



In the Lord's Day

Arlen L. Chitwood

Book I

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By the Same Author —

THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE
HAD YE BELIEVED MOSES
THE MOST HIGH RULETH
RUN TO WIN
SO GREAT SALVATION
SALVATION OF THE SOUL
FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES
IN THE LORD'S DAY
FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EAST
FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN
LET US GO ON
REDEEMED FOR A PURPOSE
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM
THE BRIDE IN GENESIS
SEARCH FOR THE BRIDE
SEVEN, TEN GENERATIONS
GOD'S FIRSTBORN SONS
THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE
JUDE
RUTH
ESTHER

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1

Caught into His Presence

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.

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

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 churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea (Rev. 1:9-11).

The Book of Revelation is clearly a *prophecy* having to do with events occurring during “the Lord’s day” (1:1, 10). These events begin with Christ’s return for the saved of the present dispensation, preceding the Tribulation (1:10; 4:1, 2), and end with events at the conclusion of the Millennium, anticipating “the day of God” (Rev. 20:7-22:5; cf. II Peter 3:10-12).

The book divides itself into *three main sections* in the opening chapter: “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter [*lit.*, ‘after these things’]” (v. 19).

“The things which thou hast seen” refer to the things in the latter part of chapter one (a description of Christ as *Judge*, with Christians in His presence [following their removal from the earth], in the future Day of the Lord), “the things which are” refer to the things in chapters two and three (God’s dealings with His people [Christians] during the present dispensation, preceding the Day of the Lord), and “the things which shall be hereafter [‘after these things’]” refer to the things beginning with chapter four (things which will occur during the Day of the Lord, after the present dispensation [set forth in chs. 2, 3] has run its course).

Note that events in chapter one actually follow events in chapters two and three, though they are listed first in the book. The Lord’s Day, during which these events occur, will not begin until Christians have been removed at the time of the rapture (following events in chs. 2, 3). And this is where both chapters one and four begin. Events beginning with verse ten in chapter one and events throughout chapter four actually occur either at or about the same time, which is at the time of and immediately following the removal of Christians from the earth into the heavens at the conclusion of the present dispensation.

(As will be shown, John’s removal into the future Day of the Lord in 1:10 is the same as his removal into heaven in 4:2. Events which follow in each chapter have to do either directly or indirectly with Christians. The events depicted beyond John’s removal in chapter one apparently precede events depicted beyond his removal in chapter four, for events in chapter one anticipate the events in chapter four.)

Events throughout the first four chapters, beginning with verse ten of chapter one, concern God’s dealings with Christians, both during and immediately following the present dispensation. Then chapter five is somewhat of a transitional chapter. God’s dealings with Christians will have been completed at this point in the book (dealings which terminate in heaven with events at the judgment seat [ch. 1] and the relinquishment of crowns by the twenty-four elders [ch. 4]), and God will then turn His attention toward Israel and the nations on earth. Chapter five is given over to a search for and revelation of the One found worthy to break the seals of the seven-sealed scroll; and the breaking of these seals — with the breaking of the first seal

marking the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation — then begins to occur in chapter six.

Thus, along with the three-way division of the book given in verse nineteen of chapter one, the preceding divisions must also be recognized. Except for several statements in the opening nine introductory verses, the first four chapters constitute the Christian section of the book. Then beyond that, events shift away from God's dealings with Christians to His dealings with the earth-dwellers (Israel and the Gentile nations); and most of the remainder of the book (through chapter eighteen) is given over to these events.

Christians appear *on earth* during the present dispensation in chapters two and three. They appear *in heaven* at the end of the present dispensation in chapter one and again in chapter nineteen at the end of the Tribulation, concluding the present age. Then events in chapter four indirectly concern Christians, *in heaven*, though there is no reference to them in the chapter. Events in chapter five present a scene *in heaven*, anticipating the Tribulation *on earth*; and chapters six through eighteen are given over to a description of this seven-year period *on earth*. These chapters (6-18) have to do strictly with Israel and the nations, and they form the most exhaustive, detailed treatment to be found anywhere in Scripture of events which will transpire *on earth* during the last seven years of the present age.

Do you want to know what's about to happen to Christians? Do you want to know what's about to happen to Israel and the Gentile nations? Do you want to know how Man's Day will end and the Lord's Day will begin and end? We're not left in the dark. It has all been made known in "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" which God gave unto John the Apostle, in order "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1).

IN THE SPIRIT

The expression, "in the Spirit," used in Rev. 1:10; 4:2, refers to a person being removed from the natural state of affairs into the supernatural for a particular purpose. John was on the Isle of Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ [which must be understood in the light of v. 1, 'things which must shortly

come to pass']" (v. 9). He was removed from his own time, near the end of the first century, and placed in the future Day of the Lord, nineteen centuries later (1:10). And he was not only moved from one time-period to another but he was also moved from one place to another. He was moved from the earth into heaven (4:1, 2).

John recorded the things revealed to him, not on the Isle of Patmos, but in heaven, nineteen and twenty-nine centuries in the future. These things were given to the Son by the Father and revealed to John through an angel (1:1; 22:6-9). And during this time he was commanded to "write" on twelve different occasions (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5).

The fact that John wrote as these things were revealed to him is evident from the one time when he was about to write but was commanded not to so do (10:4). Thus, what we have in this book is an eye-witness account concerning events which will begin to transpire at the end of the present dispensation and age (excluding events in chs. 2, 3), which are prophetic insofar as Rev. 1:1 is concerned but current from John's vantage point in the future Day of the Lord. In this respect, we have a book which was written during "time" which is yet to occur.

Moving individuals into another time-period (either past or future) or into another location within that time-period in order to receive a revelation from God is not something new in Scripture. God, on one occasion, moved the prophet Ezekiel back in time, transporting him from Babylon to Jerusalem, in order to show him certain things about Israel's past (Ezek. 8:3ff); and, on another occasion, God moved Ezekiel forward in time and once again changed his geographical location in order to show him certain things about Israel's future (Ezek. 37:1ff).

God is not bound by time or space. He can move individuals forward or backward in time at will, as well as change their geographical location (*cf.* Acts 8:39). He lives in the eternal present, and He is omnipresent. He is the eternal "I Am" (Ex. 3:14), and He is present everywhere at once through the work of the Spirit (*cf.* Gen. 1:2; 2:3; I Cor. 2:9, 10).

In Ezek. 8:3, God removed Ezekiel from Babylon and transported him to Jerusalem into a time before the captivity. God allowed Ezekiel to see the abominations that had been committed at that time by the

children of Israel, which ultimately brought about the captivity in which Ezekiel had found himself (8:5ff). Thus, God, through allowing Ezekiel to see with his own eyes that which had occurred in Jerusalem at a time in the past, allowed him to see and understand why the children of Israel were in Babylonian captivity.

In Ezek. 37:1, God removed Ezekiel from Babylon once again and placed him in the middle of a “valley which was full of bones.” On this occasion God revealed to Ezekiel, through that which happened to these bones, that which would happen to Israel at a future date. In this instance, the prophecy looks far beyond the Babylonian captivity to a time when the Israelites would be scattered throughout the nations of the earth, to a time when it would appear that *all hope was lost and the people were cut off* (vv. 11, 21ff; cf. Matt. 24:21, 22, 31; Luke 21:24).

Ezekiel was removed from Babylon and placed at a point in time over 2,500 years in the future and allowed to see that which is future even during the day in which we live. He was allowed to see the restoration of “the whole house of Israel” (v. 11) at a time when the Israelites would be placed in their own land under David their king, never to be uprooted again (vv. 12-28). Thus, he was allowed to see the restoration of Israel (both the resurrection of the dead and the regathering of the living [Dan. 12:2; Matt. 24:31]) as it will occur when Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation.

And John’s experience on the Isle of Patmos — being supernaturally transported through time and space — is no different than Ezekiel’s experience. John, as Ezekiel, was transported after the same fashion (cf. Ezek. 37:1; Rev. 1:10) for the same purpose (cf. Ezek. 11:25; Rev. 1:1; 22:6). Both men were transported “in the Spirit” through time and space in order that they might be allowed to view different things firsthand, as they actually occurred, things which God wanted them to see, understand, and record.

THE LORD’S DAY

Controversy has existed over the years in the interpretation of different parts of the Book of Revelation; and the fact that controversy of this nature has existed can, in no small part, be attributed to a misunderstanding of what is meant by the expression, “on the Lord’s

day [*lit.*, 'in the Lord's day']," in Rev. 1:10. Some expositors view this expression as a reference to *the first day of the week*, while others look upon the expression as a reference to the future *Day of the Lord*.

The manner in which one understands this expression will govern, to some extent, his interpretation of that which follows in the book. Differences of interpretation in this realm usually involve only the opening several chapters, but sometimes they involve almost the complete book.

One school of thought, for example, viewing "the Lord's day" as a reference to *the first day of the week*, looks upon the Book of Revelation as a prophecy having to do mainly with events occurring during the Christian dispensation (an interpretation requiring extensive spiritualization of the book). Almost everything leading into the Lord's return at the end of the nineteenth chapter is looked upon as pointing to events progressively occurring over two millenniums of time. All these events would have been future at the time John wrote the book, in line with Rev. 1:1, but they would be mainly past today.

A more common view among those expositors who view "the Lord's day" as a reference to *the first day of the week* is to look upon most of the book after the correct fashion — having to do with events during the future Day of the Lord — but to look upon the opening several chapters (especially chapter one) after an incorrect fashion. These expositors often see events depicted in the latter part of chapter one as referring to events surrounding Christ and His Church here on earth today, with Christ in the midst of the Church occupying His present high priestly office.

To view chapter one in this manner is to miss the whole point of the way the book is introduced, something which will reflect, after some fashion, on one's understanding of various things in the remaining chapters, especially things in chapters two through four. On the other hand though, to view John's reference to "the Lord's day" aright, as a reference to the future *Day of the Lord*, will start the person out in a correct manner in the book; and beginning the book after this fashion, he will be far more apt to see things within a correct framework in subsequent chapters than if he had begun after a fashion different from that which the author intended.

Most of the criticism concerning "the Lord's day" being a refer-

ence to the future *Day of the Lord* arises from the way that the Greek text is structured. It is structured differently in Rev. 1:10 than it is elsewhere in Scripture when reference is made to the Day of the Lord. Elsewhere, both in the Greek and Hebrew texts, two nouns are used (“day” and “Lord”). In Rev. 1:10, by contrast, there is one noun (“day”) preceded by an adjective (translated, “Lord’s”).

The adjective (translated as a possessive in the English text [a perfectly acceptable translation in this case; see also I Cor. 11:20]) is a form of the Greek word for Lord (*Kuriakos*) and is used in the sense of “Lordian” or “Lordly.” The word is articular in the Greek text, referring to a particular Lordian or Lordly day. It is a particular Lord’s day, or a particular day of the Lord.

There is absolutely no difference in saying “the Lord’s day” or saying “the day of the Lord.” In fact, the Hebrew text where the expression is found most of the different times it appears in Scripture (twenty times in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and three times [other than Rev. 1:10] in the Greek text of the New testament) can only express “the Lord’s day” one way. There is no adjective for “Lord” in the Hebrew text, as in the Greek text, and the only way “the Lord’s day” can be expressed in this language is by using two nouns and saying “the day of the Lord.”

