a little strength" -

It appears that there would not have been a large number left in the ecclesia and that is the meaning of "little strength." Words of encouragement are given first to Philadelphia.

The word "strength" is the Greek "dunamis" i.e. "power". This ecclesia only had a "little power". Maybe they were small in number or abilities.

- Look up **Matt 25v14-30.** This is the parable of the talents. The talents are given according to each one's "abilities" (dunamis).
- 1 Cor 1v26-27 "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty."

This is a key quote for Philadelphia. The Greek word "mighty" is derived from "dunamis" i.e. "power". The small ability that they had was not necessarily of particular greatness. Where was their real strength? Not in themselves. These people had an incredible love for their Bible. They regularly studied their Bibles. Their strength was made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12v9).

The phrase "little strength" is here qualified by saying that they had "kept my Word" and also "hast not denied my name".

#### "I have set before thee an open door" -

Paul said in 1 Cor 16v9 that "a great door and effectual is opened unto me" and in 2 Cor 2v2 that "a door was opened unto me of the Lord." The way to the Truth is described in Acts 14v27 as "the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

 **■ MOTES** 

#### "hast not denied my name" -

☑ It is said of those who do not deny the name of Yahweh that Jesus Christ "will confess his name before his Father, and before His angels" (v5). Similar words are spoken by Christ himself in Matt 10v32 & Luke 12v8 referring to our witness to the world. Jesus Christ will only confess our names to God if we have confessed his name to the world:

Matt 10v32 "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven."

**Luke 12v8** "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

Witness for the truth of the Scriptures is one of the great themes of Revelation. See the notes on *witnessing* for the Truth in **Rev 3v14**.

# Making the most of our opportunities

And what an example for modern believers. The Lord **still opens doors**, he is active today as he was 1900 years ago. Are we using those doors for proclaiming the Gospel? 1900 years ago an opportunity came to an ecclesia which had little power but it was seized. There are many small ecclesias throughout the world today struggling year after year to continue their work for the Lord. Sometimes they barely maintain their numbers after decades of preaching. Jesus knows they have but little power: his understanding of them is still infinite, and he does not expect a one talent meeting to produce results possible for a five talent meeting but he does require that, as at Philadelphia, they will do all they can by making full use of their one talent.

The temptation to which a believer or an ecclesia is subject if they have but one talent, is not to use it, thinking that it cannot make any real difference whether the talent is used or buried. The Philadelphian ecclesia had not succumbed to this temptation and left an example for meetings of each succeeding generation who find themselves in a similar position. The message of this letter to such ecclesias is that they need not thereby be discouraged. The Lord understands their lack of power and will commend them in the day of judgement if they had made full use of what they had. There is also a message for larger ecclesias today. They too must make full use of the doors the Lord opens for his work. It is easy in a large ecclesia to leave others to do the work. There is always someone who will! This attitude to leaving it to others and not doing all that we can is not one which will meet with the Lord's approval when he comes to reckon with his servants.

(Bro W.L. Bedwell, Letters to the 7 churches of Asia, p.98)

#### "and hast kept my Word" -

To "keep" God's Word, we must firstly read and hear it. The "keeping" should come as a natural result:

- Rev 1v3 "Blessed is he that **0** readeth, and they that **0** hear the words of this prophecy, and **0** keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."
- ☑ How do we keep the Word of God? We must firstly have the Word of God in our minds to begin with. The pressure from the world now is becoming so great that it is more and more difficult these days to do our Bible Readings. Surely it is obvious that we cannot possibly "keep the Word" without having a regular intake. We need to become walking Bibles, practically applying God's Word in our lives. It is true that most of us are all "busy". However, what is it that we are busy with? We need to ask the question, "Are we too busy just doing nothing?" This may seem a strange question at first, but isn't this a particularly relevant question today?

 **■ NOTES** 

The rapid increases in technology are filling our lives up with so much information that where is the time to fit in God's Word? Consider the following comments by a non-Christadelphian writer about how we spend our **time**:

# Keeping the Word - Are we really "too busy"?

It is true that there is so much good on TV - good information and enjoyable, uplifting entertainment. But for most of us and our families, the reality is more like digging a lovely tossed salad out of a garbage dump. There may be some great salad there, but it's pretty hard to separate out the trash, the dirt and the flies.

Low grade, gradual pollution can desensitise us not only to how awful the pollution but also to what we are trading off for it. It would take an enormous amount of benefit from television to trade off the time that could be spent with family members learning, loving, working and sharing together!

A recent *U.S. News & World Report* poll reported that 90 percent of those polled felt that the nation is slipping deeper into moral decline. That same poll found that **62 percent felt TV was hostile toward their moral and spiritual values**. So why are so many watching so much TV?

In their book *Time for Life*, sociologists John Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey reported that on the average, Americans spend 15 of their 40 hours of free time every week watching television. They suggest that <u>maybe we are not as</u> "busy" as we seem to be.

(Stephen Covey, The 7 habits of highly effective families, p. 125)

Consider that 62% of those *in the world* felt that TV was hostile towards moral and spiritual values!!! *And now* with internet & pay TV it is going out of control!

Whether or not we own a TV or computer is irrelevant. The real issue for us is, **how much time** do we devote to God's Word compared with just lazing around in front of the box or surfing the net? As devotion to the world increases, so our devotion to Yahweh and His ecclesia inevitably decreases. The Philadelphians were much different to the "average American" or "average Australian". They also might have been "very busy". However, they found time to read the Word. As such, they were able to "keep" the Word. In these **last days** we need to be the same!

The great challenge is, How do we respond to the example of Philadelphia in these last days? How much TIME do we have to listen to our God?

### VERSES 9-10: Promise that Yahweh will protect them Verse 9

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

"Behold! I am giving up those from the assembly of the adversary, who declare themselves to be Jews, and are not, but speak falsely; behold! I will make them to come and pay homage before thy feet, and to know that I loved thee." (Diaglot)

#### "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan" -

The "Synagogue of Satan" are also in the ecclesia of Smyrna. In **Rev 2v9** they are a group of Judaisers adverse to the ecclesia. Just like Philadelphia, the ecclesia at Smyrna received no rebuke, and these also are the 2 ecclesias where "the synagogue of the adversary" are said to be causing problems.

 **■ MOTES** 

There appears to be many similarities between Smryna and Philadelphia. Refer back to the notes on **Rev 2v9**.

Pergamos and Thyatira however were ecclesias who did fellowship "the synagogue of the adversary" and are rebuked for it. Pergamos had "the doctrine of Balaam..." (Rev 2v14) while Thyatira "sufferest that woman Jezebel..." (Rev 2v20) and as a result, in both cases it is said "I have a few things against thee..."

## Philadelphia and Isaiah 22

"A group of Judaisers who were trying to enslave the ecclesia into the doctrine of Salvation by works of Law with all its attendant ramifications: This class was typified by Shebna (Isa. 22v15-19) who had hewed him out a sepulchre on high, confident that he was secure in his position and resting in his own strength. Yahweh told him however that he would be removed from his station and that he would be superseded by Eliakim. The history of the times testifies to the fact that the Jewish nation were taken captive as Shebna's name implies. The Spirit's message to Philadelphia is to learn the lessons found in Isaiah 22, that the faithful Eliakim class will be exalted in due time (contrast Isa 22v15 with 2 Kings 18v18) and the Judaisers will be forced to recognise their elevation "and worship before their feet."

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, page 32)

#### "which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie" -

This phrase is repeated here in Philadelphia. The same phrase was used to describe the Synagogue of Satan at Smyrna (Rev 2v9). These are those who were not the true "Israel of God" (Gal 6v16) and who were not Jews "inwardly" (Rom 2v28) even though they may have had an external appearance. Paul says in Rom 9v6-7, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children..."

The influence of the "synagogue of Satan" and other false elements in the ecclesias led to the Apostasy of Constantine's Roman Empire. This great apostasy is also found right at the end time (Rev 16-19) in conflict with the true believers of the Philadelphian class who possess the Kingdom (Dan 7v22,27). It is only then that the world will know that Christ is King (Zech 14v16).

#### "I will make them come and worship before thy feet..." -

This statement appears to be taken from **Isaiah 49v23** & **60v14** (see margin). These are the nations who bow down and worship Yahweh:

- Isa. 49v23 "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and the queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."
- Isa. 60v14 "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

#### "I have loved thee" -

✓ Notice that the emphasis is on the words "I" and "thee". There is a personal relationship here between Jesus Christ and the Philadelphians. This is exactly what Yahweh had said to Israel in the prophets (eg. Isa. 43v4; Mal 1v2). This is what he is saying to us too (Gal 2v20).

#### Verse 10

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

"Because thou didst keep my word of <u>endurance</u> I also will keep thee out of the hour of <u>trial</u> which is about to come upon the whole <u>habitable world</u> to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rotherham)

"Because thou hast kept the word of my <u>patient endurance</u>, I also will keep thee from that hour of <u>trial</u> which is about to come on the <u>whole habitable</u>, to try those who dwell on the earth." (Diaglot)

#### "patience" -

The Greek word translated "patience" is used 7x in the Apocalypse (**Rev 1v9**, **2v2**,**3**,**19**, **3v10**, **13v10**, **14v12**) and refers to "endurance and constancy" (Strongs #5281) and therefore indicates that there is required a "patient continuance in well doing" (**Rom 2v6-8**).

#### "temptation" -

The word "temptation" is the same Greek word found in **Matt 6v13**; **26v41**, **Mark 14v38**, **Luke 4v13**, **James 1v2** etc. It refers to TRIAL. Strong renders the word as "to test, i.e. endeavour, scrutinize, entice, discipline".

