

ARMAGEDDON

A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

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CHAPTER 1.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GOD ESTABLISHING HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH OPPOSED BY SATAN

A brief history of God establishing a new creation from the Garden of Eden to The Revelation shows us that there has been continual warfare between God and Satan.

THE PERPETUAL BATTLE BETWEEN GOD AND SATAN

We will introduce this study of Armageddon with a brief account of the development of God's kingdom on earth, in which we shall see the continual conflict between God and Satan, which will have its culmination in the Battle of Armageddon. God's overall purpose has been to establish a kingdom on earth, in which the individuals He created with a free will, would willingly entrust their lives and their purposes into His hands, believing in His love and faithfulness to care for them and meet their needs.

This account reveals Satan's opposition to God establishing His kingdom of loving kindness, mercy, and grace, by replacing it with his own kingdom, foreshadowing existence in hell, where man has no free will, there is forced obedience and worship of Satan, and subjection to everlasting torment. Most people are unaware that this battle involves every person on earth, determining the outcome of their eternal existence, either in heaven or hell.

THE START OF A NEW CREATION IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

At a predetermined time in the evolution of man, God initiated the creation of a new type of man, created after His own likeness, with a spirit by which He and they could communicate with one another, an ability that prepared the way for future prophets and teachers to communicate God's truth and will to His people. The new man was created with a free will to choose what he wanted to do and who he would obey.

The first stage of this creation was set in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, who were a typical man and a typical woman. Having been blessed with a free will, Adam and Eve were faced with only one restriction. They were commanded by God that they could partake of the fruit of any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if they did so they would surely die. Without the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence because they had no knowledge of sin or what was right or wrong. Knowing good and evil, they would realise that all evil opposed God's righteousness and His will for them.

The battle which followed is a typical example of the Battle of Armageddon in that it was a battle between truth and deception, and the flesh and the Spirit. God had given Adam and

Eve a direct command, and Satan opposed God's command by enticing Eve to succumb to the desires of the flesh. The apostle John said, "...the **lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life** — is not of the Father but is of the world." 1 John 2:16. In enticing Eve, Satan used the enticement of her flesh. "So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, [the lust of the flesh] that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree desirable to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of its fruit and ate." Gen 3:6.

When Eve was deceived by Satan and ate the forbidden fruit and Adam followed suit, the whole world fell under the control of Satan. Man was banished from the Garden of Eden, and sickness, disease, and death entered the new creation.

We may ask, 'Why did God allow this to happen?' Psalm 89:14 states, "**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your [God's] throne.**" In His dealings with man, and even with Satan, God will never violate the principles of justice and righteousness. Satan was given the right to test the new creation to determine if it would be subject to him rather than God. When man disobeyed God and obeyed Satan, it gave Satan the just right to control in man all that which was submitted to him.

Most people believe that sin and evil entered the world with the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, and the question asked is, 'If God knows the end from the beginning, why did He allow sin and evil to enter the world?' First of all, evil was already in the world because Satan, who is the epitome of evil, was in the world when he tempted Eve. The thing that was missing was Adam and Eve's knowledge of the existence of sin and evil. So, why did God open the door for Adam and Eve to know the nature of sin and evil? If evil was to be overcome, it was necessary for man to understand its nature, and realise the gulf of separation between God's holiness and man's sinfulness.

What is the Origin of Evil?

Mankind, including those of the old creation, were created with a free will to choose how they would conduct their lives. Because of the innate desire of man to satisfy the desires of the flesh, man succumbed and sin and evil became a part of man's existence.

What Does the Bible say About the Origin of Evil?

In Isaiah, we read, "**I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.**" Isa 45:7. KJV.

There are two Hebrew words for 'evil.' The first is 'rasha', which refers to moral evil, or doing what is against God's righteous commands. God will never create rasha evil, because obeying His righteous commands is the basis for our personal relationship with Him. Rasha evil is the consequence of disobedience to God's will. The second word is 'raah', which refers to calamitous happenings like floods and pestilence. It is the second word, raah, that is used in the reading from Isaiah. We shall see later in this study how God uses calamitous evils to turn rebellious hearts back to Him in repentance.

The Civilisation Outside of the Garden of Eden

Is there any biblical evidence suggesting the existence of an older evolved state of man outside of the Garden of Eden? The first piece of evidence emerges when Cain slew Abel and was banished from the locality of his family. God told Cain, “**a fugitive and a vagabond** [a fugitive and wanderer without a home] **you shall be on the earth.**’ **And Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear! ...I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.’**” Gen 4:12-13. Who would kill him? Cain knew that there were other inhabitants on the earth who would threaten his life. This also explains where Cain found a wife.

Next, we see in the first verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis, a description of the intermingling of the two creations.

“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God [descended from Adam] saw the daughters of men [from the older evolved creation], that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.” Gen 6:1-2.

Genesis goes on to describe some of the features of the older creation, and the intermingling of the two. **“There were giants on the earth in those days [the older creation], and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those [referring to the old creation] were the mighty men who were of old [‘of antiquity,’ also ‘ancient time, long time (of past)’ From Strong’s Concordance. [‘of time long past’ also ‘ever of old’ - From Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies] **men of renown.**”** Gen 6:4.

With the intermingling of the two creations, sin and sickness and death increased as more of the world fell under the power of Satan. When God saw that His creation had been debased, He said, **“My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”** Gen 6:3. Evidence of the decline is clear. Adam had lived for over nine hundred years, and thousands of years later, Moses stated in Psalm 90, **“The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years...”** Ps 90:10.

The intermingled civilisation eventually fell under the complete control of Satan, and **“then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”** Gen 6:5. This civilisation was so completely under Satan’s control that there was absolutely no hope of their rehabilitation.