The context of Rev. 1:10 and central message of the book clearly reveal that the writer, through the use of the expression, “the Lord’s day,” could have had only *one thing* in mind — the future “day of the Lord.” John was not only removed from the Isle of Patmos and taken to heaven but he was also moved forward in time to the end of the present dispensation. He was transported to a place and time where he saw Christ occupying His future position as *Judge* in the midst of His Church (1:11-20). And from that point forward, the Book of Revelation has to do with things either *anticipating judgment* (chs. 2, 3, 5), with *judgment itself* (chs. 1, 6-20, or with things *resulting from judgment* (chs. 4, 19, 21, 22) during “the Lord’s day,” “the day of the Lord.”

The first reference to the Day of the Lord in Scripture forms a *first-mention principle*, establishing a meaning and usage for this day which holds constant throughout Scripture. The Day of the Lord is first mentioned in Isa. 2:12 as a day when the “lofty looks of man shall be

humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted" (vv.11-17). To bring the latter to pass (the Lord's exaltation), the Day of the Lord is always associated in Scripture with God's judgment, both upon man and the material creation. Judgment during this day falls first upon *the Church* (cf. Rev. 1:10-20; I Thess. 5:2-4), then upon *Israel and the Gentile nations* (cf. Rev. 6:1ff; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2, 11, 31; 3:14), and then upon *the material creation* (cf. Rev. 21:1; II Peter 3:10). This is the way the Book of Revelation is structured.

This is the reason why a correct understanding of the expression, "the Lord's day," in Rev. 1:10 is a major key to a proper understanding of this book. And one reason so many people have trouble with the Book of Revelation is because they have ignored the interpretative keys which God has provided, especially this one.

Aside from the preceding, there is no evidence whatsoever that *the first day of the week* was ever called "the Lord's day" prior to the time this book was written. "The first day of the week" is always called just that in Scripture — *the first day of the week* (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2); and insofar as any historical evidence is concerned, this was the usage common in John's day.

Matters surrounding the expression, "the Lord's day," and how it is used by Christians today though are quite different. This expression is presently used by numerous Christians as a reference to *the first day of the week*. In fact, one hears it almost everywhere, in and out of the pulpit. And this common usage may very well have had its origin centuries ago with a misinterpretation of Rev. 1:10.

Actually, if one is going to call a day of our week, "the Lord's day," it would have to, Scripturally, be a reference to *Saturday*, not Sunday. *Saturday* is the seventh day of the week, corresponding within the septenary arrangement of Scripture to the seventh millennium, which will be "the Lord's day," or "the day of the Lord" (ref. the author's book, WHAT TIME IS IT? Ch. III).

Thus, the use of the expression, "the Lord's day," as a reference to the first day of the week is detrimental to sound Biblical study in more ways than one. The Scriptural use of this expression (or, "the day of the Lord") is limited to *one thing*: a period of judgment lasting slightly longer than 1,000 years which will ultimately result in that which is described in Revelation, chapters twenty-one and twenty-two. The

Day of the Lord will terminate at the conclusion of the millennium (after 1,000-years of judgment, executed by Christ and His co-heirs) with God making “all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

COME UP HITHER

John’s removal from the earth and appearance in heaven during “the Lord’s day” points to that future day when Christians will be removed from the earth and find themselves in heaven during “the Lord’s day.” This is clear from comparing Rev. 1:10 with Rev. 4:1, 2, along with the contexts of these verses.

In Rev. 1:10, John was transported, “in the Spirit,” into the future Day of the Lord. He then heard behind him “a great voice, as of a trumpet,” instructing him, “What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia...” (vv. 10, 11). John then turned to see the One speaking (v. 12) and saw *the seven Churches*, with Christ, occupying His future role as *Judge*, in their midst (vv. 12-20).

In Rev. 4:1, 2, John heard a voice, “as it were of a trumpet,” which said, “Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter [*lit.*, ‘after these things’].” He was then transported, “in the Spirit,” into heaven. Once in heaven, John saw *a throne, One seated on the throne*, and *twenty-four crowned elders seated on surrounding thrones* (vv. 2-4). John then described the central throne and the worship of the One seated on the throne by four living creatures and by the twenty-four elders, as they cast their crowns before the throne (vv. 5-11).

Rev. 1:10 provides the *time* (the Day of the Lord) into which John was transported, and Rev. 4:1, 2 provides the *place* (heaven) into which he was transported.

Time is then looked upon in another sense in Rev. 4:1. This verse both begins and ends with the same two Greek words which mark the third division of the book back in verse twenty of the first chapter — the words *meta tauta* (“after these things”). The verse should literally read, “After these things I looked...and I will shew thee things which must be after these things.” “After these things” follows “the things which are [the things set forth in the messages to the seven Churches in chs. 2, 3, pointing to the present time, the time when God deals with the Church on earth].” Thus, John’s removal into heaven, “in the Spirit

on ['in'] the Lord's day," points, chronologically, to an event occurring during future time at the conclusion of the present dispensation, preceding the Tribulation (6:1ff).

This is where Scripture places the removal of the Church from the earth. It will occur at the end of the present dispensation, preceding the Tribulation on earth. And for those who have eyes to see, Rev. 1:10 and Rev. 4:1, 2 describe the same event as described in I Cor. 15:51-57 and I Thess. 4:13-18.

1. SEVEN CHURCHES

Following the removal of Christians from the earth, commonly called "the rapture," Christians will see exactly the same thing John saw following his removal in chapters one and four. They will see other Christians (which, in Rev. 1:11-20, is clearly a reference to *all Christians* [all seven Churches appear together, with Christ in their midst]), they will see Christ on His judgment seat, they will see God on His throne, they will see an active, ongoing worship of God, and they will see twenty-four elders cast their crowns before God's throne.

The seven Churches to which John was commanded to send a record of that which he saw while in heaven, in the Lord's Day, were seven existing Churches in Asia during his day. These were seven particular Churches which the Lord chose to use, because of certain peculiar characteristics embodied by each — things brought to pass under God's sovereign control of matters — in order that He, having these things, might be able to teach numerous spiritual truths in the opening chapters of this book.

These seven Churches, among other things, set forth a history of the Church during the present dispensation, beginning with the Church in Ephesus which left its "first love" and ending with the "lukewarm" Church in Laodicea (Rev. 2:4; 3:15, 16). *Apostasy*, because of the working of the leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33, began to make inroads in the Church early in the dispensation (set forth in the message to the Church in Ephesus); and the working of the leaven was prophesied to be so complete ("till the whole was leavened") that, by the end of the dispensation, within the Church, there would exist a state of total corruption (set forth in the message to the Church in Laodicea).

This is the reason Jesus asked the question, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith [‘the faith’] on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). The answer, from the wording of the Greek text, is *negative*. When the Son of Man comes, rather than finding the Church holding to “the faith” (a reference peculiarly related to the Word of the Kingdom [Matt. 13:19]; see the author’s book, SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH, Ch. II), He will instead find the Church, because of the working of the leaven over almost two millenniums of time, described as being “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17).

Such a condition, however, will make no difference insofar as Christians going forth to meet the Lord is concerned. All Christians, both the dead over a two-thousand-year period (resurrected) and the living at that time (translated), will be removed from the earth when the rapture occurs. They will be removed at the same time and be transported to the same place.

The seven Churches dealt with in the first three chapters of Revelation (dealt with on earth during the present dispensation in chs. 2, 3 and dealt with before the judgment seat of Christ during the Day of the Lord in ch. 1) point, numerically, to *the complete Church*. “Seven” is a number showing *the completeness of that which is in view*; and in this case, the reference is to *the complete Church, all Christians*.

The Book of Revelation, in one sense, is built around the use of the number “seven.” This number is not only used to point to the Church in the Christian section but it is also used, among other things, to point to judgments (seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials) upon the earth-dwellers during the final seven years of Daniel’s prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. The three sets of sevens, outlining judgments on earth during the Tribulation, point to *Divine perfection (“three” sets) within God’s complete judgment (“seven” in each set) during the completion of Daniel’s prophecy (the last “seven” years)*.

The number “seven” must show *completeness*. It is the number associated with God and the completion of His work, in contrast to man’s number, “six,” showing incompleteness. And when John sees all seven Churches in the presence of Christ in heaven, as He exercises His role as *Judge* during the Lord’s Day, only one thing can be in view. The scene is that of *all Christians* in heaven during the Lord’s Day,

standing in Christ's presence to be judged.

All Christians are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ *together, at the same time and place*. Their faithfulness or unfaithfulness, carnality or spirituality, will have nothing to do with the matter of their being removed from the earth to stand in this place at this time.

This is what is pictured in Revelation, chapter one. *All* who are "in Christ" (I Thess. 4:16, 17) — *i.e., all Christians* — will appear in the presence of Christ together, at the same time, in order that they might give an account concerning how well they had previously performed their assigned duties as servants in the Lord's house (Matt. 24:45-51; 25:14:30; Luke 19:11-27). Those represented by the Laodicean Church will be there alongside those represented by the Philadelphian Church. The separation of Christians on the basis of faithfulness or unfaithfulness occurs before the judgment seat, not via selective resurrection and translation as some teach.

This is what is taught in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, perfectly in line with corresponding Scriptures such as the parables of the talents and pounds (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27) and the reference to the future judgment of Christians in I Cor. 3:11-15.

2. IN THAT DAY

"The day of the Lord," "the Lord's day," because of how the expression is used in the Old Testament, is usually thought of by expositors as associated only with activities surrounding *Israel and the Gentile nations on earth*. However, the New Testament, following the inception of the Church, uses the expression in association with activities surrounding *the Church in heaven* as well (along with the expression, "the day of Jesus Christ" [Phil. 1:6]).

In I Thess. 5:4, there is a clear inference that "the day of the Lord" (v. 2) will overtake some Christians "as a thief." Many of those advocating selective resurrection and translation of Christians at the rapture recognize this fact; and viewing "the day of the Lord" in verse two as associated only with activities surrounding the earth-dwellers, they point to I Thess. 5:4 as one of their proof texts that some Christians will be left behind at the time of the rapture to go through either part or all of the Tribulation. However, Revelation, chapter one clearly reveals that God's dealings with man during that part of "the day of

the Lord” prior to the millennium (as during the millennium itself) have to do with the Church in heaven, as well as Israel and the Gentile nations on earth.

“The day of the Lord” will overtake unfaithful Christians “as a thief” at the time they are removed from the earth and taken to heaven — at the time of the rapture (*cf.* I Thess. 5:6-10; Rev. 1:10-20). For them, Christ’s appearance will be completely unexpected, as the unexpected arrival of a thief (Matt. 24:37-44 [note particularly vv. 43, 44; see also the author’s book, PROPHECY ON MOUNT OLIVET, Ch. X]).

Such Christians will, “in the twinkling of an eye,” be removed from the earth and find themselves in heaven, in the Lord’s Day, before the judgment seat of Christ. And, in accord with the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, it is there that they, along with all other Christians, will render an account, resulting in “a just recompense of reward” (Heb. 2:2; 11:26).

2

Judged in His Presence

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

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

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

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

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength (Rev. 1:12-16).