"the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." -

There appears to be a specific time of trial referred to here, which Bro Thomas comments on in *Eureka* (Vol. 1 p.380-381). This is identified with the persecution of Decius around the end of the 4th vial period (A.D. 248).

How would they be kept from the great persecution that was coming? Surely this is because they would be safely in the grave.

Notice that there is a distinction here between "the world" and "the earth". The "world" is the "inhabited earth" (NASB) or the "habitable world" (Roth.) whereas "the earth" always refers to the known world of their time ie. the Roman Empire. The same distinction is made in **Rev 16v14**, and also **Matt 24v14** & **Rev 12v9** where this Greek word for "world" is found (Str. # 3625).

#### **VERSE 11: Exhortation**

#### Verse 11

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

The Diaglot translates this as follows: "I am coming speedily...." Strong renders "quickly" as "shortly, i.e. without delay, soon, or by surprise, suddenly..." (Str. #5035) The plea that Christ will come "quickly" is found 7 times in Revelation (see also Rev 2v5,16, 3v11, 11v14, 22v7,12,20).

This is not saying that Jesus Christ was to literally come quickly in the sense of returning to the earth in the days of this ecclesia. Bro John Knowles in his book says that this "indicates the nature of the Lord's intervention rather than the time which should elapse before it is performed. It should be remembered that the Father is not bounded by time as is mortal man. The Spirit is infinite and eternal, thus 'a thousand years are as one day' with the Lord (2 Pet 3v8) and the whole period of his absence from the earth is but "a little while" (John 16v16). " (pg. 33)

 **■ MOTES** 

☑ For Philadelphia, the "coming quickly" therefore does not have to be a literal coming of Christ to them in their day. There appears to be an almost prophetic overtone in Christ's words here. The indication is that at the time of Christ's return there will be a great need to BE LIKE PHILADELPHIA. This is why there is the emphasis on Christ coming quickly. Could it be that the emphasis is there for those who read this letter in the latter days?

Some of the other references to Christ coming quickly are not speaking of Christ's literal coming at that time. It is the language of manifestation. To Ephesus and Pergamos, it is the language of Christ coming in judgement. Prophetically however, to those ecclesias in our day like Philadelphia, Ephesus or Pergamos, Christ will certainly come quickly. Consider the context of the following:

**Rev 2v5 -** Punishment on the **Ephesian** ecclesia: "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

**Rev 2v16 -** Punishment to those false brethren in **Pergamos**: "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against THEM with the sword of my mouth" (the "THEM" is the Nicolaitains of **v15**)

One commentator says that in effect Jesus is saying,

#### "Behold I am not coming slowly."

In fact this is exactly true. We may think Christ is coming slowly, but he is urging us that he is not. That is why there is such a strong emphasis on this in his words recorded in **Rev 22v7,12,20**.

- Why always emphasise the "quickly" aspect of Christ's return? Is it because there could well be a tendency at the time of the end to think that he is NOT coming quickly? There is a real tendency today for many to now think that his coming is way off into the future. We are now living in days where the urgency of Christ's return is beginning to wane. As we head into the new millennium, this may become more and more of a problem. More than ever we the need patient continuance to hold fast unto the end.
- How can we positively overcome this problem in our ecclesias today?

#### "hold fast which thou hast" -

What should they "hold fast" to? It could be a reference to **verse 8** where they had kept the word, and had not denied the name, or else as Bro Mansfield suggests, the love of Christ towards them in **verse 9**.

The following exhortation was written to the Jerusalem ecclesia in the lead up to AD70. Consider the importance of this for us just as much as them!

- Heb 10v36-37 "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."
- What are some ways in which we can practically hold fast to what we have today?



The Stephanos - crown of victory! (painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

#### "that no man take thy crown" -

This "crown" is the crown of victory, the "stephanos". This is not the crown of government which is the "diadem" (see Eureka Vol. 1 pages 386-389). The "stephanos" is the crown of victory given to the winner at the Games, typifying the victory crown the saints will wear, but one which never fades away (1 Pet 5v4). It is a crown of pure gold representing tried faith (cp. Rev 4v4 & 1 Pet 1v7) This "stephanos" is also found in Rev 2v10; 3v11; 4v4,10; 9v7; 6v2; 12v1; 14v14. The Philadelphian brethren were exhorted to hold fast to that which they had, so that no-one would take their crown of victory.

The "diadem" however is a different word for crown and is found in Rev 12v3; 13v1; 19v12 to indicate governmental rule. In Rev 12v3 & 13v1, the diadem is found on the heads of the Roman Empire (12v3) and the independent European kings (13v1) whereas in 19v12 it is seen upon the head of Jesus Christ.

## **VERSES 12-13: He that overcometh**

#### Verse 12

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

"He that overcometh" - Refer to the notes in the Introduction (Part 3) on overcoming the world, pages 28-31. The Diaglot translates "overcometh" as "conqueror", whereas Bro Thomas translates this as "the victor".

#### "a pillar in the temple of my God" -

This pillar is a symbol of the true believer who is made part of the New Jerusalem. The "holy city", the "temple" and "New Jerusalem" are symbols to represent the ONE BODY OF IMMORTAL BELIEVERS, in this context in the Kingdom age. This is the "temple" of Rev 11v1,2 and 21v22. In 1 Cor 3v16 it says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you". Likewise in 2 Cor 6v16, "ye are the temple of the living God; for as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This is taken from the Old Testament type where the temple was filled with Yahweh's glory (1 Kings 8v11), as are the true temple of God (1 Cor 6v18-20).

In **Gen 28v22**, God's whole house is represented by a pillar, while in **1 Pet 2v5-10** the ecclesia is represented by "lively stones" who are "built up a spiritual house" and who have Jesus Christ as "the head of the corner".

The "New Jerusalem" is described in **Rev 21** as "the bride, the Lamb's wife", and as the "Holy City" (**v2,9**). The bride of Christ is described in **Rev 11v2** as the "holy city", which is downtrodden in the days of their mortality, but elevated to immortality in the Kingdom age. The city is separate in that it was "holy". This is a temple of living persons, the saints: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood....I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious..." (1 **Pet 2v4-8**)

# "A pillar in the temple of my God"

"A pillar is representative of a saved person; therefore to make such an one a pillar in the temple of God is to make him an integral part thereof; and for a saint to be part of the temple, indicates that the temple itself is composed of persons. Compare Jacob's vision of the ladder reaching to Heaven, of the pillar he erected and the place being called Bethel (House of God) with the Lord's words in **John 1v51**. Refer also to **1 Tim 3v15** and **Eph 2v20-21** to see the spiritual significance of a temple composed of living stones.

In line with the theme of this letter to Philadelphia it is important to again see the connection with Isaiah 22. Shebna (a type of the Synagogue of Satan) had been entrusted with the position of steward over the house (v15) but all his energies had been directed into "hewing out a sepulchre for himself" (v16) and therefore he was thrust out from office (v19). He was concerned with building a house for the dead instead of a temple composed of living stones. He was replaced by Eliakim who is destined to be "a Father to the house of Judah" (v21), to have the key of the house of David laid upon his shoulder (v22), to become a throne of glory to the house of his father (v23) and to have hung upon him all the weight of his father's house. Such a one is a true pillar in the temple of God with all the characteristics of the Name of God engraved upon him."

(Bro John Knowles, Hear what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias, page 32)

In 1 Kings 7v21 we see that the temple has 2 pillars in the porch called "Jachin" (mgn. "He shall establish") and "Boaz" (mgn. "in it is strength"). Both Bro Mansfield & Bro Luke suggest in their notes that the pillars speak of the kingship and priesthood of which Christ is the prime fulfilment:

**Zech 6v13** "Even he shall build the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you."

The tabernacle of the past was only a shadow of what is still to come. Yahweh, Jesus Christ and the Saints are to be the temple of the future age. The mercy seat (Christ) and the Cherubim (the saints) were found in the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle representing the fact that in the future Kingdom, there will only be a Most Holy Place, as summed up by the statement "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it".



"Pillar in the temple of my God" (painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

## "A pillar in the temple of my God"

To be a pillar in this temple is to be a principle part of the building, or to occupy an important position in the community. A pillar never removed from its place is illustrative of the stability appertaining to an immortal constitution of things. To have the name of the city is to be made a constituent of it - to be a part of it in the municipal sense. The city is Jerusalem: for this is the city which God chose from the beginning to place His name there (1 Kings 14v21; 2 Chron 12v13). The city of the Great King (Matt 5v35), which though now forsaken, is to be re-married and re-established (Isa. 62v1,4). But it is the new Jerusalem, because Jerusalem under a new constitution of things, - abundantly set forth in the prophets (Isa 52v1-10; 65v17-19; 66v10-15). This new constitution of Jerusalem is from heaven, for it comes with Christ from heaven. Therefore the coming Jerusalem, though a manifestation of power and glory on the site of the old Jerusalem, is "new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God". To be made a constituent of this new Jerusalem is the highest pinnacle of glory conceivable to our imagination.

(Bro Robert Roberts, Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse, p.23)

 **■ MOTES** 

#### "I will write upon him the name of my God" -

The name of Yahweh will be written upon the foreheads (Rev 7v3,4, 14v1) of those who are found in the New Jerusalem, these being "a people for the name" (Acts 15v14). The true believers, or Multitudinous Christ, are revealed in Isaiah 30v27 as "the name of Yahweh" which "cometh from far, burning with his anger..." The name of Yahweh was ascribed to the angel in Exod 23v20-21 where God said "for my name is in him." The "name of my God" is written upon the saints in response to the prayer of Jesus in John 17v21.