Before God could resume His plan of creating a people that would honour Him, this civilisation had to be taken out of the way. It is not in God’s will that anyone should perish, but if this wickedness was not stopped, all future generations would fall under the power of Satan. God has given the inhabitants of every nation the utmost time to surrender to His ways of righteousness. He delayed the return of the Jews to Israel until the Amorites were beyond

redemption. He told Abraham, **“But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”** Gen 15:16.

When Abraham pleaded with God for Sodom, he asked God if He would relent if ten righteous people could be found in Sodom. And God agreed. **“Suppose ten should be found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.”** Gen 18:32.

Throughout history, God has always reserved a faithful remnant, and in this case, before the flood, it was Noah and his family. **“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”** Gen 6:8.

Contrary to popular opinion, I do not believe that the flood encompassed the whole earth, and that Noah crammed specimens of all the animals of the whole earth into the ark. I believe that the flood encompassed the known biblical world around Mesopotamia, where the nation of Israel was to be formed.

ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD’S KINGDOM THROUGH THE NATION OF ISRAEL

The next phase of God’s establishment of His kingdom on earth involved the founding of the nation of Israel, which was to have the responsibility of bringing forth the Law, the Scriptures, the prophets, and most importantly, of becoming the birthplace of the Messiah, who would present the gospel truth and become an atoning sacrifice for the salvation of mankind.

God Revealed Through the Scriptures

Throughout the history of God’s involvement with mankind, He has ordained prophets, starting with Moses, to create a Scriptural record of all occurrences and His commandments and ordinances, to be an everlasting directive of His will to all generations. The Scriptures also provide us with an unveiling of God’s nature as it describes His dealings with mankind.

The following address to the children of Israel by the Levitical priests recorded in Nehemiah is an expansive Spirit-inspired Scriptural revelation of God, by recording examples of His miraculous acts of provision, the deliverance of His children from the power of Satan and of the overshadowing of His mercy and grace.

“Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise! You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.”

“You are the Lord God, who chose Abram, and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and gave him the name Abraham; You found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites — to give it to his descendants. You have performed Your words, for You are righteous.”

“You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heard their cry by the Red Sea. You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his servants, and against all the

people of his land. For You knew that they acted proudly against them. So You made a name for Yourself, as it is this day. And You divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors You threw into the deep, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar, and by night with a pillar of fire, to give them light on the road which they should travel.”

“You came down also on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Your servant. You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, and brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, and told them to go in to possess the land which You had sworn to give them.”

“But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them. "Even when they made a moulded calf for themselves, and said, 'This is your god that brought you up out of Egypt,' and worked great provocations, Yet in Your manifold mercies You did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day, to lead them on the road; nor the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way they should go. You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, and gave them water for their thirst. Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.”

“Moreover You gave them kingdoms and nations, and divided them into districts. So they took possession of the land of Sihon, the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. You also multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and brought them into the land which You had told their fathers to go in and possess. So the people went in and possessed the land; You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hands, with their kings and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they wished. And they took strong cities and a rich land, and possessed houses full of all goods, cisterns already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and grew fat, and delighted themselves in Your great goodness.” Neh 9:5-25.

THE CULMINATION OF GOD’S PLAN THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

The New Testament records the advent of Jesus Christ, His birth, death, and resurrection to provide an atoning sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. By healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, delivering those oppressed by Satan, and His miraculous provision, Jesus demonstrated God’s love for His children. The New Testament

describes the falling of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the founding of the early Church. The Book of Acts, and the letters of the apostles to the Churches provide further guidance to future Christians.

The Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation provides the Church with a prophetic insight into things past, present, and what is to happen in the future. The book may be divided into two halves, the first half from chapters 1-11, focuses on the Church throughout its history. The second half, chapters 12-22, describes the emergence of the satanic trinity of Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet, and the Harlot and the Ten Kings. Using the Old Testament prophecies in conjunction with those in Revelation to unveil their meaning, we receive insight into the nature of the Battle of Armageddon and events to occur in the future. Revelation reveals the demise of the Harlot, and the final total destruction of the satanic trinity.

TRUTH THROUGH THE NEW CREATION IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

In the Garden of Eden, God established a core of truth that set the pattern for His creation, and His redemption of mankind.

- Man was created with a free will to choose whether he would obey God or Satan and the dire consequences of succumbing to the desires of the flesh that allow Satan to intrude into our lives.
- Man's salvation is decided by that choice—whether to cater to the desires of the flesh and the world, or to make a total commitment to God and His will for us to receive His gracious salvation.
- Because of God's justice and righteousness, Satan has the right to sift God's creation and exercise control over all that is submitted to him.

Because of man's rebellion, Satan has been able to distort or water down the truth of our redemption and acceptance by God. He said to Eve, **“Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'? ...‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”** Gen 3:1-5.

This conflict between truth and error set the scene for the Battle of Armageddon, where God is re-establishing the truth of His purpose for man's creation in bringing him into His kingdom and eternal existence in heaven. On the other hand, Satan is endeavouring to entice man into his kingdom, opposing God's truth by replacing it with all manner of lies and deceptions. This then, is the fundamental nature of the Battle of Armageddon.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

When direct persecution resulted in the dispersion of the Jews with their gospel message to surrounding nations, the satanic trio changed their strategy to contaminating the truth by introducing false doctrines and lying signs and wonders.

THE KEY BIBLE READING

“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan], out of the mouth of the beast [Antichrist], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Spirit of the Antichrist]. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs [false signs], which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, ARMAGEDDON.” Rev 16:12-16.

The Meaning of the Word Armageddon

We speak of the Battle of Armageddon, but that phrase is not in the bible, and the word Armageddon appears only once, and that in the Key Bible Reading. There are other biblical accounts of the Battle of Armageddon, as in Revelation and chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel, but in these the name Armageddon does not appear.