The Book of Revelation is a *prophecy* (1:1; cf. 22:7). Except for several introductory verses, chapters two and three, and a few concluding verses, the book concerns events which will transpire beyond the present dispensation, during “the Lord’s day” (1:10), the future Day of the Lord. And even chapters two and three, which have to do with the present dispensation, must also be looked upon as prophetic in nature. Among other things, these chapters depict a history of the Church — beginning with Ephesus (which left its “first love”) and terminating with Laodicea (described as “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”); and John, though writing at a point beyond the present dispensation (in the future Day of the Lord into

which he had been transported), wrote for those living in his own time, at the beginning of the dispensation (1:11).

In order to receive this prophecy, called, "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1), John was removed from the earth, taken to heaven, and placed at the very beginning of the future Day of the Lord. From that point he was progressively moved forward in time and shown a sequence of events which would transpire throughout this future day, both in heaven and on the earth (1:10-20; 4:1-22:6); and at the very beginning of this time he was allowed to look back upon certain events which would transpire during the present dispensation, preceding the Day of the Lord (chs. 2, 3).

The events occurring during "the Lord's day" which John saw began with the removal of the Church at the conclusion of the present dispensation and ended over 1,000 years later with preparatory events anticipating the eternal ages, the Day of God, which will follow the Day of the Lord (*cf.* Rev. 1:9, 10; 4:1, 2; 21:1ff; II Peter 3:10-13). The complete scope of time covered by the Day of the Lord is thus clearly revealed in the Book of Revelation.

The Day of the Lord covers not only events during the Tribulation and Millennium but also certain events immediately preceding the Tribulation and certain events immediately following the Millennium. It includes the judgment of Christians in heaven, preceding the Tribulation (*cf.* Rev. 1:10-20; 6:1ff); and it includes events beyond the Millennium, preparatory to the eternal ages, the Day of God (Rev. 20:7ff; *cf.* Rev. 1:10, 11; 22:6).

This is why Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, clearly associates God's activities during the Day of the Lord with both the earth-dwellers and with Christians; and insofar as Christians are concerned, this association is clearly revealed to be immediately following the rapture, preceding the Tribulation (I Thess. 5:2-4; *cf.* I Thess. 4:13-18); and this is also why the destruction of the present heavens and earth and the creation of a new heavens and earth at the end of the Millennium are placed within the Day of the Lord (*cf.* II Peter 3:10; Rev. 21:1).

(Actually, Scripture presents an overlap between the ending of the Day of the Lord and the beginning of the Day of God. Note that the

destruction of the present heavens and earth occurs both during the Day of the Lord and during the Day of God [II Peter 3:10-12]. This destruction occurs at the very end of the Day of the Lord and at the very beginning of the Day of God. Thus, at least some, if not all, of the events beyond the Millennium in the Book of Revelation will occur during the Day of God as well as during the Day of the Lord.)

THE SON OF MAN

The title, “the Son of man,” in Scripture is intimately connected with the Lord’s coming dominion over the earth. This title first appears in Psa. 8:4, a Messianic passage quoted in Heb. 2:6, within a Messianic setting. The eighth Psalm begins and ends with the same statement: “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” (vv. 1, 9). The reference is to the coming day of His “glory” when He will possess “dominion” over the earth (*cf.* vv. 1, 6). Thus, through the use of this title in Psa. 8:4, a first-mention principle is established which remains constant throughout Scripture.

Wherever this title occurs in Scripture, the underlying thought through its use always has to do with *the Lord’s coming dominion over the earth*. The first appearance of this title in the New Testament is in Matt. 8:20: “And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” At first glance there would appear to be no Messianic connection. But note the last mention of this title in the New Testament: “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” (Rev. 14:14).

Both the first and last times this title appears in the New Testament, there is a reference made to Christ’s “head.” At His first coming, He did not have a place on the earth (which He would one day receive for an inheritance) to even lay His head. This was the day of His shame and humiliation, the day when a crown of thorns was placed on His head, followed by His crucifixion between criminals. However, the day is coming when He will wear a golden crown upon His head (signifying *Divine Kingly* power [“gold” in Scripture signifies *Deity*]). That will occur during the coming day of His power and exaltation.

(The Greek word used for “crown” in Rev. 14:14 is *stephanos*, not *diadema*, indicating that Christ, at this time, will not yet have entered into His office as King. A ruling monarch wears a “diadem,” not the type crown which the Greek word *stephanos* signifies. By contrast, in Rev. 19:12, Christ is seen wearing “many crowns [the Greek word *diadema* rather than *stephanos* is used here].” Thus, that which occurs in Rev. 14:14 anticipates that which will occur in Rev. 19:12.)

The true nature of His identity — Israel’s Messiah, the One destined to possess dominion over the earth — is exactly what Jesus had in mind when He asked Peter, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matt. 16:13). And Peter, after responding to that question, in response to the Lord’s next question, “But whom say ye that I am?” (v. 15), responded within the same framework in which Christ had asked both questions. Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16).

In essence Peter said, “You are the Messiah, the Firstborn of God, the One in possession of the rights of primogeniture.” And this is why Jesus said in response, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (v. 17).

This title is used about eighty times in the four gospel accounts, and outside the gospels the title only appears in the New Testament four different places, in three books (Acts 7:56; Heb. 2:6; Rev. 1:13; 14:14).

The passage in Acts 7:56 presents “the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” The offer of the Messianic Kingdom was still open to Israel at this time, Stephen had just finished delivering a lengthy dissertation about Jesus the Christ to the Jewish council (7:2-53), and the door was open for the Jewish leaders to respond in a positive manner. Had they done so, Jesus would have returned and restored the kingdom to Israel. This is the reason He is seen “standing” at God’s right hand and identified as “the Son of man.”

The passage in Heb. 2:6 is simply a quotation from the eighth Psalm, a Messianic Psalm where the title is first used in Scripture. The use of this title in Hebrews speaks volumes about the Messianic nature of this book. Paul never used the title in His writings, though he had

far more to say about the coming kingdom than many realize. But Hebrews is different yet. Hebrews is a book given over almost entirely to things surrounding the Heir and His co-heirs, as these things relate to the Messianic Era.

Then in the Book of Revelation the title is used of Christ twice at the conclusion of the present dispensation (1:13; 14:14), anticipating His coming reign over the earth. Both times the title appears in this book, judgmental scenes are in view. The title appears first in connection with the Son judging the Church preceding the Tribulation, with a view to the manifestation of His co-heirs at the termination of this judgment; and the title appears the second time in connection with Christ judging the earth-dwellers at the end of the Tribulation, with a view to His taking the reins of government.

HIS DESCRIPTION IN THAT DAY

As soon as John was transported into heaven, into the future Day of the Lord, he heard behind him “a great voice, as of a trumpet,” telling him to write the things being revealed and to send the record to seven particular Churches in Asia. The words preceding this command — “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” — appear in some Greek manuscripts but are usually considered spurious by textual critics. The person speaking though had previously identified Himself after this same fashion (v. 8) and does so after a similar fashion later in the chapter (vv. 17, 18).

John turned to see the One speaking; and having turned, he saw seven golden candlesticks and the person possessing the “voice, as of a trumpet” standing in the midst of the candlesticks (vv. 12, 13). The person John saw was the glorified Christ as He will appear after the present dispensation is over, at the very beginning of the Day of the Lord (note v. 18); and the seven candlesticks were said to be “the seven churches” (v. 20).

Consequently, John didn’t see Christ as our *present High Priest*, but as our *future Judge*. The *time* in view and John’s *description* of Christ clearly reveal this fact.

The *time* is in the future Day of the Lord. Christ today is exercising the office of High Priest in order to effect a present cleansing of the

“many sons,” the “kings and priests,” He is about to bring “unto glory.” His present ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is strictly on behalf of those who are being called out to occupy positions as co-heirs with Him during the coming age. If He does not “wash [a reference, typically, to cleansing provided by water in the laver in the courtyard of the tabernacle]” them now (through His high priestly ministry, on the basis of His shed blood on the mercy seat), they can have “no part” with *him* during the coming age (*cf.* John 13:8-10; I John 1:7-2:2).

John sees Christ in heaven at a time beyond the present dispensation, beyond the time of His present high priestly ministry. The complete Church, shown by the seven Churches in His presence, will have been removed from the earth; and Christ’s present high priestly ministry will have come to an end. Christ, at this time, will come forth from the sanctuary to judge those for whom He had previously interceded with the Father.

The *description* which John then gives of Christ is that of a *Judge*. A description of Christ as *Priest* in the future day of the Lord, with the Church in His presence, would be completely out of place, for this would not be in keeping with events set forth in the book at all. The Day of the Lord is associated in Scripture with God’s *judgment*, and the dispensation during which Christ exercises the office of High Priest will have ended when this day begins. Thus, without even reading John’s description, one could, contextually, only expect John to see Christ as *Judge*. And that is exactly the description which he gives.

1. CLOTHED... (V. 13)

John described Christ first of all as “clothed with a garment down to the foot.” Such a garment would be worn by either a priest or a judge. But John next states that He was “girt about the paps [‘breasts’] with a golden girdle”; and only a judge wore the girdle in this position.

A priest wore the girdle around the waist, signifying service. He would often lift the hem of his garment and tuck it under the girdle as he went about some of his various priestly duties. By contrast, a judge wore the girdle over one shoulder and across his breasts as an insignia of the magisterial office which he held.

Thus, John sees Christ at a time *after* He has removed the girdle from His waist and placed it over one shoulder, allowing it to rest at

a position across His breasts. This signifies that His high priestly work has ended (the present dispensation is over) and His judicial work has begun (those for whom He occupied the office of High Priest are now in His presence, in heaven, in the Day of the Lord; and they are about to come under judgment).

2. HIS HEAD AND HIS HAIRS... (V. 14)

It is significant that at this point in the book John sees Christ, in the future Day of the Lord, *without a crown upon His head*. This part of the revelation of Jesus Christ occurs prior to the time He is seen wearing a crown (*cf.* Rev. 14:14; 19:12). It occurs at the time He judges Christians, at the end of the present dispensation but preceding the Tribulation.

Christ will turn His attention to the earth-dwellers only after He has first dealt with the Church (Rev. 5:1ff); and seemingly, at this time, He will begin wearing a crown — first a *stephanos*, to later be followed by a *diadem*.

This thought is derived from comparing four different verses — Rev. 6:2; 12:3; 14:14; 19:12.

In Rev. 6:2 the Antichrist is seen wearing a *stephanos* at the beginning of the Tribulation, three and one-half years before Satan gives unto him “his power, and his seat [‘throne’], and great authority” (Rev. 13:2) — three and one half years before he actually enters into his regal office and wears a *diadem* (Rev. 12:3; 13:1, 2), anticipated by the *stephanos*.

Christ will wear a *stephanos* prior to the time He actually assumes regal power and is seen wearing many *diadems* (*cf.* Rev. 14:14; 19:12); and since Antichrist dons a crown (though not a regal crown) at the very beginning of the Tribulation, it seems evident that Christ will have donned a crown (though not a regal crown) at this time also. Satan is the great counterfeiter, and he will see to it that regal activities surrounding Antichrist are patterned after regal activities surrounding Christ.

(See Ch. IV of this book and Ch. XII of the author’s book, JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, for additional information concerning how the words *stephanos* and *diadema* are used in this respect in the Greek

New Testament.)