Bro HP Mansfield in the forward to Bro Thomas's book *Phanerosis* identifies some ways in which the name of Yahweh is described throughout the Scriptures:

- A strong tower (Prov 18v10)
- A protection (Psa. 124v8)
- A heritage (Psa 61v5,8)
- A source of confidence (Psa. 9v10)
- A means of elevation (Psa. 91v14)

Bro Mansfield comments further...

## THE NAME OF YAHWEH

"We are told to despise not the Name (Mal 1v6); but to exalt (Psa. 34v3-4); extol (Psa. 68v4); remember (Psa 20v7); fear (Psa 86v11-12); praise (Psa 113v1-3); love (Isa. 56v6); bless (Psa. 11v4), know (Isa. 52v6); publish (Deut 32v3; Isa. 12v4); sing (Psa 61v8); and pray (Psa 140v13) in regard to the name...

The Psalmist looked to the time when the Divine Name will be magnified throughout the earth (Psa 8v1), and when His people shall rejoice at all time in His name (Psa 89v151-6). In anticipation of this glorious future, Isaiah declared: "Thy memorial name is the desire of our soul" (Isa. 26v8). The prophetic significance of the memorial name of Yahweh is expounded in the pages of *Phanerosis*."

It says that "He shall go no more out" because the door is shut, just like in the times of Noah (Gen 7v16). The hope is sure for those who have been saved, whereas for those outside there "shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" (Rev 21v27)

"the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God" -

We are told that "the name of the city of my God" is the "New Jerusalem" of Rev 21v9-10. This is the multitudinous bride of Christ who is found "coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21v2)

- **Heb 12v22** " But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."
- Rev 21v9-10 "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,"

What does this vision of the Kingdom mean for us personally?

God's name will be new in the Kingdom, because the "I who will be" will have been fulfilled. It will be new to those who bear the name, not being something of the future but of the present. The new name will indicate the exalted position of the saints in their new position of authority (cp. Phil 2v9; Eph 1v21) It will be like the "new song" that is sung in the time of the Kingdom (Psa 149v1, Rev 5v9)

#### Verse 13

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear..." - To hear is to "hearken" (Rev 1v3; 3v20) and "give heed". Therefore, a practical application is involved! This is emphasised in all 7 letters to the ecclesias (Rev 2v7,11,17,29; 3v6,13,22). The only other place this phrase is stated in the Apocalypse outside of the 7 ecclesias is in Revelation 13v9. This is in the context of judgement upon the Roman Catholic apostasy. This apostasy was the end result of that "mystery of iniquity" found even in these first century Gentile ecclesias (2 Thess 2v1-11).

IMPORTANT: Read further comments about having an ear and hearing in the notes on the letter to Ephesus in **Revelation 2v7**.

Following is some additional detail on the wonderful promise made to Philadelphia - the promise of the New Jerusalem. Do we have an ear to hear?

# THE NEW JERUSALEM - REVELATION 21



The New Jerusalem (painting by Bro Simon Sawell)

# THE NEW JERUSALEM - REVELATION 21

As we often find in the 7 letters to the ecclesias, there are connections with future chapters of Revelation. In the letter to Philadelphia, they are promised that they would form part of the New Jerusalem. This vision is detailed in **Revelation 21**, a beautiful chapter about the saints in glory beyond the millennium. Some notes on the first 3 verses of **Revelation 21** follow:

#### Verse 1

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

The Diaglot renders the verse "...the <u>former</u> heaven and the <u>former</u> earth were gone." **Rev 20v11** says that "the earth and the heaven fled away". This is referring to the political arrangements of the past, along with the earth's mortal population. A new heaven and a new earth replaces what went before. The symbology of "heavens" is always used in Revelation to refer to ruling powers (see also **Isa 1v2,10**; **13v10-19**, **Jer 4v23-28**). **Psalm 19v1-7** describes in detail the marvellous attributes of God's creation and how they relate to his purpose. This Scripture is quoted by Paul in **Rom 10v18** to represent the glories of God's universal rule.

The language of **Rev 21v1** prompts us to turn straight back to **Isaiah 65**, where the characteristics of that future kingdom are described in more detail:

Isaiah 65v17 "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

Yahweh of hosts will be reigning in Mt Zion at this time (see also Isa 24v19-23). The literal, physical heavens and earth will not pass away, but will remain for ever (Eccl. 1v4, Psa 125v1; 148v5-6). Isaiah 45v18 says that God created the earth "not in vain" and that "he formed it to be inhabited". See also Psalm 78v69, Jer 31v35-36, Psa 89v36-37. Paul had revealed to him the "third heaven" in 2 Cor 12v2. The "first heaven" was the Kingdom of God, established in Israel, and which lasted until its destruction in AD70. The second heaven is the millennium itself. John's "new heaven and new earth" is the "third heaven" which Paul was permitted to see. Look at the language of Deut 32v1. Despite its destruction, there is coming another heaven:

- **2 Pet 3v7** "But the heavens and the earth, <u>which are now</u>, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men."
- 2 Pet 3v12,13"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

The third "heaven" and "earth" is the ushering in of the new order or arrangement of things as described in 1 Cor 15v24: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."

The sea represents nations (**Rev 17v15**, **Isa. 57v20**, **Rev 15v2**). During the 1000 years there will be nations existing in the earth (**Dan 7v12**, **Rev 4v4-5**). However, there will be no more nations *after* the 1000 years, as the Kingdom is delivered unto the Father. Jerusalem will be restored to God's favour (**Isa 65v17-25**) and the restoration of Israel will be complete (**Isa 11v9**).

#### Verse 2

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

The holy city is described as the "new Jerusalem" in contrast with "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (i.e. Rome, **Rev 17v18**) The "holy city" was previously trodden under foot for 1260 years (**Rev 11v2**).

# THE NEW JERUSALEM - REVELATION 21

#### continued....

The "city" is speaking of its inhabitants rather than the physical city. **Matt 8v34** describes the inhabitants in this way: "Behold the whole city come out to meet Jesus..." Also, **Mark 1v33**, "..all the city was gathered together at the door." Also see **Matt 12v25**, **21v10**, **Acts 13v44**. Here is a Jerusalem altogether different in form to what went before (**Gal 4v26**; **Heb 12v22**).

Some key quotes showing that the true believers are the "Israel of God" are as follows: Matt 21v43, Rom 8v28, Gal 3v29, Acts 28v20, Rom 15v8, John 4v22, I Pet 2v5,9, Eph 2v22.

The bride is "adorned" for her husband by the character and disposition of mind which makes Christ want to take her for his own. See **Eph 5v25-27** where the perfected ecclesia is presented to Christ, cleansed by "the washing of water by the word". Consider the following:

- **2 Cor 11v2** "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."
- **1 Pet 3v3-4** "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit..."

**Isaiah 61v10** speaks of the figure of a bride adorning herself with jewels and the believers being clothed with "the garments of salvation." The adorning of the bride is spoken of further in **Psalm 45v13-14**, and in many other places in Song of Solomon. The bride of Christ will be ruling in "the heavenlies". These are they who are "born from above" (**John 3v3**, mgn). See also **John 3v13,31 & 6v33**.

#### Verse 3

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Here is described something very different to what has gone before. It is important to see this section of Scripture following on as a result of what occurred beforehand in **Rev 20v13-14** - "and death and the grave were cast into the lake of fire."

Yahweh's dwelling place is now with men because all mortality is wiped from the earth. The tabernacle had been God's dwelling place in Israel (**Exod. 25v8**, "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." This was just a type of the future however, when the tabernacle represented the true believers (**Heb 9v9,11**; **2 Cor 6v16**)

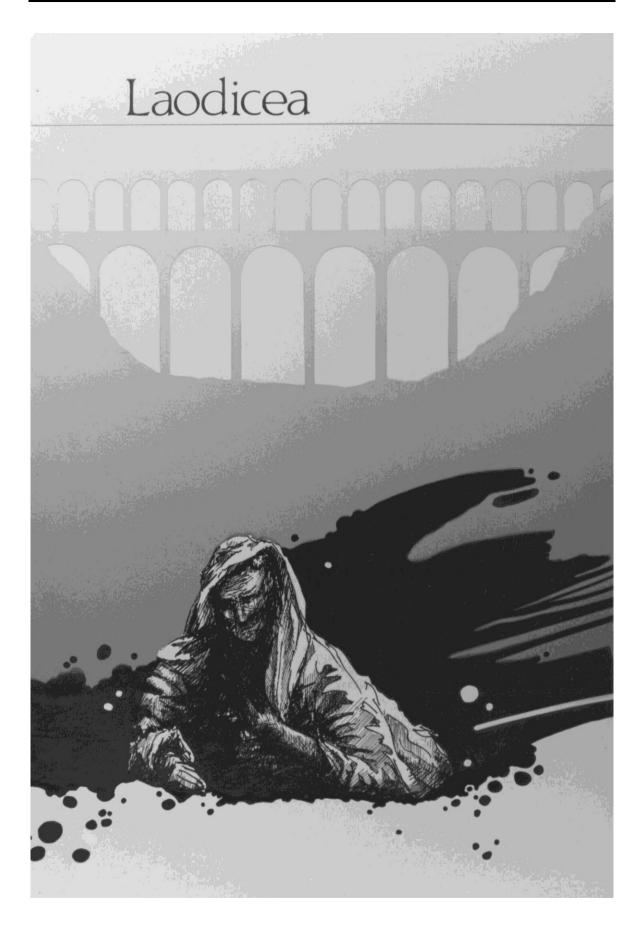
#### How will God dwell with men?