The word Armageddon is said to come from two Hebrew words, ‘Har’ and ‘Megiddo,’ meaning the ‘hill of Megiddo,’ a site which overlooked a plain renowned as a battlefield where Israel was engaged in many epic battles. Literally, the word Megiddo is translated as ‘place of troops.’

The Battle of Armageddon is More Spiritual than Physical in Nature

Many people think of Armageddon as a physical occurrence that will take place at the close of the age.

However, Armageddon is essentially a spiritual battle in which Satan and Antichrist use all manner of deceptions in an effort to oppose and destroy the truth of Christ’s salvation, and the evil forces in Satan’s kingdom attempt to destroy all Christian moral and ethical values.

We saw evidence of the spiritual nature of the Battle of Armageddon in the Key Bible Reading, where it states that it is “**unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon** [Satan], **out of the mouth of the beast** [Antichrist], **and out of the mouth of the false**

prophet [spirit of Antichrist]. **For they are spirits of demons, performing [false] signs.”** These demonic spirits coming out of the mouths of the satanic trio create all manner of deceptions that draw people to unknowingly be involved in the Battle of Armageddon.

Because of their literal interpretation of Revelation 20:9 below, many people envisage Armageddon as being a physical battle between the satanic forces of Antichrist, Christ, and His Church gathered at Jerusalem or somewhere in Israel.

Revelation 20:9 states,

“They [Antichrist’s army] went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [the whole Church]. And fire [fire is a symbol for judgement] came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.”

Fire is a consistent symbol for judgement, and so the reading is saying that when the Church is being overwhelmed by the forces of Satan, God will send forth His judgement on the satanic forces and destroy them. This judgement should not be seen as one event, but rather an overall ongoing judgement of God. The truth is that the Battle of Armageddon is a world-wide spiritual battle in which Christendom is being besieged with all manner of deception, which has the capacity to violate the purity and effectiveness of the true Church doctrine and in particular the message of salvation. Meanwhile, Christ and His prophets and teachers are engaged in exposing and destroying these deceptions by the revelation of spiritual truth. Although the battle will reach its climax with the defeat of Antichrist prior to the Last Judgement, it is already under way, and increasing in intensity as the end of the age approaches.

Essentially the Battle of Armageddon is an extension of this statement of Paul.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Eph 6:12-13.

COMBATANTS IN THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

The Holy Trinity Opposed by the Satanic Trinity

The foremost combatants in this battle are the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, opposed by the satanic trinity of Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

GOD is being counterfeited by SATAN.

CHRIST is being counterfeited by ANTICHRIST

THE HOLY SPIRIT is being counterfeited by THE FALSE PROPHET, who John calls the spirit of the Antichrist. **“And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”** 1 John 4:3.

Both God and Satan are endeavouring to draw as many souls as possible into their kingdom before the door closes at the end of the age.

Christ's purpose has been to establish the Church as a body of believers to whom He can impart His salvation and all of the blessings of His sacrificed body and shed blood.

Antichrist's purpose has been to establish a false 'church.' This is a body of people who have been deceived into accepting false doctrines as the truth and knowingly or unknowingly worshipping and obeying Satan rather than God. In the Book of Revelation, this false church is called THE HARLOT.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal light and truth and be a guide and helper to all believers.

The role of the False Prophet is to counterfeit truth with deception to mislead all believers and turn their minds and hearts away from straight paths of truth.

When the early Church began to prosper and dramatically increase in numbers, Satan used those under his control to persecute and murder its members, but this caused the dispersal of Christians to other countries, resulting in the spreading of the gospel. When violence failed, Satan embarked on a new strategy of undermining the true doctrines of Christianity with deceptive false doctrines and ministries and lying wonders, using as his agents Antichrist and the False Prophet.

REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST AND THE NATURE OF HIS WORKING

Who is Antichrist?

Many people believe that Antichrist is an absolutely evil person who will take control of the world at the close of this age. However, Antichrist and the False Prophet are spirit beings, archangels of Satan, whose influence was manifested in the days of the apostle John, who wrote, **“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.”** 1 John 2:18.

The **“many antichrists”** is a reference to human people who had allowed themselves to be dominated so much by Antichrist's spirit that John equated them with Antichrist himself. Such a wicked person could appear at the close of the age and be so evil and so powerful that he may be considered by many to be Antichrist himself, but he would be one of the many such persons who have appeared throughout history.

Antichrist Counterfeits Truths with Look-a-like Deceptions

We may better understand the nature of Antichrist's working by looking at the prefix 'anti', which has two meanings. The first is opposed to, or against, and the second is instead of. Combining the two, we see that Antichrist's strategy in combatting Christ and His Church is to oppose and dismantle all truth by replacing it with counterfeit doctrines that appear so much like the real truth that even mature Christians may be deceived. Jesus warned, **“false christs**

and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” Matt 24:24-25.

Antichrist’s ultimate aim is to deceive people into accepting false christs, false prophets, and teachers, with their false doctrines and lying signs and wonders, to the end that they may unwittingly direct their allegiance to Satan instead of God and Jesus Christ.

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON IS FOUGHT ON TWO FRONTS

In the Heavens

In Revelation 19, we have a figurative portrayal of the Battle of Armageddon depicting the Lord and His angelic warriors waging war against Antichrist and his satanic hordes in the heavens.

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him [Jesus Christ] was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev 19:11-16.

On the Earth

In conjunction with the battle between spiritual beings in the heavens, a war is being waged on earth between all Christians under the leadership of Christ and those under the control of Antichrist, who are endeavouring to turn hearts away from Christ and His truth. The Church has been entrusted with the responsibility of overcoming Antichrist through anointed ministries of teaching and prophecy, which present truth that exposes and destroys Antichrist’s lies and deceptions.