The yet-to-be-crowned head of Christ and the hairs of His head were described by John as being “white like wool, as white as snow.” Wisdom, dignity, and superiority (all surrounding longevity) are in view, but the best commentary on the passage is Dan. 7:22, where the results of Christ’s judicial activity set forth in Revelation, chapter one are depicted.

The words, “saints of the most High,” in Dan. 7:22 (also vv. 18, 25, 27) should literally be translated, “saints of the high places [heavenly places].” Since Israel, through rejection, forfeited the right to occupy these heavenly places in the coming kingdom and the Church was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel rejected (*cf.* Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10), Christians (among others, *e.g.*, martyred Tribulation saints [Rev. 20:4]) would have to be the ones receiving judicial power and authority (rulership) in Dan. 7:22 (even though the Church was not in existence at the time this was written). And since all such power and authority has been committed into the hands of the Son (*cf.* Matt. 28:18; John 5:22), “the Ancient of days” in Dan. 7:22 would have to be identified as Christ, even though “the Ancient of days” is a title used of the Father back in verse nine of the same chapter (*cf.* v. 13; also note the Son’s title, “the Son of man,” in this verse).

The thought is similar to Psa. 45:6 and Heb. 1:8. The author of Hebrews, quoting Psa. 45:6, takes words directed to the Father in the Old Testament and uses them relative to the Son in the New Testament. The words, “Thy throne, O God...,” are used of both; and in Daniel 7:9, 22, the title, “the Ancient of days,” is also used of both.

(In Daniel, chapter seven, verses seventeen through twenty-seven form an “interpretation” of several visions which Daniel had previously been shown, recorded in verses two through fourteen [v. 16]. However, the manner in which “the Ancient of days” is presented in the interpretation is significantly different than the way He is presented in the visions.

In the visions, “the Ancient of days” gives *the Son* “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom.” [vv. 13, 14]; but in the interpretation, “the Ancient of days” gives *the saints of the high places* judicial power and authority in the kingdom [vv. 22, 27]. The former allows the latter to

occur, and in this respect, revelation becomes progressive as one moves from the visions to the interpretation.

In the visions, the Father, called “the Ancient of days,” acts on behalf of His Son; but in the interpretation, it is the Son Who acts. The Son, now in possession of the kingdom [received from His Father], is also called “the Ancient of days” and acts on behalf of His co-heirs.

This is the manner in which the delegation of power and authority in the coming kingdom is presented elsewhere in Scripture. The Son receives the kingdom from His Father [an act of the Father as He delivers the kingdom over to His Son]; but once the Son has received the kingdom, then He, rather than the Father, is the One seen acting with respect to the power and authority placed in His hands [cf. Luke 19:12, 15-19; Matt. 20:23; 25:19-23]. This is why the work of “the Ancient of days” in Daniel, chapter seven must be looked upon as progressive acts of both the Father and the Son.)

In Dan. 7:9, the Father is described as having hair “like the pure wool,” and this same description must be looked upon as also applying to the Son in verse twenty-two, which perfectly fits the description given of the Son in Rev. 1:14. The Father cannot be described one way and the Son another. The Father and the Son are “one” (John 10:30), which can be easily illustrated by comparing the description of the Father in Dan. 7:9 with the description of the Son in Rev. 1:14, in the light of Dan. 7:22.

Thus, not only does the manner in which Christ is clothed in Rev. 1:13 depict a *judicial* scene, but the first thing said about the description of His person in the following verse (in the light of Daniel, chapter seven) also depicts *judgment*.

3. *His eyes...* (v. 14)

John next calls attention to His eyes, described “as a flame of fire.” “Fire” is used numerous places in Scripture in connection with *God’s judicial activity*.

In Dan. 7:9-11, in the same *judicial* scene previously considered, God’s throne is described as being “like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire”; and a “fiery stream [a stream or river of fire]” issued forth from before Him.

Fire is used after this same fashion in connection with what

Scripture reveals about the judgment seat of Christ: "Every man's work shall be made manifest...it shall be revealed by ['in'] fire; and the fire shall try every man's work..." (I Cor. 3:11-15). This is where the baptism "with ['in'] fire" occurs — on Christ's threshing floor when the wheat is separated from the chaff and the chaff is burned (Matt. 3:11, 12; cf. Heb. 6:8, 9).

Christ used the Valley of Hinnom (*Gehenna*), the place of refuse south of Jerusalem, where the fires always burned, as a synonym for the place numerous individuals found unworthy to enter the kingdom would occupy following judgment.

Then there are the fiery judgments of the Tribulation, the destruction of the earth by fire at the end of the Millennium, and the Lake of fire as the final abode of the unsaved.

There can be no question concerning how "fire" is used in Scripture; and when Christ is presented as having eyes "as a flame of fire," only a *judicial* scene can be in view.

In the subsequent messages to the seven Churches, Christ is presented as the One Who sees all and consequently knows all. Nothing which occurs escapes His attention. And this same individual is the One Who will one day judge all those in each of the seven Churches (pointing to a judgment of all Christians); and nothing which occurs during the present day will escape His attention in that coming day when every man's work will be "revealed by ['in'] fire."

Christ's eyes, "as a flame of fire," in that day will be searching, penetrating, and revealing, just as they were when He looked upon Peter after his foretold denial of Christ. Immediately after Peter had denied his Lord the third time, the cock crowed a second time; and the Lord (apparently being led at that moment past Peter into "the hall of judgment") turned and looked upon Peter, awakening him to the stark reality of that which he had done (Luke 22:61).

The Lord's look at this time was far more than a brief glance. The word used in the Greek text (*emblepo*) points to Christ fixing His eyes upon Peter in an intently searching sense. These were the eyes which John saw in Rev. 1:14; and Peter looked into these eyes, as will every Christian.

Peter came under scrutiny for his actions, causing him to remember that which had previously occurred. Resultingly, he "went out,

and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). And Christians who have followed a similar course of action will react after a similar fashion when they, in that coming day, look into those same eyes, described as “a flame of fire.”

4. *HIS FEET... (V. 15)*

John not only sees Christ’s feet as being “like unto fine brass,” but he further describes them “as if they burned in a furnace.” Thus, there is actually a dual reference to judgment, for both “brass” and “fire” are used in Scripture depicting *judgment*, with “brass” specifically depicting *judgment upon sin as borne for us*.

In Num 21:5ff, God judged His people because of sin. He sent poisonous serpents throughout the camp, and numerous Israelites, bitten by the serpents, began to die.

Moses interceded with God on behalf of the people, and God provided him with the antidote. He was to take a brazen serpent, affix it to a pole, and lift it up in the camp of Israel. And any individual who had been bitten by a serpent needed only to look upon the brazen serpent in order to live.

In the antitype (to which Christ called attention in John 3:14) man today is under the sentence of death. Man is dying, and God has provided the antidote. In the camp of Israel, serpents caused the problem, and a serpent provided the cure. In the world today, man (the First Adam) caused the problem, and Man (the Last Adam) has provided the cure. God has judged sin in the person of His Son, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15).

The same use of brass in Scripture is seen in the two articles of furniture in the courtyard of the tabernacle. The brazen altar was constructed of wood overlaid with brass, and the brazen laver was constructed completely of brass. Both appear in connection with God’s judgment upon sin.

The brazen altar stood next to the only door to the tabernacle and barred the way for any who would not come via the required blood sacrifice (typifying Christ’s finished work on Calvary); and the brazen laver stood between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and barred the way for any priest who would not first avail himself of cleansing from

present defilement, provided by the water in the upper and lower basins (typifying Christ's present work as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary).

5. HIS VOICE... (v. 15)

His voice, heard and described by John, was "as the sound of many waters."

During Christ's earthly ministry, officers sent to apprehend Him returned empty-handed and confessed to the chief priests and Pharisees, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). At a later time, shortly before His crucifixion, Judas led a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees in another attempt to apprehend Him, and, at the sound of two words which He used to identify Himself, they were caused to go backward and fall on the ground (John 18:5, 6).

Christ identified Himself to His would-be captors through the use of the expression, "I am." By using this expression, Christ identified Himself with the God of the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14). He revealed that those sent by the chief priests and Pharisees had been sent to take God Himself captive. It was God Who was later led into "the hall of judgment," and it was *the blood of God* which was subsequently shed to redeem fallen man (John 18:28; Acts 20:28).

A *judicial* scene in connection with Christ speaking can be seen in Matt. 22:11, 12, in the parable of the marriage feast. This parable has to do with the festivities surrounding the wedding of God's Son, and the King coming in to see the guests in verses eleven and twelve can only be identified as the Son Himself making His appearance, as *King*.

The King, viewing the guests, sees a man who does not have on a wedding garment, and he asks the man a very revealing, searching question: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?"

The way the question is worded in the Greek text indicates that the man knew he was supposed to have a wedding garment to attend the festivities, but he deliberately, defiantly refused to provide himself with one and sought to attend the festivities dressed after another fashion. This fact was called to his attention in Christ's question, and he was left without any way to respond. There was nothing he could

say. The man, as described in the text, was “speechless.”

6. *IN HIS RIGHT HAND... (v. 16)*

John saw Christ with “seven stars” in His right hand, which are identified as the “angels of the seven churches” (vv. 16, 20).

These are “angels,” not men, and would have to be identified as being angels from among the “ministering spirits” of Heb. 1:14 — ministering on behalf of Christians during the present dispensation but somehow connected with the future judgment of those for whom they presently minister. God has always used angels to carry out affairs in His kingdom, and angels will apparently be very active in events surrounding the judgment seat of Christ (*ref.* the author's book, *SO GREAT SALVATION*, Ch. II).

7. *Out of His Mouth... (v. 16)*

Out of Christ's mouth went a sharp twoedged sword. A “sword” in Scripture is symbolic of *the Word of God* (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). God always acts in complete accordance with His revealed Word; and judgment, wherein a just recompense will be rendered to every Christian, will be carried out in perfect keeping with that which God previously revealed in His Word.

In Christ's message to the Church in Pergamos (the Church which had settled down in and, as its name implies, had become “married” to the world), reference is twice made to the “sharp twoedged sword” from Rev. 1:16 (2:12, 16). The Church in Pergamos was warned that unless those in the Church repented, the day would come when Christ would appear to them and “fight against them” with the *sword proceeding out of His mouth*.

That day would be when Christians appear before the judgment seat of Christ as seen in chapter one. And the common teaching that only blessings and rewards will emanate from Christ's judgment seat can immediately be dispelled by noting how Christ uses this same sword in His dealings with the unsaved at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 19:21). Christ, on His judgment seat, will come against those Christians settling down in and associating themselves with the world; and Christ, at the time of His return, seated on a white horse, will come against those in the world itself.

Christ will speak, and it will be done; and that which He speaks will be in perfect keeping with that which He previously revealed in His Word.

8. *HIS COUNTEenance... (v. 16)*

John then sums up the appearance of Christ by writing that “his countenance [His overall being] was as the sun shineth in his strength.” The allusion is to the sun at noon on a cloudless day, too intense for man to gaze upon.