His dwelling will be with men because the only people alive will be immortal saints. God will be manifest in a multitude of mighty ones in the earth. When Jesus Christ entered the world, it was said of him that, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1v14) Yahweh said of the tabernacle in Exod 29v45 that "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God". The "Shekinah" or "dwelling" glory shone above the Mercy Seat (Christ - Rom 3v25, Heb 9v5) and between the Cherubim (saints of the future age, Rev 4).

At this time, God will be made "all in all" (1 Cor 15v28). Paul speaks of Christ "delivering up the kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all authority and power..." (1 Cor 15 v 24-28). Here is the final fulfilment of Numbers 14v21.

# **NOTES**

# **NOTES**



- This symbol has been used in the NOTES to indicate various questions and exercises
- oxdots This symbol is used to identify particular practical issues arising from Christ's words

# Revelation 3v14-22 LETTER TO THE ECCLESIA AT LAODICEA

Eureka Vol 1, p. 400-419

☐ Old & New Testament Background: Isaiah 65; Hosea 2&12; Luke 12

The symbology used in the letter to Laodicea is chosen carefully to suit the environment they lived in and therefore would have been well understood. Consider the following background summary:

## IMPORTANT BACKGROUND TO THE CITY OF LAODICEA

This is the seventh and last of the ecclesias to whom the Lord Jesus Christ sent these remarkable letters. Looking at the map, we find that Laodicea was roughly 60 kilometres south of Philadelphia and that the seven ecclesias lay in a kind of circular pattern. Laodicea, with Colossae and Hierapolis were cities of the Lycus Valley and it is clear from **Col 4v12-16** that the ecclesias in these three cities were quite closely associated and that Paul wrote not only to Colossae but to Laodicea likewise.

Laodicea was on the main trade route from the interior to Ephesus in the west. Ephesus was the greatest trade centre of Asia and Laodicea's role was complimentary, providing a strong fortress to protect the caravan trade routes and flourish in their trade at the same time. Hierapolis was three kilometres north and Colossae about 18 kilometres east but recent changes in the road system had given distinct advantage to Laodicea.

So Laodicea was a very strong fortress planted right on the line of the great Eastern highway, but it had one terrible weakness - within the city there was no permanent water supply and its water was piped from Hierapolis, whose soda-laden warm water derived from thermal springs possessed emetic qualities (ie. qualities that induced vomiting), a fact to which evident allusion is made in **Rev 3v16** - "because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Quite apart from the wealth that flowed into Laodicea because of its strategic position, it was a *manufacturing centre* in its own right. In the Lycus valley the three towns of Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea formed an important textile industry. Colossae produced a glossy dark violet wool, Laodicea was noted for its black, soft-textured wool, and Hierapolis for its Jewish trade-guilds such as purple dyers, carpet makers, etc. "White raiment, that thou mayest be clothed", the Spirit counselled them to buy in **verse 18**, and that the Spirit's intention could not be more obvious.

Another feature that marked Laodicea was its famous *school of medicine*, and the manufacture of collyrium, the famous Phrygian eye-salve. There could be no mistaking the Spirit's admonition in **verse 18** - "and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

Laodicea, strategically considered, was the meeting place of two worlds. Here, East met West: a large Jewish population rubbed shoulders with a Gentile majority, and both luxuriated in the evident wealth of the city and its district. So much so that, when an earthquake overthrew Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea in about AD65, Laodicea disdained to receive of the Roman Senate's earthquake relief, choosing to rebuild from its own resources, and thereby saying, "I have need of nothing" (v17)

Laodicea of old is now Eski Hissar, ie. Hissar, ie. "the Old Castle", after the ruins of its preeminent buildings. It has been in ruins since the Turks ravaged the city in the 12th and 13th centuries and although its ruins, upon seven hills (!), indicate that it was a very large and important city, there are no inhabitants there today.

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 77-78)

## LAODICEA'S PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Nearby, the health-resort of Hierapolis brought many visitors to the area. It was a revered place, thought to have special gifts, and thus was named "Holy City" (hierapolis). From its smooth hills spurted the hot calcium springs which were renowned for their healing and medicinal benefits... On the other side of Laodicea rose a range of picturesque, majestic snow-capped mountains. Clean and white, sparkling in the sunshine, the snows gave source to streams that flowed down the mountain side to refresh and irrigate the valley. It was a delightful sight; a constant reminder of the cool, fresh waters that were always available, provided by the good hand of the Creator. The people of Laodicea, in their busy, materialistic lives, however, forgot the One who provided the pure waters of the southern mountain range. But down in the valley, the hot streams from Hierapolis and the cool waters from Cadmus merged together. A lukewarm stream it became... Unfortunately, the ecclesia was much the same.

(summary by Bro. Greaham Mansfield, Logos, February 1989, p.134)

## THE LETTER TO LAODICEA IS VITAL IN OUR DAYS

Look at the obvious links between the letter to Laodicea and Christ's urgent appeal in Rev 16v15:

Revelation 3	Revelation 16
"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock" (v20) (He is obviously there at the door!)	"Behold I come as a thief!" (16v15) (one who is unexpected - normally opposite to one who knocks - an irony about this, cp. Luke 12v36&39)
"eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (v18)	"Blessed is he that watcheth" (16v15)
"that thou mayest be clothed" (v18)	"and keepeth his garments" (16v15)
"the shame of thy nakedness do not appear" (v18)	"lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (16v15)

This letter is therefore vital for our days. There is no doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ in his final plea before Armageddon, refers to his letter to Laodicea (see Rev 16v15). He is saying in effect, "Go back to Laodicea and learn the lessons from that letter, because that is what the ecclesia is like in the last days." He is also referring us back to the ecclesia at Sardis, as we have seen. Notice how that both Laodicea and Sardis appear free from active persecution.

The ecclesia also did not appear to have any wrong doctrine. However there was also nothing to commend it. There is in this letter therefore a grave warning for the ecclesia in our days. This letter is very much based upon the book of Hosea. Hosea's wife Gomer was an unfaithful bride - just like Israel had been with God, and just like Laodicea had been with the Lord Jesus Christ. Incredibly, there is no condemnation here for having wrong doctrine.

Christ says to Laodicea that he is "about to spew them out of his mouth". On the surface, this may appear to be a harsh thing to say. But think about what this really means. Think about who is saying it. This is the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has the most beautiful character of any man who has ever lived. He is the meekest and gentlest of all men. He has a real love and concern for these brethren. Despite being "in Christ" through baptism, they had been unfaithful to him. Think how much this would have upset our Lord! - In fact he was so upset that it made him literally feel really, really sick. He was so physically and emotionally affected by their worldliness that he was ready to vomit them out of his mouth. That is how much he was personally sickened.

**Likewise in our days,** the world may be having a similar affect. The world may not seem too bad to us, but to a character so pure and beautiful as our Lord, it really makes him want to vomit. The media, entertainment industry and the commercialism of our times can harden and desensitise our characters. We need to honest about this. There is a *harshness* about our world that is totally opposite to everything that our Lord stands for. **The world thrives on the enjoyment of violence, immorality and materialism.** If we develop a love for these things, it will make our Lord very very upset. It will make him want to spue us out of his mouth. Given what he has done for us, how could we possibly do this to him? But if we stay faithful and true to him, we can sit with him in his throne.

 **■ MOTES** 

#### **Summary of the Letter to Laodicea:**

v14 Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ v15-17 Disapproval - Lukewarmness condemned v18-19 Exhortation

v20-22 He that overcometh

#### **VERSE 14: Revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ**

#### Verse 14

"And unto the angel of the ecclesia of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;"

The background to this introduction verse is **Revelation 1v5,9** and **Isaiah 65**.

"The Amen" and "the faithful and true witness" were carefully chosen titles particularly suited to the situation in Laodicea. There is an appeal in these titles for them to turn from their ways. This ecclesia had been an unfaithful bride. They were not faithful in witnessing for the Truth. See notes on Rev 1v9.

"The Amen" is a title of Yahweh himself, but manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yahweh is called the "God of Truth" or the "God of Amen" in Isaiah 65v16. It is used here in the context of God's promises being fulfilled in the establishment of a new heavens and new earth. In Isaiah 65 we are therefore given a vision of Yahweh's faithful promises coming to pass. "Amen" is translated as "faithful" in Deut 7v9 and Isaiah 49v7. "Amen" simply means "faithful" (Strongs #543).

In **Rev 1v7**, John adds "Even so, Amen" which is a Hebrew word transliterated into Greek and English. It is an acknowledgement by the writer that what has been said is correct and true. That is why we say it at the end of a prayer. Christ himself is called "The Amen" here in **Rev 3v14** because he is the centre of that purpose, a purpose which is certain. There is therefore a double emphasis here in **verse 14** ie. "I am the faithful, the faithful".

#### **□** OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND:

Isaiah 65 is therefore an important chapter which Christ alludes to:

**Isa. 65v11** The context of **Isaiah 65** is important - Israel had forsaken God: "But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain…"

- **Isa. 65v12** "because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil..." This is similar language to that spoken to Laodicea: "Behold I stand at the door and knock"
- Isa. 65v13 "Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed."

  This is similar language as that to Laodicea: "poor, blind, naked"
- **Isa. 65v5** Despite the faithlessness of Israel, they are saying of all things "I am holier than thou!". Laodicea was saying "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing."