The Outcome of the Battle is Decided Here on Earth

It is obvious that God could use His invincible power to destroy Antichrist’s army, as happened when God overcame Satan through Christ’s atoning sacrifice on earth. When Christ was crucified and man’s redemption was accomplished, Satan had no more right to remain in heaven to accuse mankind of sin, and so was cast down to the earth.

“War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.” Rev 12:7-8.

Because He is a God of justice and righteousness, God acknowledges that Satan has a legitimate right to sift mankind, and even the Church, to see what is submitted to him, as in those who have accepted his lies as the truth and allowed themselves to be controlled by him. It is by people’s choice that they accept Antichrist’s deceptions rather than the truth of God, and now they are justly subjected to sifting and judgemental testing.

Now at the end of the age, God has given the Church the responsibility of wresting Antichrist’s control out of his hands and directing headship back to the Lord Jesus Christ. As the truth is presented by Christ’s end-time prophets and teachers, the power of Antichrist and his angels is weakened, both here on earth and also in the heavens, until he and the False Prophet are stripped of their power.

In His universal reign, God grants the authority to use power in accordance with the principle of justice and righteousness. When Satan has a just right to war against the Church because of her disobedience, he has the authority and power to do so. But when that right is removed by the repentance of the Church, and her presentation and acceptance of truth, Satan’s authority and power is diminished, until eventually Satan and his angels, with Antichrist and the False Prophet, will be defeated and cast into the lake fire.

The Battle of Armageddon Concludes with God’s End-time Judgement

Although the overall nature of the Battle of Armageddon is a spiritual contest between good versus evil and truth versus deception, it also involves God’s intervention by executing His judgement on the world order Satan has created on earth, on the wayward Church with its apostasies, and on those who have rejected Christ and His truth.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SATANIC TRIO

The thirteenth chapter of Revelation describes the emergence of Antichrist from the turbulent nations of the world, and the False Prophet from the pagan religions of the world.

THE CREATION AND FALL OF SATAN

Satan was a created being with a splendour that was above all other angels. Ezekiel 28:14 says, **“you were the anointed cherub who covers,”** a picture taken from the cherubim covering the presence of God, who was represented by the Ark of the Covenant. He had the most prominent position in heaven as a covering over the glory and holiness of God. He was perfect in all of his ways until pride in his beauty corrupted him, and he wanted to be equal to God. Although the following description of his beauty and fall in Ezekiel 28 is addressed to the king of Tyre, a city renowned for its trading and wealth, the king is seen as a type of Satan who we shall see uses the power of buying and selling and money to control the world.

“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. Ezek 28:12-17.

This reading from Isaiah presents us with another picture of Satan’s corruption and fall. **“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars [angels] of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.”** Isa 14:12-15.

In rebellion, Satan decided to set up his own kingdom where he would be worshipped and honoured in a like manner to God. Revelation 12 tells us that he drew a third of the angels in heaven into his rebellion through lies and deception.

“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon [Satan] having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail [the tail is a symbol of lies and deception] drew a third of the stars [angels] of heaven and threw them to the earth.” Rev 12:3-4.

We then read that Satan was enraged, and vowed to make war with Jesus Christ and His Church.

“Now when the dragon [Satan] saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman [the Church] who gave birth to the male Child [Jesus Christ].” Rev 12:13.

Stern opposition was directed to a particular group within the Church who had the ‘testimony of Jesus Christ,’ which is called the ‘spirit of prophecy,’ because they were the most threat to his kingdom. **“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”** Rev 19:10.

“And the dragon was enraged with the woman [the Church], and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Rev 12:17.

THE EMERGENCE OF ANTICHRIST

From Revelation 13 & 17, and Daniel 7

In this section, biblical readings are highly figurative, with symbols that have to be interpreted to discover the meaning of the prophecies.

The thirteenth chapter of Revelation describes the emergence of Antichrist’s kingdom through the influence of four great empires, taking on their characteristics as it was being formed in their midst. In the following reading from Revelation, these empires are represented symbolically by a leopard, a bear, and a lion, identified in a similar prophecy in Daniel as the Greek, Persian, and Babylonian empires.

“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast [Antichrist] rising up out of the sea [the unbelieving nations of the world], having seven heads and ten horns [complete authority and power from Satan], and on his horns ten crowns [representing kingship], and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard [representing the Greek Empire], his feet were like the feet of a bear [Medio-Persian Empire], and his mouth like the mouth of a lion [Babylonian Empire]. The dragon [Satan] gave him [Antichrist] his power, his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads [the doctrinal authority of the false church] as if it had been mortally wounded [the falseness of the doctrine of salvation by works was exposed by Luther and the Reformation, and the doctrinal integrity of the false church was seemingly destroyed], and his deadly wound was healed [by the Counter Reformation]. And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” Rev 13:2-4.

Whereas Revelation 13 describes three beasts or empires, a similar vision described by Daniel discloses the emergence of a fourth beast, which was the Roman Empire.

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast [the Roman Empire], dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns [complete power].” Dan 7:7.

The Roman Empire conquered the nations of the known world and set up a system of governance and economic management that became a model for future civilisations. It was different from the previous three empires in that it became humanistic in nature, and because of its focus on the prowess of man, it is now considered as the birth place of New Age humanism.

From a spiritual point of view, the Roman Empire received within itself the pagan practices and idolatries of the empires that precedes it, and became home to the Harlot, or false church.

Antichrist’s Kingdom Emerges from the Roman Empire

Daniel describes a little horn, symbolising the kingdom of Antichrist, emerging from the Roman Empire. In its early stage it was considered ‘little’ in comparison to the vastness of the Roman Empire from which it emerged.