This is Christ in His glory, as John, along with Peter and James, had beheld him about sixty years earlier on the Mount. At that earlier time “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:2). Now, six decades later, John sees the same glorified Christ and compares His complete being to the shining of the sun; and it is not just simply the sun shining but the sun *shining in its strength*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

When Christians see Christ it will be *at His judgment seat*, and the description given in Rev. 1:13-16 is exactly what they will see in that day. That which John saw caused him to fall at Christ’s feet “*as dead*” (v. 17); and his experience will also be that of numerous Christians when they look upon Christ as Judge and realize that “the terror of the Lord” is about to be manifested (II Cor. 5:11; *cf.* v. 10), and a “fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” is about to occur (Heb. 10:27; *cf.* v. 30).

3

The Seven Churches

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus... Smyrna“... Pergamos... Thyatira... Sardis... Philadelphia... Laodicea... I know thy works... To him that overcometh... (Rev. 2:1ff).

Revelation, chapters two and three consist of short, to-the-point epistles written to seven Churches in Asia during the first century, during the time in which the Apostle John lived. These seven Churches were specifically chosen by the Lord to not only receive the message given to John in the future Day of the Lord but to also set forth certain evident, spiritual truths in the opening part of this message.

Near the end of the first century, at the time John was removed into heaven to receive “the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” it is obvious that there were many Churches scattered throughout Asia [groups of believers in different communities, comprising various Churches], far more than the seven referred to in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation. There were some five hundred to one thousand townships in Asia near the end of the first century; and through the dispersion of Christians and the evangelistic fervor of the early Church, with much of this evangelistic fervor concentrated in Asia (*cf.* Acts 2:9; 8:1, 4; 11:19; 19:10, 26; James 1:1; I Peter 1:1), one could only conclude that there had to be numerous Christians, comprising many Churches, in different communities throughout Asia by this time.

Thus, the seven Churches appearing in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation could only have been chosen by the Lord from

among numerous existing Churches, and the Lord's purpose behind not only selecting *seven* but selecting *these particular seven* becomes very evident as one studies the material in these opening chapters.

SEVEN CHURCHES

"Seven" is one of four numbers used in Scripture to show *completeness* ("three," "ten," and "twelve" are the others). Each one shows completeness after a particular fashion. "Three" shows *Divine completeness*. "Seven" is somewhat similar to "three" in the sense that it is a number associated with Deity. It is God's number, and in this respect it is used in Scripture numerous times to show *the completeness of that which is in view*. "Ten" shows *numerical completeness*, and "twelve" shows *governmental completeness*.

When the Lord used the number "seven" in the first three chapters of this book, referring to seven Churches in Asia, He, through this means, was also referring to the complete Church (the completeness of that which was in view, *i.e.*, "the Church"). These seven Churches are spoken of and dealt with in the Book of Revelation in an *all-inclusive* sense (*cf.* Rev. 1:4, 11, 16, 20; 2:1ff). Insofar as revelation in this book is concerned, there were *no other Churches* in Asia. These "seven" are looked upon as comprising a summation of the whole, the *complete Church*.

In this respect, any one of the numerous other Churches in existence in Asia during John's day could not be named or even alluded to in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, for the *complete Church* is shown within the scope of the "seven" which are listed. This is the reason that there is a repeated reference to "seven churches," no more, no less — calling them "the seven churches which are in Asia," looking upon them, in actuality, as *the only Churches in Asia* — in the opening three chapters of this book.

These seven Churches show not only the complete Church in Asia during John's day but also the complete Church in the world throughout the dispensation. This is evident by that which is shown at the very beginning of the book, in chapter one — the seven Churches appearing in Christ's presence in the future Day of the Lord. These seven are used to represent the complete Church — all Christians throughout

the entire course of the dispensation — appearing in Christ's presence to be judged in that future day when we *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ (*cf.* II Cor. 5:10).

By having John send “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” to “the seven churches which are in Asia,” viewing these Churches in an *all-inclusive* sense, the Lord clearly revealed that this message was for the complete Church, represented by the seven. It was also for the other congregations in Asia or any other part of the world during that time, as well as all congregations in the world during any intervening time since. The message in this book is thus for all Christians at any time during the dispensation.

1. AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE

Two entire chapters of the Book of Revelation are given over to material pertaining strictly to the seven Churches. Seven short epistles — one directed to each of the seven Churches — form all of the material comprising these two chapters. And each of the seven epistles follows exactly the same outline: 1) Introductory words, drawn from that which has already been revealed about Christ in chapter one, 2) the statement, “I know thy works,” 3) certain things peculiar to each Church, and 4) an overcomers' promise to each Church.

God has taken a rather lengthy segment of the Book of Revelation to record a number of things to and about the seven Churches in Asia, and these seven epistles can only be fraught with meaning and spiritual significance. There are seven Churches, there is an order to the way these Churches are listed, and certain things are said to and about each Church within this order.

Possibly the best way to illustrate what God did in His choice of these Churches and the arrangement of material set forth in Rev. 2, 3 is to illustrate what He did prior to this time in establishing the types of Scripture. One was done exactly in the same fashion as the other.

God, in His sovereignty, allowed certain things to occur (beginning with the sin of Satan and the subsequent ruin of the earth prior to the creation of man) in order that He might have these occurrences (and also the subsequent experiences of Adam and his descendants), forming the types of Scripture, to draw upon as object lessons to later

teach His people the deep things of God. Everything occurred within the scope of God's sovereign control of matters. God does not draw spiritual lessons of this nature from haphazard experiences.

And it is the same with the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation. God, in His sovereign control of matters, allowed certain things to occur within seven particular Churches in Asia during the first century for particular purposes — that at the end of the first century He could have these seven Churches and the things peculiar to each to draw upon in order to teach His people, for the next nineteen centuries, numerous spiritual truths surrounding the Church.

2. A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

With the seven Churches pointing to the complete Church as shown numerically, one would naturally be led to look for a foreview of the history of Christendom during the dispensation, and even more so since the first and seventh of these epistles fit perfectly within the framework of that which Scripture elsewhere reveals about the beginning and end of Church history during Man's Day.

It is entirely by Divine design that *Ephesus* (which had left its "first love") is mentioned first and *Laodicea* (which had never known a "first love" but, rather, is presented as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked") is mentioned last. The dispensation began after a fashion described by Christ's words depicting conditions in the Church in Ephesus, and it will end after a fashion described by Christ's words depicting conditions in the Church in Laodicea.

During the Apostolic period, "the hope of the gospel" (which has to do with "the mystery" revealed to Paul ["Christ in you, the hope of glory"]), was proclaimed to "every creature ['the whole creation,' Weymouth] which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23, 26, 27). But Scripture presents conditions in Christendom at the end of the dispensation in a completely opposite framework. The departure of Christians from their "first love" eventually resulted in complete apostasy in Christendom — Christians refusing to have anything to do with "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," *i.e.*, Christians departing from particular Biblical truths which were widely proclaimed by the Church during the Apostolic period but would not be proclaimed by the Church at the end of the dispensation (*cf.* Jude 3, 4).

It was the Lord Himself Who asked the question while on earth the first time, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith [‘the faith’] on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The way the question is worded in the Greek text necessitates a *negative* answer. When the Son of Man comes He will not find "the faith" on the earth (an expression in Scripture peculiarly related to the Word of the Kingdom, the salvation of the soul, or, as in Rev. 2, 3, overcoming and subsequently occupying a position with Christ in the kingdom [cf. I Tim. 6:12; Jude 3]). Rather than finding "the faith" on the earth when He returns, the Son of Man will find conditions in Christendom exactly as described in His words to the Church in Laodicea in Rev. 3:15ff.

(Note the section dealing with the Messianic nature of the Lord's title, "the Son of man," in Part II of this series. It is "the Son of man," the One about to possess dominion over the earth, Who will not find "the faith [the message concerning Christians having a part as co-heirs with Him in His dominion]" being proclaimed by the Churches at the time of His return.)

The thought of a history of Christendom being presented in Rev. 2, 3 must be understood within the framework of the subject matter in these two chapters. The seven epistles deal with the works of Christians in relation to overcoming or being overcome, with a view to the coming judgment of Christians and the Messianic Era which follows. In short, the epistles deal with the Word of the Kingdom; and that part of Church history which is covered within the scope of these seven epistles must, contextually, center around the direction which Christendom takes over a 2,000-year period in relation to this message.

3. PRESENT CONDITIONS IN CHRISTENDOM

The Word of the Kingdom is the central message which is supposed to be proclaimed by pastor-teachers in the Churches of the land during *the entire dispensation*. This is the message which was proclaimed throughout the entire known world during the Apostolic period and the message Christ will not find even being proclaimed in the world when He returns. And it is this central thought which must be kept in mind when viewing a panorama of Church history in Rev.

2, 3. Church history is not covered in a broad sense in these two chapters. Rather, it is covered in a very restricted sense.

Why has Church history gone in this direction? Why did the Church leave its "first love" and eventually end up in its present apostate state? The answer is very simple. The leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33 has progressively done its damaging work during two millenniums of time. And not only is this the case, but once the working of the leaven had brought Christendom into the state described by the seventh Church, the Laodicean Church, the leaven could then rapidly finish the work which it had begun almost two millenniums earlier.

Leaven works best in a place where the temperature is not too hot nor too cold, and the "lukewarm" conditions existing in the Laodicean state of Christendom provide a very conducive atmosphere for the leaven to complete its work in a rapid manner. Because of this, the leaven today is actually doing its most rapid, damaging work of the entire dispensation.

This is the reason why a person can go into the Churches of the land today and begin talking about any number of subjects, *except one*, and encounter very little problem or opposition. But let him begin talking about the one subject which was uppermost in the mind of the Lord before the inception of the Church, or uppermost in the minds of the Apostles and others in the early Church (before or about the time that the leaven began its work in Christendom) and see what happens. Let him begin talking about the Word of the Kingdom, and trouble will immediately surface. Apostate Christendom, brought into a place separate from "the faith," will be antagonistic toward and will have nothing to do with this message.

Thus, don't be surprised when you find Christians, even in so-called fundamental circles, who will not only reject but be antagonistic toward the things having to do with the coming kingdom of Christ. The leaven has been working toward this end for almost two millenniums, and that which is very evident in Christendom today is the end result. The condition in which Christendom presently finds itself is *exactly* the condition in which Christendom had been prophesied to exist at the end of the dispensation.

MESSAGES TO THE CHURCHES

As previously stated, each of the seven messages to the seven Churches follows exactly the same outline: 1) Introductory words, drawn from that which had already been revealed about Christ in chapter one, 2) the statement, “I know thy works,” 3) certain things peculiar to each Church, and 4) an overcomers’ promise to each Church.

The messages to the seven Churches are directed, not to the Churches themselves, but to the angels of the Churches: “Unto the angel of the Church of [‘in’] Ephesus... Smyrna... Pergamos... Thyatira... Sardis... Philadelphia... Laodicea write...” These angels are heavenly messengers and could only be identified as angels from among the “ministering spirits” in Heb. 1:14, ministering on behalf of Christians relative to “so great salvation,” “the saving of the soul” (Heb. 2:3; 10:39) — or contextually in Rev. 2, 3, relative to overcoming and realizing a position as co-heir with Christ in the coming kingdom (*cf.* Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21).

In Hebrews, chapter one, angels are seen as spirits ministering on behalf of individual Christians; but in Revelation, chapters two and three, angels are seen as spirits ministering on behalf of groups of Christians, comprising Churches. Angels are thus presented in Scripture as ministering on behalf of Christians on both individual and corporate levels.