"The faithful and true witness"- The word "faithful" really means "trustworthy" (Str. #4103). The phrase appears to be quoting Psalm 89v37, a Psalm all about Yahweh's faithfulness in fulfilling His covenant to David:

- Psa. 89v35-37 "Once I have sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

  His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before

  me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a

  faithful witness in heaven."
- Read **Psalm 89** and colour in the words *faithful*, *faithfulness*, *mercy* and *mercies*. Why the continual emphasis of these words? What effect should this have upon us? (look up **Phil 1v6**).

These words also allude back to **Rev 1v5** where the Lord is also called "the faithful witness". See also **Rev 19v11**, where he is called "faithful and true". The Kingdom visions of **Rev 21v5**; **22v6** are described as being "faithful and true". The true believers who have suffered under the hand of the Roman Catholic apostasy are known as being "called, and chosen, and faithful" (**Rev 17v14**) and are with their Lord in victory at this time (**Rev 14v4**). Yahweh is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins" if we confess them (**1 John 1v9**). He guarantees that he will forgive - he is faithful! The "witness" of the risen Christ is testimony to the truth of Bible prophecy.

Why would the word "witness" be left off the name in **Rev 19v11**? (hint: look at the context of **Rev 19v11-20**).

"Faithful" is derived from the same Greek root word translated "faith". The great chapter which tells us about faith is **Hebrews 11**. Who are these people recorded in **Hebrews 11**? A "great cloud of witnesses"! This is the title of the Lord Jesus Christ in his letter to Laodicea. The great cloud of witnesses were those who have witnessed for the Truth. The book of Hebrews was written to the Jerusalem ecclesia only 7-8 years before the desolation of AD70. Look at the context of the chapter, and think about the circumstances in Jerusalem when they received the letter! Think how relevant this was to Laodicea and to us in these last days:

- Abel (v4) Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice. The Hebrews were going back to the law, back to Cain's sacrifice. God did not want their sacrifices!
- Enoch (v5) Enoch was translated that he might not see death. The ecclesia in Jerusalem was also about to be translated that they might not see death they fled to Pella just before the Romans invaded. God was going to save them just as he had Enoch.
- Noah (v7)

  Noah was moved with fear because he had been warned of things not seen as yet. This is the opposite of law. The Jews were going back to the law. Noah also condemned the world and prepared an ark to escape the flood of God's judgements. The Jerusalem ecclesia also had to prepare to escape Jerusalem they had to leave their world behind, a world that was about to be flooded by God's judgements.
- Abraham (v8) Abraham dwelt in tents in a strange country. He looked for a city which was yet future. He wasn't about to set himself up a city on this earth he looked for the one to come. This is exactly what the Jerusalem ecclesia had to do. They needed to look for the Heavenly Jerusalem (cp. Heb 12v22) rather than put trust in their city of Jerusalem which was to be overrun by the Romans. Laodicea was setting up their own kingdom of riches on this earth and needed to remember the lesson of Hebrews 11.

Joseph (v22) Of all attributes it could record of Joseph, it was his commandment that his bones may be taken out of Egypt! This is exactly what was being faced by the Jerusalem ecclesia. They had to get out of Jerusalem before the invasion of AD70 otherwise their bones would be found strewn amongst the city when the Romans invaded.

Moses (v23) Moses forsook Egypt, not wanting to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He looked for greater riches than those in Egypt. He saw his God who is invisible. This is exactly the lesson for Laodicea.

No wonder Christ described himself as the faithful witness. He was undoubtedly alluding back to all those other faithful witnesses in **Hebrews 11**.

To "witness" really means witnessing or testifying in the dock, in a court scene. Strong indicates that a witness is one who does so "judicially" or one who is a "martyr". The Greek word is actually "martus" (Str. #3144). Similar words "martureo", "marturia" and "marturion" are found extensively throughout the book of Revelation (all from the same root word). The word is translated in Revelation as "bare record" (1v2), "testify", "testifieth", "testimony", "martyr" and "witness". The same word is used to describe the 2 witnesses in Rev 11v3 and the "cloud of witnesses" in Heb 12v1. It is translated "witness" in Rev 1v5. Antipas was the faithful martyr (Rev 2v13) - He witnessed for the Truth!

Just consider how many times this theme of witnessing is found in Revelation:

Rev 1v2(2x),5,9; 2v13; 3v14; 6v9; 11v3,7; 12v11,17; 15v5; 17v6; 19v10 (2x) , 20v4; 22v16,20

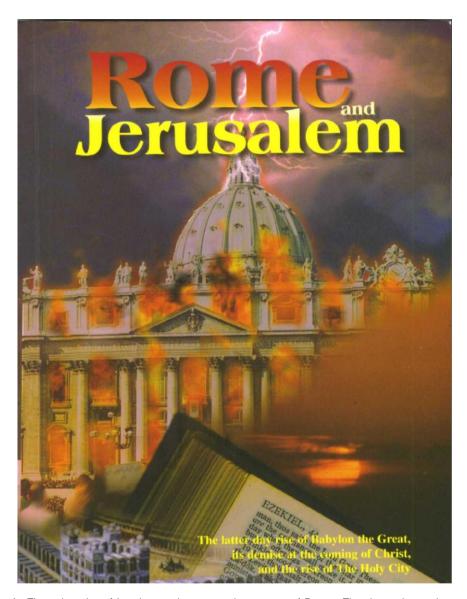
Look up these quotes. What is the Lord Jesus Christ trying to emphasise and re-emphasise throughout Revelation?

The theme is therefore found 18 times in Revelation and is also found 47 times in John's gospel. We can therefore see that **Witnessing** is one of the **KEY THEMES** in the book of Revelation. The book is all about how people in times past have witnessed to the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest witness of all:

- "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from thence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."
- The Apostle Paul followed in the footsteps of his master and those who had gone before. Look up the following quotes and think about what it means to be a faithful and true witness: Acts 23v11; 26v21-22; Rev 20v4.
- Probably one of the best examples of a martyr who witnessed is Stephen. Carefully read Acts 6v9 - 7v60 and think about what it really means to witness. The Laodiceans were the opposite to this.

Consider how God's judgements upon the harlot system are described...

"And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, **true and righteous** are thy judgements." (Revelation 16v5-7)



↑ The redemption of Israel can only come at the expense of Rome. The above picture shows Rome beginning to burn (Rev 17v9,18), the Sun of Righteousness arising (Malachi 4v2) and the temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40-48). This picture features on the front cover of Graham Pearce's book, Rome & Jerusalem and was designed by David Billington.

Look at how Jesus Christ is described when he takes the Kingdom from Babylon the Great, the Laodicean Roman Catholic Apostasy. Notice the allusions back to Laodicea in **Rev 3v14** and also to the subsequent vision of **Revelation 4** - the very promise of hope given to Laodicea:

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgements: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia... And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." (Rev 19v1-4,11)

 **■ NOTES** 

Why does Jesus describe himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness"? Because Laodicea had been an unfaithful bride. Also, because he was the true witness of the Truth (1 John 5v20), unlike Laodicea, who had failed to witness. Because they were rich and increased with goods, they became so involved with this that they failed to witness.

What priority do we give personal and ecclesial preaching? How willing are we to speak about our hope to those outside? What sort of example are we when at school/uni/work? When people see us, do they see the Lord Jesus Christ in action? Are we enthusiastic to help our ecclesia's preaching efforts (eg. Seminars) in whatever way we possibly can? Remember that there is always something to do to help. Those who set up the tables and chairs, prepare the coffees, arrange printing of the notes etc. are doing a vital work which really takes a lot of pressure off the speaking brethren. Don't think that this aspect of preaching work is unimportant! Witnessing in whatever form is vital. This is what the book of Revelation is all about. This is THE APOCALYPSE IN ACTION.

To be a witness, you have to be right there on the scene. To be a faithful and genuine witness means that you have to faithfully recall what you have witnessed. Is it possible that no-one in the ecclesia was actually doing this? Here Jesus Christ is confirming that what he was saying was true. The ecclesia should have been faithful and true witnesses to what was going on in their ecclesial environment. They should have been witnessing to the world outside.

Why is Christ called "the beginning of the creation of God." Because he was in the mind of God from the beginning. It is for this purpose that everything was made. A "beginning" means "a commencement" (Str. #746). Isaiah 65 speaks of a new creation!

Col 1v15-18 "The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

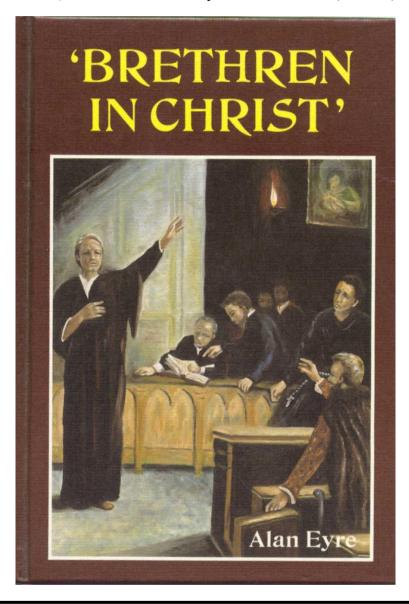
## THE LAODICEAN APPROACH TO LIFE

"Being destitute of these qualities of the true believer, they delighted in the things that perish. Like professors of the nineteenth century, they said that they had need of nothing. They were rich in the wealth of the world, and high in favour with the powers that be. Being rich, they were influential in the state; and being lukewarm, they were not troublesome in bearing witness for the truth against the superstitions of the world. Hence, the world ceased to persecute them, because the world loves its own, and they had become the world's, in ceasing to testify against it."