“I was considering the horns, [horns symbolise power] and there was another horn, a little one [Antichrist’s kingdom], coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn [Antichrist’s kingdom], were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.” Dan 7:8.

Where it says that three of the horns of the Roman Empire were plucked out by the roots, it could be interpreted that the kingdom of Antichrist diminished a third of the power of the Roman Empire. It did this by establishing its own religious kingdom in its midst, a kingdom that eventually brought much of the world under its control.

The fourth beast, or Roman Empire, had a profound effect on perfecting the reign of Antichrist’s kingdom on earth because of its focus on the attributes of man rather than God, and secondly, because it became the home of Antichrist’s masterpiece, the Harlot, a false church that established itself as the head of all Christendom.

The Church has Been Taken Captive by Antichrist

Revelation 13:7 states, **“It was granted to him [the beast or Antichrist] to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev 13:7-8.**

Almighty God, who is absolutely invincible, has allowed Antichrist to make war against the Church, and even overcome her. This is part of God’s overall plan to expose the working of Antichrist to the Church, test the allegiance of all believers, and glorify His name by defeating and casting down Antichrist’s kingdom forever. At this point in history, it is evident

that the Church has been overcome, for she has been unable to prevent the encroachment of the spirit of Antichrist and the spirit of the world from polluting her pure doctrine and ministry.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE FALSE PROPHET

A Figurative Account from Revelation 13

The False Prophet is a spirit being named by the apostle John as the spirit of the Antichrist. In Revelation 13, John saw Antichrist emerging from the nations of the world, and now we are told that he saw the False Prophet emerging from the earth, which in this case represents the pagan religions of the world.

“Then I saw another beast [the False Prophet] coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.” Rev 13:11.

The first beast, or Antichrist, arose out of the sea, which symbolises the turbulent nations of the world. The second beast, or False Prophet, came out of the earth, which represents the religious background of the pagan religions of the world. This becomes evident when we see the False Prophet’s involvement in the forming of the Harlot and enticing her to receive within herself the rites and practices of pagan religions. The False Prophet had two horns, representing secular and religious power. He looked like a lamb, signifying his seemingly benign presence, but spoke like a dragon, showing that he is the source of the pompous arrogant words coming out of the mouths of the spokesmen of the false church.

In the next reading, we see that the False Prophet acts in union with Antichrist, causing people of the world to worship Antichrist by legitimising the Harlot, or false church, and establishing her in the minds of people as the main religion of Christendom.

“And he exercises all the authority of the first beast [Antichrist] in his presence and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast.” Rev 13:12.

It may appear from the above description of the operation of the False Prophet that his activity is mainly centred on the creation of the Harlot, but we will see that his opposition extends to the contamination of all denominational churches, and the creation of many other counterfeit religions, false doctrines, false ministries, and lying signs and wonders. His operation further extends to every fabric of society in corrupting moral values, and turning hearts away from accepting the gospel truth of salvation, and inviting people to accept counterfeit alternatives that press them into Antichrist’s kingdom.

USING THE POWER OF MONEY TO CONTROL THE WORLD

We shall see later in this study how the False Prophet uses the power of money to captivate and control mankind.

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Rev 13:16-18.

CHAPTER 4

THE HARLOT OR FALSE CHURCH

The seventh chapter of Revelation discloses the identity of the Harlot, and John had great amazement to see that she posed as head of all Christendom.

REVEALED REVELATION 17

The apostle John said that there were many “**Antichrists, or those controlled by Antichrist**” present in his age, and likewise, there are many Antichrists among us today that Antichrist uses to establish Satan’s kingdom on earth. Antichrist has developed a highly organised world kingdom through which he is able to manifest his power through earthly organisations and institutions. Two main ones are shown to us in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation. The first is the Harlot, or false Church, and the second is the Ten Kings, who use the inherent power of money to establish their reign over mankind.

Revelation 17 - The Revelation of the Harlot

In the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, John first presents us with a figurative description of the Harlot.

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters [all the nations of the world], with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication [pay reverence to her exalted position in the world], and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness [the climate of spiritual dryness that the Harlot operates in]. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [the beast being Antichrist] which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns [complete authority and power from Satan]. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.”
Rev 17:1-4.

Note that the Harlot, which we know is the false church, was sitting on a scarlet beast, the same beast of Revelation 13, who is Antichrist. The fact that the Harlot was sitting on the beast tells us that Antichrist is supporting her and promoting her false doctrines.

The Identity of the Harlot

We are then shown the identity of the false church in verses 6-9.

“I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement. But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns ...Here is the mind which has

wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains [this can also be translated ‘hills’] on which the woman sits.” Rev 17:6-7 and 9.

The Scripture notes, **“the seven heads are seven mountains [or hills] on which the woman sits.”** The **“seven heads”** refers to the perfect authority of Antichrist, now invested in the Harlot, and the **“seven hills”** are the location where the Harlot sits. The **“seven hills”** is reference to the seven hills surrounding Rome, where the complete authority of the Harlot is established in the Vatican, which has become an independent state in Italy with its own authority and governance. The Harlot is the corrupt governing body of the Roman Catholic Church, which includes the Vatican, the Papacy, the cardinals, and the false ideologies false doctrines, dogmas, and traditions, propagated and declared infallible by successive popes down through the centuries. It is not the body of devotees that make up its membership.

John **“marvelled with great amazement”** because he discerned that the Harlot would be proclaimed as the only true church of all Christendom.

The woman, **“drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”** is a reference to the martyrdom of millions of Christians who were martyred because they refused to accept her ideology. The most obvious example is the Spanish Inquisition, in which millions of devout Christians were martyred.

The Image of the Beast

In the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, we are told that it was granted to the False Prophet to make an image of the beast, or Antichrist, and that the image would speak and cause those who would not worship the beast to be killed.