Though the different messages in Revelation, chapters two and three are directed to the angels ministering on behalf of the Churches, the messages are for and concern the Churches themselves, not the angels *per se*. The material concerns the angels only in the sense that they have been placed over the Churches and occupy positions in which they can minister on behalf of the Churches in relation to that which is in these messages.

(For additional information concerning these angels, see the author’s books, *JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST*, Ch. IV, and *SO GREAT SALVATION*, Ch. II.)

1. *INTRODUCTORY WORDS*

Revelation, chapter one provides the background material for

chapters two and three, and these two chapters would stand alone, in a nonintelligible sense, apart from the first chapter. Chapter one provides numerous descriptive statements concerning Christ, but revelation in the chapter centers around John being removed into the future Day of the Lord and seeing the Church (the complete Church, all Christians [represented by the seven Churches]) appearing in Christ's presence to be judged.

Then chapters two and three also contain a number of descriptive statements concerning Christ. Each of the seven epistles to the seven Churches begins with one or more descriptive statements, and each is drawn from material in chapter one.

The descriptive statements in these three chapters could all be looked upon under four different headings: 1) the Deity of Christ, 2) His finished work of redemption, 3) Christ as Judge, and 4) Christ as King.

The One Who is co-equal with the Father, the "I AM" of Scripture (*cf.* Ex. 3:13, 14; John 18:4-8), purchased the Church "with his own blood [the blood of God (Acts 20:28)]" with a purpose in view. And that purpose is intimately connected with His coming reign over the earth. However, prior to His reign, Christians must be judged. And it is with all these things in mind that the descriptive statements concerning Christ are given in the first three chapters of this book.

Chapter two, opening with the message to the Church in Ephesus, begins by showing Christ in the midst of the seven Churches and by calling attention to the angels of the seven Churches (2:1). Since these angels are mentioned within the scope of the judgmental description of Christ in the first chapter (1:16, 20), the only logical conclusion would be that they will somehow have a part in Christ's judgment of Christians. God has always used angels to carry out affairs in His kingdom, and angels will apparently be very active in events surrounding the judgment seat of Christ.

The scene beginning the second chapter of this book is thus one of *judgment*. Christ is presented as walking "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks [the seven Churches]" with the angels of the seven Churches in His presence, which is a judicial scene drawn from chapter one (vv. 13, 16).

The next descriptive statement concerning Christ in chapter two,

beginning the message to the Church in Sardis, centers around the *eternity (Deity) of Christ and His finished work of redemption*. He is “the first and the last,” and He is also the One Who “was dead, and is alive” (2:8). The One Who will judge the Church is described as the One Who not only has existed from all eternity but has also redeemed the Church.

In messages to the next three Churches, the Churches in Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis, reference is made to things having to do with Christ as *Judge*. He is described as the One “which hath the sharp sword with two edges,” “eyes like unto a flame of fire,” and “feet...like fine brass”; and reference is again made to the angels of the seven Churches, along with the “seven Spirits of God” (2:12, 18; 3:1; cf. 1:4, 14-16).

Then in the messages to the last two Churches, the Churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea, reference is made to *Christ’s Kingship* and to things surrounding *His Deity* once again (3:7, 14; cf. 1:5, 6, 8).

God’s *message* in this sevenfold description of Christ is very simple: God is calling attention to the One existing from all eternity Who will *one day* reign over the earth (2:8; 3:7, 14); but the One Who will reign has *first* provided redemption (2:8), and He will also *first* execute judgment (2:1, 12, 18; 3:1).

2. I KNOW THY WORKS

God’s judicial activity has always been and will always be on the basis of “works.” There is no such thing as God executing judgment apart from works.

God, for example, judged sin in the person of His Son on the basis of the Son’s finished work; and *God is satisfied*. This is the reason unredeemed man can come into possession of eternal salvation only one way — by receiving that which has already been done on his behalf.

The things surrounding Christ’s finished work can never enter into any future judgment of man, whether saved or unsaved. That is, no man can ever stand before Christ to be judged on the basis of his eternal salvation. Judgment surrounding this matter has already occurred in past time, and it can never occur again.

This is the reason we find in John 3:18 that the one believing on

Christ “is not condemned [‘judged’],” but the one “that believeth not is condemned [‘judged’] already.” No judgment relative to eternal salvation can await the believer (it has already occurred [cf. Rom. 8:1]); nor can judgment relative to eternal salvation await the unbeliever (it has already occurred also, for it is the same judgment, occurring at the same time, as for the believer).

God judged sin in the person of His Son once, never to be repeated; and unsaved man, in relation to God’s judgment upon sin in the person of His Son, has already been judged. A perfect tense is used in the Greek text in John 3:18, indicating that judicial activity surrounding unsaved man occurred in past time and presently exists in a finished state. Unsaved man has already been judged, and that’s the end of the matter.

Some Christians have sought to view the first part of John 3:18 and Rom. 8:1 in relation to Christ’s judicial activity at His judgment seat, leaving them with a one-sided, erroneous view of this future judgment. God’s judicial activity in the past is one thing, and Christ’s judicial activity in the future is something completely different. Both have their basis in *works*; but they are completely separate judgments, surrounding completely different matters, occurring at completely different times, for completely different reasons, based on completely different works

If a person, on the basis of Christ’s past finished work, is going to say that a Christian can never enter into any type future judgment (leaving the judgment seat of Christ operable only in the realm of rewards), he is going to be forced to say exactly the same thing about unsaved man relative to future judgment at the Great White Throne. Unsaved man can no more be judged at the Great White Throne on the basis which is being used (John 3:18; Rom. 8:1) than saved man can escape judgment on this basis at the judgment seat of Christ.

Judgment awaiting both saved and unsaved man will be on the basis of works — *their own works* (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 20:12). There’s no other basis upon which they could be judged. Their prior acceptance or rejection of the finished work of Christ will only determine which judgment they will enter into. Their eternal destiny will have already been determined, and it can have *nothing* to do with that which will occur at either of these future judgments.

This is the reason that the works of Christians are mentioned *first* in each of the seven messages to the seven Churches, immediately following the introductory words concerning Christ. “Judgment” is in view (from chapter one; note also how the first of the seven epistles is introduced in chapter two — Christ, as *Judge*, walking in the midst of the seven Churches [2:1; cf. 1:13, 20]), and it can’t be a judgment on the basis of eternal verities. The eternal destiny of those being judged will have already been settled, on the basis of God’s past judgment surrounding the past finished work of Another. Consequently, something entirely different is being dealt with in these seven epistles when the works of Christians are mentioned.

A judgment of Christians, with a view to overcoming and occupying a position on the throne with Christ, is the only thing which could possibly be in view (and, contextually, it is clear that this is *exactly* what is in view); and the only basis for this judgment will be *the works of those being judged*. Thus, each of the seven epistles, after introductory statements concerning Christ, begins exactly the same way: “I know thy works...”

3. PECULIARITIES OF EACH CHURCH

The “Nicolaitanes” appear to occupy a prominent place in the facet of Church history depicted by the seven Churches in Rev. 2, 3. These individuals are named in the first and third of the epistles to the seven Churches (epistles to Ephesus and Pergamos), and there is a sharp deterioration in the attitude of Christians toward “the faith” in these epistles, which would seem to be connected with what is said about the Nicolaitanes.

Outside of Revelation, chapter two, there is no known sect in Church history (Biblical or secular) by the name “Nicolaitanes.” Some early writers tried unsuccessfully to connect this group of individuals with *Nicolas of Antioch*; and others, following in their steps, try this even today. However, such a connection cannot be established, which leaves one with a sole method of identification — *the meaning of the word itself*.

The reference can only be to a group of individuals in the early Church whose practices and doctrine are self-explained by the term which Christ used to identify them. Apart from this method of

identification, nothing can be known about the Nicolaitanes.

The word “Nicolaitanes” is a transliterated, compound word from the Greek text, derived from *nikao* (“to conquer”) and *laos* (“people”). Thus, the word simply means, “to conquer the people.” Using the meaning of the name itself after this fashion, the Nicolaitanes would have to be identified as individuals in the Church who had subjugated the remaining Christians to their self-imposed authority — individuals comprising a ruling class (the clergy over the laity), something condemned by Scripture in no uncertain terms.

Authority within the Church must *always* be based *solely* upon “service.” Those occupying positions of leadership (elders, deacons) must always minister (serve) within this sphere of activity, which is to bear no relationship whatsoever to authority exercised by those in the world (cf. Matt. 20:25-28; I Cor. 16:15, 16). “Nicolaitanism” is simply a corruption of delegated authority within the Church, exercising this authority after a forbidden pattern — after the pattern set forth by the world.

Christians in the Church in Ephesus were said to hate “the deeds of the Nicolaitanes” (2:6), but this was not said about Christians in the Church in Pergamos. Rather, in the Church in Pergamos, Christ alone is mentioned as hating their “doctrine”; and the Nicolaitanes appear to have found acceptance in the Church by this time.

Christians in the Church in Smyrna — the Church which Christ singled out after He mentioned the Nicolaitanes in the Church in Ephesus but before He mentioned them in the Church in Pergamos — were exhorted to be faithful; but such was not to occur. By the time one reaches the epistles to the third and fourth Churches (Pergamos and Thyatira), doctrinal corruption appeared to be rampant. The doctrine of Balaam was being taught, and a woman identified by the name “Jezebel” was being allowed to teach Christians things surrounding sexual immorality and idolatry (see the author’s book, JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, Chs. VII, VIII).

Contextually, the “deeds of the Nicolaitanes,” brought about through the working of the leaven, appear to have been the means by which the working of the leaven then produced the additional named corruption in the Churches.

The fifth and sixth Churches which Christ addressed — the

Churches in Sardis and Philadelphia — reveal that even though corruption of the nature set forth in the Churches in Pergamos and Thyatira will exist during the dispensation, there will still be faithful Christians in various Churches (3:4, 10). But the Church as a whole, in relation to the attitude of Christians toward the Word of the Kingdom, is going to exist at the end of the dispensation exactly as depicted by the seventh and last Church which Christ addressed, the Church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:14ff).

4. *TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH*

The promise ending each message concerning what Christ will do for the one overcoming becomes self-evident when these seven messages are viewed in their proper perspective.

“Overcoming” is *to conquer, to gain a victory*. The promise is to Christians alone, to those comprising the seven Churches, *i.e.*, to all Christians. Christians, rather than falling victim to the various forms of corruption arising in the Church are exhorted to remain “faithful” (*cf.* Rev. 2:10; 3:4), and seven different overcomers’ promises are held out for those who so govern their lives.

The overcomers’ promises are all millennial in their scope of fulfillment, and they will be realized in the coming age when Christ and His co-heirs ascend the throne together.

4

Crowns Before the Throne

After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold...

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created (Rev. 4:1-4, 10, 11)

In Rev. 1:9, 10; 4:1, 2a John was removed from the earth and placed in heaven in the future Day of the Lord. Both sections of Scripture describe the same event. That which John saw in heaven in the Day of the Lord in chapter one though is different than that which he saw in chapter four. In chapter one He saw Christ as Judge, with the Church (the complete Church — all Christians — represented by the seven

Churches) in His presence to be judged. Then in chapter four John saw God seated upon His throne and twenty-four crowned elders seated upon surrounding thrones. At the same time John also saw four “beasts [‘living creatures’]” in God’s presence who worshipped Him continuously, day and night (vv. 2b-9).