(Bro John Thomas, Eureka Vol. 1 p. 409)

#### THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESSES

"And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev 12v17)



↑ This is the front page of Bro Alan Eyre's book, *Brethren in Christ*. These brethren were not like the Laodiceans. They WITNESSED for the TESTIMONY of Jesus Christ. This is what the Laodiceans needed to learn. The above picture is of Brother Ferenc David, speaking in the Parliament of Turda (Romania) in 1568. At David's left is Gaspard Heltai, turning the pages of a Bible in Hungarian which he himself had translated. Standing worried at right are a Catholic priest and a Calvanist divine, while leaping up enthusiastically at lower right is Gaspard Bekes, one of the supporters of David. Ferenc David wrote a brilliant exposition on the *Reign of Antichrist* which predicted "the system of papal imposture" and its ultimate ruin.

These brethren pleaded for freedom of religion. Upon granting of this freedom, they began to preach everywhere. Expositions rolled off the presses as the brethren furiously sought to make the most of the opportunities they had. The word "testimony" in Rev 12v17 comes from the same root word as "witness" in Rev 3v14 ("the faithful and true witness"). The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Do we make the most of our opportunities to witness?" That is undoubtably the question Christ wanted the Laodiceans to ask. Read Brethren in Christ, pages 73-85. This book and also Bro Eyre's first work, The Protestors is essential reading for all who have ears to hear.

#### VERSES 15-17: Disapproval - Lukewarmness condemned

#### Verse 15

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot."

An allusion is being made to Laodicea's physical environment, where the water was lukewarm and undrinkable.

The exact same Greek word translated "cold" occurs only once outside Revelation:

Matt 10v42 "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of **cold** water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

In what ways can we be refreshing to others in the ecclesia?

Cold is referred to in **Prov 25v13** as being refreshing in the time of harvest and is likened to a "faithful messenger." The reference here to "cold" may well therefore refer to refreshment:

**Prov 25v13** "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a **faithful messenger** to them that send him: for them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters."

A similar word for "hot" in the Greek is translated "zealous" in **Rev 3v19** (i.e. *"fired up"*, **2 Tim 1v6**). See also **Acts 18v25** and **Rom 12v11**. David said that his "heart was hot within me" (**Psalm 39v3**) when he thought on the mighty things of God.

Hot means to "bubble up and boil over" - A classic example of this was Jeremiah (Moffat's translation):

- Jer 20v7-10 "Now all day long I am a laughing stock, men all deride me, whenever I speak, they mock and ill treat me. For uttering the LORD's words day after day I am tormented, I am taunted, and insulted. If I say I will not mention it, I will not speak in his name any more, then I feel within me as it were a fire that burns my very being. I am tired of this. So tired that I cannot bear it any longer. At every turn I am in terror, for I hear many whispering, let us denounce him, let us denounce him. My very friends are on the watch for a false step. Perhaps, he will make a slip, and then we have him, then for our revenge."
- When the Word is this powerful, that it just has to come out, then that is real faith. How often do we feel like this?

Consider **Psalm 39** in the context of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and compare with **Isaiah 53**:

**Psa. 39v2-3** "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My **heart was hot within me**, while I was musing **the fire burned**: then spake I with my tongue.

#### Verse 16

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

The Diaglot says "I am <u>about to</u> vomit thee out of my mouth" indicating in the Greek text that Christ would do this only if they continued in this way of life. The worst part of the whole process of vomiting is just before you actually vomit. This is when you feel the most sick in your stomach. This shows us the character of Christ. He was really concerned for these brethren and sisters. The fact that they had been unfaithful really upset him - so much that is literally made him want to vomit (see notes in the introduction to Laodicea).

- Is the lack of zeal and enthusiasm something that warrants a rebuke as strong as this? If so, then why?
- These people were claiming to be spiritually rich and the reason for this is that God had blessed them with all these material goods. This is exactly the way we can think also. We need to realise the dangers of materialism.

A classic example of lukewarmness is the example of the people as recorded in **Mal 1v6-10**. They carried out the rituals of true worship however they "offered polluted bread upon mine altar; and they said, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" (v7) Laodicean tap water was lukewarm - just like the ecclesia in that city.

How could we be lukewarm today? How could ecclesias drift into a state of lukewarmness without even knowing it? How can we help to positively overcome this?

#### Verse 17

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:"

"and knowest not..." - The amazing thing about this condemnation of Laodicea is that they didn't even know that they had a problem. The fact that they didn't even know they had a problem is similar to those in Noah's day:

Matt 24v39-40 "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

As Babylon was about to fall, Daniel makes an interesting plea to the king: "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven." (Dan 5v22-23). What was it that Belshazzar knew? The character of the God of Israel and the revelations made to King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 5v18-21). He was willingly ignorant. What a strange irony. He knew the Truth. However he chose not to know the Truth. This is exactly Laodicea. The flesh is so deceptive that we chose to know what we want to know. See notes on Rev 3v3.

☑ Could it possibly be like this for us today? Noah had preached for 120 years about the coming flood. But when it came they didn't even know!! Why? Because they were willingly ignorant (2 Peter 3v5). Look at the context of 2 Peter 3. This is what it is like in our days. The affect of the world may be so gradual that we may not even have any idea that it is influencing us. For example, the entertainment industry today has the potential to harden our characters slowly, so that over a period of time we do not even know that it has affected us. Are our characters being changed from the gentleness and meekness of Christ to the hard, coarse thinking of the world without us even knowing? This is such a vital issue.

Look at the characteristics of people in the last days in 2 Peter 3. How many of these attributes are opposite to those specifically stated in 1 Corinthians 13?

#### Laodicea's true spiritual state was clearly made known to them:

- "wretched" The only other occurrence of this word in the New Testament is in Rom 7v24: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." The Apostle Paul knew he had a problem and sought God for forgiveness and strength to overcome. Laodicea didn't even know they had a problem. They thought everything was going fine. What a contrast!
- "miserable"- This means "pitiful". The only other occurrence of "miserable" in the New Testament is in 1 Cor 15v19. If Christ was not risen from the dead, their hope was in vain. This is the word that Christ uses for Laodicea.
- "poor" The word means "a beggar ie. pauper" (Strongs). This is a real contrast to Smyrna whom it was said that they had "poverty, but thou art rich" (Rev 2v9).
- "blind" Symbolises those who are mentally blind, some of whom choose to be so (Isa. 6v9-10; Matt 13v14; 15v14; 23v16)
- "naked" Symbolises one who has no spiritual clothing. It is a symbol of shame and humiliation (eg. 2 Sam 10v4-5; Ezek 16v36; 23v29). Consider that the only other 2 places this word is found in Revelation is Rev 16v15 and 17v16. It is used in 16v15 in the context of Christ's warning to the ecclesia in the last days leading up to Armageddon. It is also used in 17v16 to describe the status of Babylon the Great in recent times. Babylon the Great symbolises the Roman Catholic Apostasy which originally grew out of apostate elements in early Gentile Ecclesias.

Why were the Laodiceans in this sickly state? The reason is given....

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

It is obvious that the Laodicean brethren were rich and wealthy in the same way as we are today.

1 Tim 6v17 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

The exhortation Paul gives is for us to be "rich in good works". Consider also...

- **Isaiah 55v1** "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."
- James 2v5 "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

- How rich and increased with goods would the Laodiceans have been compared with us today in Australia?
- How can the accumulation of goods today cause us to become lazy in the Truth? How can our ability to witness decrease as the striving for more "things" increases?

#### **OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND:**

**Hosea 12v8** - Hosea definitely appears to be the real basis for the letter to Laodicea. This was an ecclesia lacking zeal and enthusiasm:

"Ephraim boasts, I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin." (NIV)

This is exactly what Laodicea was saying!!!

While the context of **Hosea 12** may not seem all that relevant on the surface, the overall theme of Hosea is very relevant. The book of Hosea shows Yahweh's love for His people who had been an unfaithful bride. Hosea was written just before the Assyrian captivity, and was written to the northern tribe of Israel. They are condemned for their immorality, drunkenness and pride (see **Isa. 28v1**, to the drunkards of Ephraim). Just like Laodicea, it says of Israel that "strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not." (Hos 7v9) Hosea's family life was symbolic of the relationship between God and Israel. A very similar relationship existed between the Lord Jesus Christ and Laodicea.

How could the brethren possibly convince themselves that they were going fine? What circumstances could cause us to be exactly the same?

#### ☑ THE VITAL ISSUE FOR US TO CONSIDER TODAY:

Think about the comment "Have need of nothing" !!!

- There was nothing they needed they thought that they had everything necessary to live the Truth.
- They didn't even know that they had a problem they were blind.
- They thought that you could just continue on and not progress in the Truth.
- They were proud of the system and felt confidence in being a part of it
- They thought that being a member of the organisation was all that is needed.

In other words, they thought that being in the Truth was enough, without concentrating on developing a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It appears that other language in Hosea is also relevant:

**Hosea 2v3-7** There are interesting allusions to Laodicea in these verses:

"Lest I strip her **naked**, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with a thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done **shamefully**: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now."

Laodicea were just concerned with the good things of life - the wool, flax, oil and drink. They had rejected their husband, the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Hosea 4v6-7

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame."

Laodicea said that they were increased with goods, but Yahweh said that they should be clothed that the shame of their nakedness not appear. They were to be spued out of the Lord's mouth because they did not KNOW God. They had rejected KNOWLEDGE, just like Israel in the days of Hosea.