“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.” Rev 13:15.

This image that personifies Antichrist is the office of the Pope, who is the spokesman of the Harlot, or false church. The office of the Pope presents us with an obvious example of the working of the spirit of Antichrist, who has caused people to believe that the Pope is the head of all Christendom. The title of the Pope, the ‘Vicar of Christ,’ is interpreted as having all of the authority of Jesus Christ in his role as head of the Church. “The Pope, as the Vicar of Christ on earth, possesses the same full power of jurisdiction that Christ Himself possessed during His human life.” Pope Clement VI, Acta Clementis, c. 1350; cited in the Roman Catholic publication: Granfield, Patrick, *The Limits of the Papacy*, NY: Crossroad, 1987; p.36. The Pope is venerated throughout the world, even by heads of countries and non-Catholics. He is invested with spiritual authority to pronounce ‘infallible’ edicts that have led many astray and caused the demise of millions who have disagreed with them.

We were told that the beast (Antichrist) **“had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.”** Rev 13:11. The two horns represent sources of power, the spiritual power or the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church, and as we shall see, the secular power of the Ten Kings.

Throughout history the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church has outwardly expressed the need for love, compassion, peace, and well-being for all mankind. On the other hand, its papal decrees have been haughty and arrogantly domineering in assuming the role of Christ's headship of the Church.

Christian Salvation

The true Church of Christ is a body of believers not bound by denominational boundaries, who have received righteousness and salvation through belief in Jesus Christ. They have been given the commission of spreading the gospel of salvation to the whole world, so that all who believe in Jesus Christ are saved. This commission makes the doctrine of salvation a key indicator of the validity of any organisation that calls itself a church. The true doctrine of salvation decrees that to be saved, one must believe in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ that has made us righteous before God, and eternally saved. In true Christianity, receiving salvation is the outcome of the following actions:

- Repentance of past sins.
- Confession of one's belief that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, bore the punishment for our sins on the cross, so that we are accounted righteous by God and eternally saved.
- Belief that Jesus was raised from the dead and is now enthroned with God the Father.
- It follows that we choose to make Jesus Christ the Lord of our lives.

Salvation in the Catholic Church

In salvation in the Roman Catholic Church, the accent is more on upholding the ideology and traditions of Catholicism, rather than belief in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

For example, they believe that baptism, even as an infant, and the Sacrament of Confirmation establish one into the body of Christ. This must be followed by good works and obeying the ordinances of the Catholic Church. (The bible states, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**" Eph 2:8-10.)

Catholic doctrine states that salvation can be endangered or lost, and so it must be kept intact by participating in the sacraments and accepting the ordinances of the Catholic Church, many of which are contrary to the Scriptures. The following are examples of the ordinances, rites, and traditions of the Catholic Church, pronounced to be infallible by popes down through the ages.

- Salvation by Catholicism - 'Whoever refuses to enter and remain in the Catholic Church cannot be saved.' Vatican II Lumen Gentium, 14. This claim that the Catholic Church is the only true church, is based on an erroneous interpretation of the following Scripture: "**Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter [the actual translation of the name Peter is stone], and on this**

rock [as foundational rock] **I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”** Matt 16:16-18.

The Catholic Church has claimed that Peter was the rock on which the Church was established, but it was Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, that was the foundational rock on which the Church would be built.

- Receiving the Holy Spirit - ‘The Catholic Church alone is the body of Christ. Consequently, those who are outside the Church have not the Holy Spirit.’ The Teaching of the Catholic Church - A Summary of Catholic Doctrine. Pg. 666.
- The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception declares that Mary remained a virgin and led a sinless life. It was made infallible and official by Pius IX, on December 8th, 1854. He also stated, “There is no salvation to those who do not believe this dogma...” (This reading from Mark states **“Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?”** Mark 6:3.)

Other Examples of Roman Catholic False Ideology and Doctrine

- Papal Infallibility - “Papal infallibility is a dogma of the Catholic Church, which states that, by action of the Holy Spirit, the Pope is preserved from even the possibility of error when in his official capacity he solemnly declares or promulgates to the universal Church a dogmatic teaching on faith or morals.” This doctrine was defined dogmatically in the First Vatican Council of 1869–1870. The infallibility of the Pope is based on the belief that the apostle Peter was the founder of the Christian Church at Rome and the first of the line of successive popes ordained by God.

Peter was appointed by the Church to be the apostle to the Jews, and Paul the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:8). In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, **“For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles...”** Rom 11:13. Paul’s letter to the Romans is the most comprehensive outline of the doctrine of Christianity in the bible, and so we may safely assume that Paul, and not Peter, was the overseer of the Church at Rome. Some might argue that Peter ministered to the Jews in Rome, but the Jews had been banished from Rome by Claudius. **“After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome)...”** Acts 18:1-2. Others might say that Peter ministered in Rome after Paul’s death, but both deaths are said to have occurred about the same time, (AD 65-68).

If the apostle Peter was not the head of the Church in Rome, who was the first pope of the Roman Catholic Church? Some researchers point to Simon Magus, who is described in the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts. Phillip the evangelist preached the gospel in Samaria, and the people believed and were baptised.

“But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to

whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’”

Simon himself believed, but as we will see, not with his whole heart.

“Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’” Acts 8:9-10, 13-23.

History records that Simon travelled to Rome, where he established a church defiled by paganism. Evidently, he resorted to practising his satanically controlled magic that so mesmerised the Romans that they deified him, and statues have been unearthed with inscriptions honouring him. It was a common practice that pagan gods had the name Peter (pagan meaning ‘interpreter of mysteries’) inserted into their title, so once deified, Simon Magus may have become Simon Peter. This opens the door to the possibility of assuming that this Simon Peter might have been the first Roman Catholic pope.