Chapter four concludes with a scene depicting the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before the throne and, as the four living creatures, worshipping the One seated on the throne (vv. 10, 11). And with this act by the twenty-four elders, a sequence of events is brought to a close in this book.

The next sequence of events is introduced by John seeing a seven-sealed scroll in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. This sequence of events has to do, not with the Church in heaven, but with Israel and the Gentile nations on earth during the seven-year Tribulation period (*cf.* 5:1ff; 6:1ff). Attention at this point (and for the next fourteen chapters) is channeled in a different direction entirely. Events having to do with the Church in heaven are no longer in view, and the situation remains as such — with revelation focused strictly upon Israel and the nations — until immediately preceding Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation in the nineteenth chapter (vv. 7, 8).

The events which John saw following his removal into heaven in chapter four would appear to follow the events which he saw following his removal into heaven in chapter one. That is, events surrounding Christ’s judgment seat will occur first; then, after decisions and determinations have been made at the judgment seat — decisions and determinations affecting every Christian — the twenty-four elders come into view.

They are introduced as individuals wearing crowns of gold, clothed in white raiment, and seated on thrones surrounding God’s throne. Then, after a description of God’s throne and the four living creatures worshipping in God’s presence, the twenty-four elders once again are brought to the forefront. They are seen falling down before God, worshipping God, and casting their crowns before God’s throne, saying, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

This is the way the first part of the Book of Revelation closes, and

it closes after this fashion for a particular reason. This act by the twenty-four elders must be understood in the light of not only its contextual setting in the book but also in the light of Biblical history and prophecy. Only after this fashion can one understand the identity of the twenty-four elders, the reason why they cast their crowns before God's throne, and the reason why this act and their ensuing worship of and statement concerning God bring to a close the first section of the Book of Revelation.

CROWNS, GOVERNMENT UNDER GOD

That which was revealed to John in the future Day of the Lord, comprising the Book of Revelation, all moves toward a dual goal.

Events surrounding the Church on earth during the present dispensation (chs. 2, 3), the Church in heaven at the end of the dispensation (chs. 1, 4), and Israel and the Gentile nations on earth during the Tribulation (chs. 6-18 [introduced in ch. 5]) all have to do with the first part of this goal — the ushering in of the Messianic Era (*cf.* Rev. 19:11-20:6). The Messianic Era follows 6,000 years of human history, with the Tribulation comprising the last seven years of the 6,000. It will comprise the seventh millennium of time, or the seventh day in the pattern set forth in the opening two chapters of Genesis (*cf.* Heb. 4:4-9; see the author's book, *WHAT TIME IS IT?* Ch. III).

The second part of this goal will be realized after the Messianic Era is over. God's Son and His companions are going to reign over the earth with a rod of iron for a revealed purpose. The purpose will be to bring "all things" in *subjection unto Christ*, and this will take 1,000 years. After this has been accomplished, the kingdom will then be "delivered up" to the Father that "God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:24-28). Then the eternal ages which follow the Messianic Era will be ushered in (Rev. 21, 22).

All these things have to do with government within God's kingdom. God rules over the entire universe, comprised of billions of galaxies; and the earth is one province within one of these galaxies, with possibly billions of other provinces in just our galaxy alone. By comparison, the earth could be looked upon as a grain of sand upon the seashore. This one grain of sand would seemingly be insignificant,

but not so at all in God's sight.

God focuses His attention upon the earth, a province where rebellion entered into the ranks of one of the Messianic angels who rule under Him different places in the universe (Isa. 14:12-14; cf. Ezek. 28:14, 15). Because of this God-dishonoring act by one Messianic angel (by the one we know today as Satan), God brought the province over which he ruled (the earth) into a state of ruin (Gen. 1:2a). Then, at a later time the province was restored, made habitable once again, though not for Satan and his angels (Gen. 1:2b-25). Man, an entirely new creation in the universe, created in God's image, after His likeness, was then brought on the scene to take the sceptre held by the Messianic angel who had rebelled against God's supreme authority (Gen. 1:26-28).

Then Satan, through causing man to sin, brought about man's disqualification to take the sceptre (Gen. 3:1ff). And from that point forward, God's program relative to this earth centers around man's redemption with a view to man one day being able to realize the purpose for his creation. God even sent His Own Son to pay redemption's price; and man must one day hold the sceptre, else the purpose for creation and the purpose for redemption would fall short of that which God had in mind when He brought both to pass.

The original pattern concerning how God restores a ruined creation has forever been set forth in the opening verses of Genesis. God took six days to restore the earth for man, and He rested on the seventh day (Gen. 1:2b-2:3). And the restoration of man (a subsequent ruined creation) must follow the original pattern, with God once again resting on the seventh day, the day following man's restoration. Each of the days in the latter restoration though is 1,000 years in length. God is going to work for 6,000 years to bring man back into the position for which he was created, and He will then rest the seventh 1,000-year period, which will be the Messianic Era, wherein man will hold the sceptre.

The preceding is known as the septenary arrangement of Scripture. The whole of Scripture, save a very minute portion which deals with events either before or after the 7,000 years, fits within this framework. God not only provided redemption for man but He provided His redeemed creature a revelation of Himself, His plans,

and His purposes. And this revelation, consisting of numerous parts given through different men at different times, concludes with a climactic section outlining exactly what is going to transpire — relative to Christians, Jews, and Gentiles — surrounding that time at the end of the 6,000 years when “the kingdom of the world” becomes “the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15, ASV). And not only so, but the latter two chapters of the book move beyond the millennium — the seventh one-thousand-year period — and provide a glimpse into certain things having to do with the eternal ages which follow.

Thus, what we have in the Book of Revelation is a sequence of end-time events having to do with Christians, Jews, and Gentiles, anticipating man coming into a realization of the purpose for his creation 6,000 years earlier.

And when “crowns” are mentioned prior to the closing two chapters, these crowns *must*, contextually, have to do with *the government of this earth*. They *must* have to do with either the present world government under Satan (*cf.* Rev. 12:3; 13:1) or the coming world government under Christ (*cf.* Rev. 14:14; 19:12).

And when twenty-four crowned elders appear and cast their crowns before God’s throne at the end of the section of this book in which Christians are being dealt with before the judgment seat of Christ, there’s only one thing which could possibly be in view. Angels, up to this time, have held the sceptre; but man, having been shown qualified at the judgment seat, is about to assume the sceptre. These crowns are relinquished by those who can only be identified as angelic beings (for only angels would possess crowns at this point in the book) in view of those having been shown qualified at the judgment seat (ch. 1; *cf.* chs. 2, 3) wearing these crowns during the Messianic Era (chs. 19, 20).

(A principle of Biblical government necessitates an incumbent ruler retaining his crown until he is actually replaced. Whether or not he continues to reign while retaining the crown would be of no moment. He could not relinquish his crown until his successor actually appeared and was ready to take the sceptre.)

All angels associated with a rule over this earth under Satan —

whether preceding or following his fall — will have to relinquish their crowns, for God has decreed that the “world [‘inhabited world’] to come” will be ruled by *man*, not by angels (Heb. 2:5). A segment of the angels presently possessing crowns will relinquish their crowns willingly (as shown by the act of the twenty-four elders in Rev. 4:10, 11), but crowns worn by the remaining segment of angels will have to be taken by force (*cf.* Rev. 13:1, 2; 19:11-20:3).

STEPHANOS, DIADEMA

There are two words in the Greek text of the New Testament which are translated “crown” in English versions of Scripture; and an understanding of the distinctions between these two words, how they are used in the Greek New Testament, and which one of the two words is used relative to crowns worn by the twenty-four elders is vital to a correct understanding of the text.

The first and most widely used word is *stephanos* (or the verb form, *stephano*), referring to a “victor’s crown” or a crown denoting certain types of “worth” or “valor.” The other word is *diadema*, referring to “regal authority,” “kingly power.”

Stephanos (or *stephano*) is the only word used for “crown” in the New Testament outside the Book of Revelation. This, for example, is the word used referring to the “crown of thorns” placed upon Christ’s head immediately preceding His crucifixion (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5). This is also the word used throughout the Pauline epistles referring to “crowns” awaiting faithful Christians (I Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; I Thess. 2:19; II Tim. 2:5; 4:8). James, Peter, and John also used *stephanos* in the same sense (James 1:12; I Peter 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11). The writer of Hebrews used this word (the verb form, *stephano*) referring to positions which will ultimately be occupied by Christ and His co-heirs in “the world [‘inhabited world’] to come” (2:7, 9). Then John used the word six additional times in the Book of Revelation in several different senses (4:4, 10; 6:2; 9:7; 12:1; 14:14).

Diadema, the other word used for “crown” in the New Testament, appears only three times; and all three occurrences are in the latter half of the Book of Revelation (12:3; 13:1; 19:12). The first two references have to do with power and authority possessed by incumbent earthly

rulers immediately preceding and within the kingdom of Antichrist, and the latter reference has to do with power and authority which Christ will possess at the time He takes the kingdom.

The distinction between the way these two words are used in the New Testament must be borne in mind if one is to properly understand the subject of “crowns.” *Diadema* (referring to the monarch’s crown) is used *only* where one has actually *entered into* and is *presently exercising regal power*. *Stephanos* is never used in this respect; it appears in all other occurrences in the New Testament, covering any instance where the word “crown” is used *apart from* the present possession of regal power. The possession of such power at a future date can be in view through the use of *stephanos*, but *diadema* cannot be used until one actually comes into possession of this power.

In this respect, overcoming Christians have been promised a *stephanos* (victor’s crown), never a *diadema* (monarch’s crown); *but* the promised *stephanos will become a diadema* at the time overcoming Christians assume positions on the throne with Christ. There can be no such thing as either Christ or His co-heirs wearing a *stephanos* in that day. They can only wear the type crown referred to by the word *diadema*.

To illustrate the matter, note how *stephanos* and *diadema* are used relative to Antichrist and his kingdom. *Stephanos* is used of the type crown worn by Antichrist when he is first introduced in the Book of Revelation (6:2), but later *diadema* is used relative to his exercise of delegated power (12:3; 13:1, 2).

Antichrist is seen wearing a “crown,” as he goes forth “conquering, and to conquer” in Revelation, chapter six. He is crowned and moves after the described fashion in view of ultimately attaining *regal power over the earth*; but, at this time, as shown by both the context and the word *stephanos*, he has not attained such power. Then, in chapter twelve he is once again seen wearing a “crown” (all seven heads are crowned at this point in the book. The Antichrist will be the seventh head [seventh ruler] in a succession of rulers), and in chapter thirteen those ruling with him (the ten horns) are also crowned. As shown by both the context and the word *diadema*, the matter is completely different at this point in the book. The Antichrist has now attained *regal power over the earth*, and he has subordinate rulers exercising

power with him. Thus, *diadema*, not *stephanos*, is used in these passages.

The use of *stephanos* relative to crowns in connection with Israel in Rev. 12:1 illustrates the same truth. Israel today is not occupying the position for which the nation was called into existence — “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). Israel is to one day rule upon the earth at the head of the nations, and the nations are to be blessed through Israel; but Israel will not come into this position until *after* the time of Rev. 12:1. Thus, *stephanos* is the only word which could be used relative to crowns in connection with Israel at this point in time. The use of *diadema* in this same sense awaits events of the coming age.