There was nothing they needed - they had everything necessary to live in the truth. They thought that they could just continue on without progressing.

- In what way could we say that we have "need of nothing" today? What could be cause of us really thinking that is true?
- ✓ Look at our situation today: We belong to an organisation which has Bible Schools, Ecclesial Weekends, Town Hall efforts, young people's weekends with hundreds of young people, an easy drive/plane flight to Conferences and Study Weeks. We have bookshelves full of books, every different Bible version you could want, tape libraries with thousands of tapes, PC's with Bible reference CD Roms, we now even have our own Christadelphian schools. The whole organisation runs itself. Are we proud of the system that has been set up? Are we self sufficient? Do we think we have need of nothing and therefore do nothing?
- ✓ Look also at everything that can divert our attention: We have air conditioned cars, big houses, good looking clothes, heaps of "things" to buy. Consider the ease of access and availability we have to various forms of electronic media television, internet, movies etc. The sporting events on the TV continue from one thing to another week after week. As soon as the footy season is over, then it's the cricket season, one game after another. There is obviously nothing wrong with sport in itself in fact sport can be a good thing. However, the continual pre-occupation day after day is surely drowning out commitment to the Truth in our ecclesias. Isn't this true?

**The big question is:** How is all this really affecting us? Is it having an adverse affect on us without us even knowing it? Is it hindering our efforts of Bible study and helping others in the ecclesia & young peoples group?

Rom 7v24 "wretched man that I am" - Paul clearly understood the nature that he had. He knew that he had a problem, a big problem! He had a need for salvation. Laodicea didn't even know they had a problem. Why should the ecclesia even look forward to the Kingdom? They had everything now! Do we think that because we are a part of the system, that this will in some way save us?

- Look at **Psalm 137v4-6** and ask the question, "Is Jerusalem the greatest Joy in our lives?" This is a very important question. If the answer is "no" then how do we make Jerusalem our pre-occupation?
- It was very difficult to maintain a relationship with a God who they didn't even need. Do we even need our God? In our times of luxury, it is very easy to think that we don't need God. This can be a real problem.
- M How can we possibly overcome a problem like this?

#### NOTES

Consider the following challenges raised in the letter to Laodicea:

It is so easy to read a list like this and pass by, on to the next verse or point of interest. In fact, it is for *that very reason* that the Laodiceans were in this terrible state of indifference. We need to pause. There has never been a generation in the history of mankind that has been so saturated with material goods as our generation. There is provision for every conceivable service and indulgence. When we read a list of frightening adjectives like the above we have to take time to think how Christ would think of us. Do we fellowship his sufferings? Are we truly his companions? Do we labour diligently with spirit and sacrifice for the service of Christ? Do we really? Do we rise early to seek His Word? How often do we seek His help in prayer? Do we walk with Him? (cp. Noah, Enoch and Abraham).

How willing, even at this week, are we seeking the interests of God, above "having a good time"?

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p.82)

#### **VERSES 18-19: Exhortation**

#### Verse 18

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

The Lord now aims to remedy the situation. There were 3 main spiritual problems that the Laodiceans had (outlined in **verse 17**), and therefore 3 remedies are given:

**1 poor -** "buy of me gold tried in the fire"

**2** blind - "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

• maked - "white raiment that thou mayest be clothed"

**Gold** is a symbol of tried faith which is only to be "bought" through continual application and practical living. See also **Psa. 66v10**; **Zech 13v9**; **Mal 3v3**.

Consider the following:

**1 Peter 1v7** "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

**Isaiah 55v1** "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

White raiment is a symbol of imputed righteousness based on a faithful life in the Truth (Rev 19v8). See notes on the "garments" in Rev 3v4. Notice that the "One like unto the Son of Man" is "clothed with a garment down to the foot" (Rev 1v13) indicating that the true body of believers are clothed with Christ. It is appropriate that this symbol of clothing is used here for Laodicea. Paul had written to the Colossians and Laodiceans (cp. Col 4v16) about this very issue. Colossians 3 is all about putting on Christ as a garment:

**Col 3v9-10** "Lie not to one another, seeing that ye have **put off** the old man with his deeds; And have **put on** the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

 **■ NOTES** 

Notice how "nakedness" is again mentioned here in verse 18 (refer back to notes on verse 17, cp. Rev 16v15).

Look up **Leviticus 18** - In this chapter the word "nakedness" occurs 24x. This chapter is all about nakedness, fornication and adultery. This typifies spiritual unfaithfulness. But look at the language of **ch.18** and compare this with the words spoken to Laodicea...

Lev 18v24-28 "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgements, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you."

Surely there is a clear connection with **Leviticus 18** when the Lord says in **Rev 3v16** that "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

"anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" - What the Laodiceans needed to purchase was "eyesalve" which was an ointment which obviously helped the eyes to see better. This ointment was manufactured in the area of Laodicea (see introduction to this letter). The symbology of v18 is chosen carefully to reflect Laodicea's environment. The symbols represent items the Laodiceans would have been well aware of. Consider how that buying gold, puting on white raiment and anointing with eyesalve were such carefully chosen exhortations:

## "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve...

The Laodiceans would have understood what this advice meant. The city was on a busy trade route, and attracted wealthy financial benefits. It was the banking centre of western Asia. But it was not the gold of economic trade that they were urged to purchase - although that may have been their consuming interest. Instead, it was **the gold of tried faith**. Like the gold in vaults, a "tried faith" demanded time, effort and energy (1 Pet 1v7). It might cost them "the world," but they would have "gained their soul" (Matt 16v5-26). How blind they were not to recognise such value!

The second item of purchase was **white raiment**. Around the city of Laodicea in the lush, green pastures of the valley were extensive farms which specialised in black goats, providing a wool that was much in demand. The city became famous as a centre for the manufacture of black woollen garments. But it was not to industry and manufacture that the Lord urged their attention. In contrast to working with black wool, he advised that they should seek "white garments"- which represent righteousness (**Rev 19v8,14**). They had to learn the vanity of present labour, and the benefits of working for God.

The final item they needed was medicinal, because they were all blind, unable to ascertain their desperate condition. The divine Physician was able to accurately diagnose the problem: "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve." This was also an appropriate expression, for within busy Laodicea was a school of medicine, especially skilled in eye diseases. But so clever in physical achievements, they were destitute in spiritual. Yet they should have understood! The lesson could be drawn from their own environment! So the Master urged them to purchase from him the eye-salve of discernment."

(summary by Bro. Graeham Mansfield, Logos, February 1989, p.135)

The Apocalypse is a "revelation" or something that is no longer hid from the eyes. It is something that is unveiled for the eyes to behold. In **Matt 13v44** Jesus likens the Kingdom to the story of a man who finds a treasure in a field and therefore sells everything he has to buy that field (given that no-one knows about it).

If eyesalve had this effect, their vision would not be blurred. Does this give an indication of what life is like today, in the latter days? (cp. **Rev 16v15:** "Blessed is he that watcheth") What is obviously required is a clear vision of the future glory and the age to come. Consider the following quotes:

**Prov 29v18** "Where there is no vision the people perish" (The Hebrew for "perish" = "are made naked")

...compare this language with what Christ says to Laodicea!

- **2 Cor 4v17,18** "We **look** not at the things that are seen but the things which are **not seen**, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the **things which are not seen are eternal**."
- Also look up **Hebrews 11v1,7,10,13,27.** Notice the use of the words "seen" and "looked". What appears to be the emphasis in these verses? Why was **the future** so important for these people?
- Look up **2 Pet 1v5-10.** Clear vision is linked with Christ-like characteristics which arise from faith. Peter tells us about all the attributes a disciple of Christ must have once he has faith, and then he says, "But <u>he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off...</u> wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure..."

#### Verse 19

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

Rotherham translates this verse as follows: "As many as I tenderly love I convict and put under discipline: be zealous therefore and repent."

Paul tells us that we are to "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth..." (Heb 12v5,6 - cp. Prov 13v24; 10v13; 22v15; 29v15). Paul in Hebrews 12 is clearly quoting Proverbs 3v11-12.

The Greek word for "zealous" is zeloo (Str. # 2206), meaning "to have warmth of feeling", and is from the same root word translated "hot" (Str.#2200) in Rev 3v16.

"repent" - Repentance is essential if we are to be clothed with Christ and this is obviously the great exhortation for us today, given Christ's words in Rev 16v15. Refer also to notes on repentance in Rev 2v21-22.

## "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten..."

The amazing thing is that this statement is said to Laodicea. After the terrible state of spiritual degradation exposed and indicted in **verses 15-18** we may have expected that Laodicea was finished in the Lord's eyes. Yet both in this beautiful appeal and in the moving invitation of **verse 20**, the Spirit seeks desperately to woo the brethren and sisters of Laodicea to repentance. There is much for instruction in this example. The Truth has been clearly revealed, the exhortation given is straight-forward but there is still love for the wayward and the endearing appeal that they should accept the Lord's approach and eventually sit with him in the glory of Millennial splendour (**v21**). If this is the attitude of the Lord, without sin and with exact knowledge from heaven, it is quite clear that our approach to those whom we may consider weak in the faith cannot be less gracious (**1 Cor 13v6-8**).

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p.83)

#### **VERSES 20-22: He that overcometh**

#### Verse 20

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Here we have the bridegroom knocking on the door of his bride. The basis for this is taken from **Song of Solomon 5v2-6**.