- The Assumption of Mary - The doctrine of the assumption of Mary states that Mary ascended into heaven in bodily form. It was made infallible and official by Pius XI on November 1st, 1950.
- Mary was Adopted as a Mediatrix between Man and God - The Catholic Church calls Mary, ‘the Mediatrix of all graces,’ and that ‘her prayer is all powerful with her lord, for he will refuse her nothing, who deigned to be called and to be her son.’ (The bible states, **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,”** 1 Tim 2:5-6.)
- Extreme Unction - End of life baptism to nullify the effect of any remaining sins. There is no Scriptural basis for this practice.
- Transubstantiation - The miraculous turning of the bread and wine into the actual blood and body of Jesus.
In the light of what is presented above, one might ask, “Can Catholics be saved?” No one, Catholics and Protestants, can afford to place their allegiance to their church above their allegiance to Jesus Christ. But everyone who believes that the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ applies to them personally, and have proclaimed Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, are saved.

THE TITLES OF THE HARLOT

In Revelation 17, it states that on the Harlot’s head was written this inscription,

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Mystery

This title refers to the multitude of secretive rites and rituals incorporated directly into the Catholic Church. Things that are mysterious are often afforded undue reverence, and so Catholic worship services are shrouded in mysterious rites and practices, such as the transubstantiation of the bread and wine, the use of Latin liturgy, genuflecting to the altar, the Stations of the Cross, bells, the smoke of incense, the sprinkling of holy water, and clerical vestments with symbolic adornments.

Babylon the Great

Babylonian religious rites and practices are generally acknowledged as the epitome of godlessness and idolatry. When world domination passed from Babylon to Rome, the Roman Catholic Church incorporated many pagan religious practices of Babylon into her midst, believing that it would attract pagan worshippers into this new religion. By the time of John's writing of Revelation, the Harlot was given the title 'Babylon the Great', by which we may assume that the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church is even greater than the original Babylon. The following are some of the Babylonian rites incorporated into the Catholic Church.

Celibacy - The Babylonian religion had a celibate priesthood.

Nuns - Babylon also had female devotees called vestal virgins, later to be known by the Chaldean name, nun.

Confession to a priest - and penances originated in Babylon. The Catholic Church states that priests have the authority to forgive sins and allocate penances. (Canon Law 870 and 888) and that confessions to a priest should be made at least once a year (Pope Innocent III – Lateran Council).

Cardinals - The Babylonian High Priest was attended by twelve cardinals with scarlet robes.

The sign of the cross - The Babylonians used the letter 'T' in a similar manner to the sign of the cross, to commemorate the death of their god Tammuz.

Purgatory - An intermediate place or state between heaven and hell was of Babylonian origin. Purgatory became an article of faith in 1439 at the Council of Florence and was confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1548. The sale of indulgences to reduce time spent in Purgatory was introduced by the Roman Catholic Church.

The adoption of pagan rites and practices by the Catholic Church has been acknowledged by prominent Catholics, as attested to in the following quotation from Cardinal Newman.

Cardinal Newman wrote, "Temples, incense, oil lamps, votive offerings, holy water, Holidays, and seasons of devotion, processions, blessings of the fields, sacerdotal vestments,

the tonsure (of priests, monks and nuns), images, and statues... are all of pagan origin.” The Development of the Christian Religion. p.359

Cardinal Newman tells us that the reason for adopting pagan worship rites was to appease the many pagans in Rome, “in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen”.

The Mother of Harlots

The Harlot is also called ‘the mother of Harlots’ because many of her rites and practices have been incorporated into Protestant churches and other religions. E.g.

Early churches were local and autonomous, governed by local elders. Protestant churches have adopted the Catholic model of national or international organisations with a system of hierarchal leadership. Church memberships are separated into the clergy and the laity, with ministry being the province of the clergy. Protestant churches have adopted the Catholic preoccupation with things created by man, like cathedrals with stained glass windows and statues, clerical vestments, titles, rituals, and other things of the world that glorify man rather than God.

CHAPTER 5

THE TEN KINGS ALLIED WITH ANTICHRIST

Satan has used the power of money to control the minds and actions of all mankind, and we will see that the Ten Kings are the controllers of the world finances.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TEN KINGS IN REVELATION 17

After revealing the Harlot, Revelation 17 goes on to describe the Ten Kings, who are the secular horn or power base in Antichrist's confederacy.

“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” Rev 17:12-14.

The Characteristics of the Ten Kings

- The Ten Kings have no kingdom that is recognisable to the world.
- They exercise the power and authority of kings in the world.
- God allows them to have this authority and power for one symbolic hour or a short historical period.
- They have the same mind with Antichrist in opposing the kingdom of Christ. The Ten Kings work in union with Antichrist, allowing him to use their authority and power.
- They engage in continual warfare against Christ and His kingdom, attempting to overthrow Christianity and all other religions, and undermine all morality, preparing the way for the establishment of one kingdom ruled by Antichrist and the Ten Kings.
- Christ will overcome them for He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

THE IDENTITY OF THE TEN KINGS

Nathan Rothschild, the most influential of the five sons of Mayer Amschel Rothschild, and founder of the Central Bank of England, made the statement that he who controls the finances of the world controls the world, and that he controlled the finances of the British Empire. We shall see that the Ten Kings are the controllers of the world's finances, the heads of the world's banking houses and industrial consortiums. Their power and influence are made more effective by their alliance with the Antichrist controlled Illuminate, and satanic secret societies. It is important to understand that the Ten Kings are not motivated by the amount of money that they can accumulate, but by the power it generates.