Then note the type crowns on Christ's head — past and future — in Matt. 27:29; Rev. 14:14; 19:12.

Matt. 27:29 refers to the time Christ was arrayed as a mock King. The word used is *stephanos*. *Diadema* could not be used in this instance, for this word would show Christ actually exercising regal power and authority; and this is something which He did not do at all.

The same is true in Rev. 14:14 where the word *stephanos* is used once again, and for the last time, relative to a crown upon Christ's head. Christ, at this point, will not yet have assumed His regal position.

In Rev. 19:12 though, the entire matter changes. All at once *diadems* are in view. Christ is seen with “many crowns [*diadems*]” upon His head, and He is declared to be “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” He, at this time, will have *entered into* His long-awaited regal position; and the first order of business will be the putting down of the beast, the kings of the earth, and Satan and his angels (Rev. 19:17-20:3). They cannot be allowed to reign beyond the point Christ assumes regal power. Their crowns (*diadems*) must, *at this time*, be taken and given to others — those to whom they will *then* rightfully belong.

An understanding of the distinction between *stephanos* and *diadema* will also reveal certain things in our text about the twenty-four elders which could not otherwise be known. They each cast a *stephanos* before the throne, not a *diadema*. This shows that they were *not then* occupying regal positions. At one time they undoubtedly occupied such positions (wearing *diadems*); but with the disarray in the structure of the earth's government, resulting from Satan's rebellion, they

ceased exercising regal power (for, not participating in his rebellion, they no longer retained active positions in his rule). Their crowns could then be referred to only through the use of the word *stephanos*; and these crowns would, of necessity, be retained until the time of Rev. 4:10.

God's system of government (an incumbent remaining in office *until* he has been replaced by his successor) would necessitate the twenty-four elders retaining their crowns *until* the time Christ and His co-heirs were ready to move in and take the kingdom (which will be *following* events surrounding the judgment seat depicted in Revelation, chapter one). Once this has occurred, each *stephanos* which had been cast before the throne would later, once again, become a *diadema*, as seen in Rev. 19:12.

TWENTY-FOUR

Numbers are very important in Scripture. The book of Genesis opens with a system of numerics, establishing a septenary arrangement for all of God's subsequent revelation to man; and Scripture closes with a book which is filled with numbers.

When God uses a number, it is for a definite and specific purpose. God does nothing in a haphazard manner. All numbers which God uses in His revelation to man carry spiritual significance, and the Book of Revelation is filled with such numbers. This book is actually built around a system of numerics, and this must be recognized in order to properly understand that which God has made known in the closing portion of His revelation to man.

The Book of Revelation deals with *seven Churches* (chs. 1-3), *seven years* of climactic judgment awaiting the earth-dwellers (described under *seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials of wrath* [chs. 6-18]), *seven particular angels* who will be instrumental in God's judgments upon the earth-dwellers (1:4; 4:5; 8:2; 16:1), and a *seventh day of rest* (the Messianic Era) awaiting man (20:4-6; *cf.* Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 31:17; Heb. 4:4, 9). The book also deals with *twenty-four elders* (a number divisible by *twelve* [4:4, 10, 11]), with *the nation of Israel* (a nation comprised of *twelve tribes* [chs. 11, 12]), with *144,000 Jews* out of this nation (another number divisible by *twelve* [7:4-8; 12:17; 14:1-5]), and with *the kingdom*

of Antichrist (shown by a beast having *seven heads and ten horns* [12:3; 13:1; 17:8-13]).

When twenty-four elders are introduced at the end of the first section of the book, one should immediately note the place where they appear in the book and the figure which God uses to designate their number. They appear at the *end of the section wherein God deals with Christians* prior to turning to and dealing with the earth-dwellers, and there are *twenty-four elders — two sets of twelves* — and “twelve” is the number in Scripture showing *governmental perfection*.

Then, seeing where these elders appear elsewhere in the book is quite revealing. They appear five other places, and that which occurs in each place is intimately connected with that which has already occurred in chapter four — a relinquishment of their crowns in view of others wearing these crowns during the coming age.

Their first and last appearances in the book beyond chapter four have to do with God's judgments upon the earth-dwellers, resulting in “the kingdom of the world” becoming “the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15, ASV). They appear first in chapter five (vv. 5, 6, 8, 11, 14) surrounding the search for and revelation of the One found worthy to loose the seven seals of the scroll held in God's hand (containing all of God's judgments about to befall the earth-dwellers [the subsequent seven trumpet judgments and seven vials of wrath are judgments under the seventh seal]). Then they appear last in chapter nineteen (v. 4) after all these judgments have been concluded, immediately before attention is called to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven and Christ's return to the earth as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (19:7ff).

Their second and fourth appearances in the book beyond chapter four have to do with the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the last half of the seven-year Tribulation. They appear in chapter seven in connection with the numerous Gentiles saved as a result of the ministry of the 144,000 but martyred under the reign of Antichrist because of their faith (vv. 11, 13). These individuals will rule and reign with Christ from the heavens, wearing crowns previously worn by angels ruling under Satan (Rev. 20:4). Then the elders appear in chapter fourteen (v. 3) in connection with the 144,000 at the time they are removed from the earth preceding their ministry. The 144,000 will

also rule from the heavens with Christ, wearing crowns previously worn by angels (*cf.* Rev. 12:4, 5, 17; *ref.* the author's book, PROPHECY ON MOUNT OLIVET, Ch. II).

Their third appearance in the book beyond chapter four is in chapter eleven immediately following the announcement by the seventh angel, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever" (vv. 15, 16, ASV). This announcement is made by the angel who blows the seventh trumpet and pours out the seventh vial (16:17). The seven vials of wrath are within the seventh trumpet, which was under the seventh seal; and the announcement by this angel in Rev. 11:15 anticipates the pouring out of the vials of wrath in chapter sixteen (vv. 1-16) and the announcement from God's throne immediately after these judgments have occurred (v. 17) — "It is done [*lit.*, 'It has been done'; a perfect tense in the Greek text, indicating action completed in past time with the results of this action existing during present time in a finished state]." All of God's judgments in the seven-sealed scroll will have been completed at this time, and the announcements in Rev. 11:15 and Rev. 16:17 can then be made.

Thus, at every appearance in the Book of Revelation the twenty-four elders are intimately connected, after some fashion, with that time when Christ and His co-heirs take the kingdom. Three times they are seen in contextual settings having to do with the overthrow of the present world system (they, at one time [prior to Satan's fall], occupied a place in this system). Then three other times they are seen in contextual settings having to do with others (redeemed man) coming into positions of power and authority in the kingdom of Christ which they at one time occupied in the kingdom under Satan.

The place which the twenty-four elders occupy in the book of Revelation leaves no room to question their identity. They are crowned individuals seated on thrones (Rev. 4:4), something which could not be said at this time of redeemed man at all. Such a view would allow redeemed man to wear a crown prior to the time Christ actually takes the kingdom and wears a crown Himself — an impossibility.

The fact that the twenty-four elders are crowned connects them with both angelic beings and the government of this earth. Only

angels could be seen wearing crowns at this point in the book, and the only government with which they could possibly have a connection is the government under Satan.

They would have to be identified as representing, at least in part, angels placed by God in positions of power and authority with Satan over the earth in the beginning; and since they cannot be identified with the angels actively ruling at the present time in Satan's kingdom (cf. Heb. 1:14), there is only one other group of angels left — those angels who refused to follow Satan in his attempt to exalt his throne. Thus, ascertaining their identity is really a very simple matter.

(Also note the pronouns in the song which the twenty-four elders sing in Rev. 5:9, 10. The pronoun "us" in v. 9 is not in the Greek text, and the better Greek manuscripts have "them" and "they" rather than "us" and "we" in v. 10, further distinguishing the twenty-four elders from redeemed man [ref. ASV].)

Why though does Scripture show the two-thirds contingent of angels who refused to follow Satan as represented by the number "twenty-four"? Note that there are "two" sets of twelves, one set short of "three," the number of *Divine perfection*. That is, "three sets of twelves" would show *Divine perfection within a governmental structure*, which is the only way God would have established the government of this earth in the beginning; and, beyond that, viewing three sets of "twelves," He apparently established this government in accord with His Own triune being.

Remaining within this framework, there is a missing set of "twelve" in Rev. 4:4, 10. And this is exactly what is shown, for these twenty-four elders represent only *two-thirds* of the original group. The other *one-third*, the other set of "twelve," remained with Satan (Rev. 12:4). "Two" is the number of *division* in Scripture. Two sets of twelves separated themselves from Satan. "One" though is the number of *unity*. The other set of twelve remained with Satan.

As a consequence of Satan's attempt to exalt his throne, Divine perfection ceased to exist in his kingdom in more ways than one. Not only was the domain over which he ruled brought into a state of ruin (Gen. 1:2a), but the governmental administration within his kingdom ceased to exist in its previous perfect triune state.

All of this brings us to a point concerning the coming kingdom of Christ and how it will be structured. Angels represented by the twenty-four elders will relinquish their crowns willingly in view of Christians wearing these crowns during the coming age. But these are not all of the crowns, either presently worn by angels or which Christians will wear in that future day. The full complement must be shown by *three sets of twelves*, not two sets.

The other one-third, presently ruling under Satan, must also relinquish their crowns, along with Satan himself. *Only then* can Christ and His co-heirs assume regal positions on His throne, allowing Divine perfection to once again be set forth in the government of this earth, with the government established after God's Own triune being.

Redeemed man will inherit with God's Son within a restored governmental order which will be both perfect and established after God's Own triune being. It is clear from Scripture that this is the manner in which the past government of the earth was originally established; and in the "restitution ['restoration'] of all things" the future government under God's Son could not, it will not, be established after any other fashion (Acts 3:21).

This book, IN THE LORD'S DAY, deals 1) *with the time of the resurrection of the dead and translation of the living "in Christ"* (commonly called "the rapture"), 2) *with judgment awaiting Christians* at Christ's judgment seat following their removal from the earth, and 3) *with events related to this judgment*, which preceded and anticipate the coming Messianic Era.

These are the things dealt with in the opening four chapters of the Book of revelation. And viewing the book as a whole, these opening four chapters provide a sequence of events which *must occur at the end of the present dispensation but before the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period on earth.*

The Book of Revelation is the only book in Scripture which provides a comprehensive coverage of this nature, surrounding these events. The same truths concerning these events are taught elsewhere in Scripture (particularly in Old Testament typology) but not all together, in a sequence, which includes the Tribulation in the sequence, such as one finds in the Book of Revelation.

Now only *must* the rapture and events surrounding the judgment seat occur preceding the Tribulation, but these events must, according to information in these chapters, be *all-inclusive*. That is, *all Christians (all of the dead and the living "in Christ" throughout the entire 2,000-year dispensation) must* be removed together, at the same time and place, to appear before Christ in judgment. According to these chapters, there can be no such thing as a selective removal of Christians from the earth at the time of the rapture; nor can there be such a thing as more than one time and place for events surrounding the judgment seat.

A separation of Christians on the basis of faithfulness will occur, but not at the time of the rapture. This separation will occur at the judgment seat alone.