**Song 5v2** "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."

As the bride awakes, she hears the bridegroom knocking. Unlike Laodicea, she is a pure bride, an undefiled virgin. Figuratively, the Lord Jesus Christ is knocking at her door, he is outside, waiting for her to let him in! This is why it says that his "head is filled with dew" and his "locks with the drops of the night." We are living in the days of Gentile darkness now. We must let him into our hearts that we may have fellowship with him. We must not be asleep to his knocks. If we do let him in, he will sup with us in the Kingdom age.

For further reading on this beautiful subject of the bride and bridegroom, read pages 76-78 of Bro HP Mansfield's verse by verse notes on **Song of Solomon** entitled *Romance for Eternity* (**chapter 5v2-6**).

"if any man hear my voice" - Rotherham indicates that it is "if anyone shall hearken unto my voice" i.e. not just hear but actually take notice of and act upon it. See Rev 1v3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy..." (Bro Thomas translates this as "they that give heed...") Again this is emphasised in v22.

What door was this?

The letter to the Colossians was also written to the ecclesia of Laodicea.

Col 4v15-16 "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the ecclesia which is in his house. And when the epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the ecclesia of the Laodicea; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."

What makes this vision of the Kingdom real for us personally?

They may have been only a small ecclesia as they met in a house. The ecclesia was held in the house of Nymphas. Incredibly, Nymphas's name means "to veil as a bride" (Strongs). Laodicea was part of Christ's bride. Here was the unfaithful bride of Laodicea being sought by the Lord Jesus Christ. Laodicea was just like Hosea's unfaithful wife.

#### **□** IMPORTANT NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND:

**Luke 12v34-39** provides such an important basis for the letter to Laodicea. Look at the parallels. Here is the Christ coming and knocking on the door...

"For where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto you immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

✓ Notice the ironic situation. Here the Lord is knocking, yet it then says that he comes "at an hour when ye think not." Surely if he is knocking we know he is there? This appears to indicate that when the signs of the times are most obvious, more and more people will be going to sleep. What a tragedy! Are we awake to what is happening?

The key Scripture again is **Rev 16v15** where the thoughts are alluded to in the context of our days: "Behold I come as a thief, blessed is he that watcheth..."

To "sup with him" indicates to have a meal or have fellowship (1 Cor 5v7-8; 11v20,23-24). Those who partake in true fellowship with him now, will do so in the future (Isa. 25v6-9; Matt 8v11; 22v1-13). Just like the father of the Prodigal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ is always waiting for his wayward servants to return. When they do, he gives them a feast of celebration (Luke 15v18-20).

#### Verse 21

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

The throne is described in **Revelation 4**. The throne is occupied by Yahweh manifested in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who is at one with his brethren. This is the fulfilment of the Lord's prayer in **John 17**. It is at this time that "they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Yahweh; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Yahweh, to Jerusalem..." (**Jer 3v17**). The promise to Laodicea is definitely preliminary to the vision of **chapter 4**.

Read also **Rev 2v26**: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." Paul in **2 Tim 2v12** says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him..."

Christ is now seated "at the right hand of the Majesty in high places" (**Heb 1v3**) which in **Heb 10v12** is called "The right hand of God" and in **Heb 8v1** "the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens". See also **Eph 1v20**.

"He that overcometh" - Refer to notes in the Introduction (Part 3) on overcoming the world, pages 28-31.

## The throne of the Lord Jesus Christ

These words clearly arise from **Psalm 110v1**. It is a highly significant passage of the Old Testament and perhaps no other Psalm is quoted as often, and for such varied reasons, in the New Testament. It is superscribed "A Psalm of David", but concerns David's greater son who, having ascended to Yahweh's right hand, returns to overthrow all his enemies and establish the Kingdom of God (**Matt 22v41-46**; **Acts 2v33-35**).

It is this psalm and **Psalm 8** that form the basis of so much of Paul's letters to Ephesus and Colossae, and which no doubt were well known to the neighbouring ecclesia at Laodicea (cp. **Col 2v1**; **4v16**). Thus in the former epistle Christ is "set down at His own right hand in the heavenlies" (**Eph 1v20**) and sin having been conquered the believers are "raised up together, in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (**2v6**). Similar thoughts are presented in **Col 1v21-22** and **3v1**.

Yet in this promise it is not our current state that is in mind, but the ultimate glory of the Kingdom of God when "a King shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgement" (Isa. 32v1; 24v23). A very similar but more exalted promise was made to the twelve disciples in Matt 19v28 and Luke 22v29-30: their thrones are to be established in Jerusalem (Psa. 122v5).

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p.85)

#### Verse 22

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

This phrase is repeated, so it is again worth re-emphasising the following:

To hear is to "hearken" (Rev 1v3; 3v20) and "give heed". Therefore, a practical application is involved! This is emphasised in all 7 letters to the ecclesias (Rev 2v7,11,17,29; 3v6,13,22). The only other place this phrase is stated in the Apocalypse outside of the 7 ecclesias is in Revelation 13v9. This is in the context of judgement upon the Roman Catholic apostasy. This apostasy was the end result of that "mystery of iniquity" found even in these first century Gentile ecclesias (2 Thess 2v1-11).

How then do we have an ear that hears? By the diligent day-by-day reading and study of the Word of God. There is no secret formula: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom 10v17) We need to approach God's Word like a child that loves to listen to his father. Every day we need to ask the question, "What does my Father want me to learn today?" We need to develop a mind which really feels a need for God's Word. The result is that we can then encourage others. This is the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ:

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." (Isa. 50v4).

To have ears that hear means that we must direct our ears *towards* the Word. This means directing our ears *away* from worldly distractions. So long as our ears are tuned in to the world, we will never take in the Word. Yahweh has revealed to us His glorious future Kingdom in the words of the Apocalypse. Are we thankful for this? **Are we willing to take up the challenge?** 

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

(Colossians 3v1-4)

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev 3v21)



24 Elders round about the throne (Revelation 4) - painting by Bro Simon Sawell

#### Connection between the letter to Laodicea and the vision of Revelation 4:

Revelation 3v14-22	Revelation 4
"Behold I stand at the door and knock" (3v20)	"After this I looked and behold a door was opened in heaven" (4v1)
"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (3v21)	"a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne" (4v2)
"white raiment that thou mayest be clothed" (3v18)	"24 elders sitting, clothed in white raiment" (4v4)
"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich" (3v18)	"they had on their heads crowns of gold" (4v4)
"anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." (3v18)	"4 living creatures full of eyes" (4v6)

In other words, despite their Laodicean way of life, there was still opportunity to repent. The Laodiceans were offered the hope of the Kingdom if they turned to Yahweh their God. The Lord Jesus Christ was knocking on their door. We are given the same opportunity.

## Revelation 2 & 3

## FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE 7 ECCLESIAS

The critical issue is how we apply these exhortations in our own lives over the coming months, if our Lord remains away. The following is a summary of some main issues arising from the 7 letters:

We have come to the end of the seven letters to the ecclesias and are surely affected by the allembracing wisdom and relevance of their instruction. What a treasure-house of wisdom! What divine insight! What stirring exhortation mixed with faithful warnings and heart-warming promises! Surely ecclesias in all lands and all ages have found great value in these beautiful last letters of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us summarise their combined instruction. Error must be exposed but not in such a way that love is lost. The Truth must be preserved in the gentleness of Christ so that a resilient spirit rejoices in the services of the truth. (**Ephesus**)

An ecclesia of abject poverty, subjected to defamation and persecution, had not complained about its lot nor been provoked to retaliation, but allowed faith and love to control its actions and words. The brethren and sisters of **Smyrna** could have avoided both poverty and persecution by offering a pinch of incense on Caesar's altar, but they avoided the easy way because they had respect to the "crown of life". Where do we stand today?

Love must not be confused with weakness. Lack of separation from the sins of a pleasure-ridden society is utterly destructive. The ecclesia at **Pergamos** had a "little leaven", teachers of the doctrine of Balaam bringing compromise into the Israel of God; and the fear was that this teaching would permeate the whole ecclesia. A similar but worse situation pertained in **Thyatira** and deliberate action was required to eradicate teachers of moral degradation and worldliness. Those who will be with Christ in the day of his judgements must show similar sympathy with him now in their personal and ecclesial life. We cannot have one foot in the world and the other in the house of God! Where do we stand today?

There is a need for great watchfulness. An ecclesia may have a reputation among its fellow ecclesias for strength and activity but in reality be asleep, satisfied with itself, and unconscious of its true position. The words to **Sardis** are a positive stimulant to self-examination.

**Philadelphia** was smaller in numbers and less renowned, but there the Truth was faithfully kept and the love of the Master rested with them. It is doubtful if any of the ecclesias would have been correctly assessed by other ecclesias of their day. Certainly Philadelphia would have been less thought of than Sardis, and yet the Divine eyes have revealed the facts. We should be hesitant to enter into judgements of another ecclesia, for only Christ really knows the state of each lightstand.

**Laodicea** was content with its spiritual and material condition, but the Lord's assessment was utterly contrary. No doubt Philadelphia sometimes envied Laodicea, just as the Laodicean brethren and sisters felt confident of their position. The overwhelming lesson here is for every *individual* and every ecclesia, to ensure that we *do read the Word of God*, and that we read it properly, carefully, and prayerfully; with open heart and dedicated mind to grasp its power and practical import in our lives.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

(Bro Brian Luke, Letters to the 7 Ecclesias, Youth Conference notes 1987, p. 86)

"And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear... And he said unto them, <u>Unto you</u> it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."

# **NOTES**