ANTICHRIST'S USE OF MONEY TO CONTROL THE WORLD'S POPULATION

We read in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation how the False Prophet, or spirit of the Antichrist, has used the power of money to condition all mankind, so that he might gain control over all that they do and all that they think. This is expressed in the figurative language of giving them a mark on their hand and forehead, signifying his control over all that they do and their mental attitude to all things.

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; [the False Prophet] ...And he causeth [prepares or conditions] **all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive [literally - that he might give them] **a mark in their right hand** [signifying all that they do], **or in their foreheads** [all that they think]: **And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or [or alternatively] the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”** Rev 13:11, & 16-17. (KJV)**

A common misconception is that at the end of the age, Antichrist, as a person, will control the world, forcing people to receive a mark like a tattoo or electronic chip, on their hand or forehead, and without the mark being displayed at shopping outlets, people will be prohibited from buying or selling.

The reading states that **“no man might buy or sell, save he that had** [or - without having] **the mark.”** This can be viewed in two ways. The first is that a person must have the mark in order to buy or sell. The second is that buying and selling so conditions people that it becomes an inevitable consequence that the power of money influences all that they do and think. The second is the appropriate interpretation and is made more evident when we examine the literal meaning of some of the phrases used.

The reading states that the False Prophet **“causes all” ...to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads.”** The words **“causes all”** make more sense when Strong's alternative meaning, **‘conditions all’**, is used. Man is conditioned by the process of buying and selling until money becomes a major controlling influence on all that he does or thinks. The literal translation of the words **“to receive”** is actually **“that he may give.”** The spirit of the Antichrist conditions all so that **he can give or implant in them the mark** signifying his control over their lives.

The mark of the beast is not a literal visible mark, but a signification that the recipient has been brought under a bondage to Antichrist through the controlling power generated by money.

Notice from the reading that when Antichrist conditions all, it is so that man may receive the following: **“the mark, OR the name of the beast [his attributes], OR the number of his name ...for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”**

The “**name of the beast**” represents his attributes, and so having the name of the beast means that Antichrist can impart some of his traits to people, according to their openness in various areas.

The “**number of a man**” could have been just as correctly translated as ‘the number of man.’ In spiritual numerology, six is the number of man, because man was created on the sixth day. 666 is the number of man, which in this case taken to the third degree, revealing the belief that man has the ability to accomplish all things without reference to God. This glorification of man is the basic precept of the New Age philosophy.

Although all mankind has been conditioned by Antichrist to receive the mark, or the name, or the number of the beast, we read in Revelation that we can overcome them.

“And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.” Rev 15:2-3.

The sea of glass mingled with fire symbolises the barrier of God’s holiness that separates Him from mankind. The fire represents the fire of refinement leading to holiness, which allows man to draw closer to God. Those who have gotten the victory over the mark stand on the sea of glass, showing that they had accepted God’s refinement that had eliminated their carnal natures, and as a consequence had drawn closer to Him.

Lessening the power of our carnal natures allows us to overcome the power of money that produces all manner of traits like covetousness, ungodly ambition, seeking security through possessions, fear, anxiety, insecurity, and envy. By abandoning all self-effort and self-reliance to provide for our needs, and putting our trust in God as ‘**Jehovah Jireh**,’ or ‘He who provides,’ as the source of all provision, the power of money to control us dissipates, and we enter into God’s rest.

THE FORMATION OF THE TEN KINGS

The world-wide reign of the Ten Kings began with the advent of the Rothschild banking dynasty, which was initiated by Mayer Amschel Rothschild, who established his five sons as heads of the major European banks. Each bank became the central bank for its country enabling the Rothschilds to control the finances of Europe.

Using their amassed wealth, the Rothschilds financed major companies throughout the world, giving the Rothschilds considerable control over their expansion strategies. It was Rothschild capital that enabled the establishment of the following industrial and financial empires—Rockefellers (oil), Harriman (railroads), Carnegie (steel), Cecil Rhodes (South Africa mining), and the J P Morgan, M Warburg, and Kuhn Loeb banking dynasties in Europe and America. It was Rothschild capital that enabled the building of the Suez Canal and European railroads. Later, the beneficiaries of Rothschild finance proved to be valuable agents that prepared the way for the House of Rothschild to gain control of American finance.

Banking Houses Gain Control of American Finances

Having gained control of European finances, the Rothschilds, with other banking and industrial institutions they controlled, turned their attention to America. By clever manoeuvring and deception, they set up a central banking system that had the outward appearance of a nationally owned and controlled establishment, but in fact was a privately owned corporation controlled by the bankers themselves. The 1913 *Federal Reserve Act* granted them authority to print their own money and use it to create loans and bonds that they could sell or retain the accrued interest, people believing that it was going into the government coffers.

President Woodrow Wilson, the person the bankers groomed and installed to sign off on the *Federal Reserve Act*, later stated when he became aware of what had transpired, *"I am a most unhappy man. I have unwittingly ruined my country. A great industrial nation is controlled by its system of credit. Our system of credit is concentrated. The growth of the nation, therefore, and all our activities are in the hands of a few men. We have come to be one of the worst ruled, one of the most completely controlled and dominated governments in the civilized world—no longer a government by free opinion, no longer a government by conviction and the vote of the majority, but a government by the opinion and duress of a small group of dominant men."*

Congressman Louis McFadden was undying in his efforts to expose and cancel the powers granted to the bankers by the 1913 Federal Reserve Act, but they were so powerful and entrenched that he continually failed. He wrote, "When the Federal Reserve Act was passed, the people of these United States did not perceive that a world banking system was being set up here. A super-state controlled by international bankers and industrialists... acting together to enslave the world... Every effort has been made by the Fed to conceal its powers, but the truth is—the Fed has usurped the government." Congressman Louis McFadden, House Committee on Banking and Currency Chairman (1920-31).

Eventually, the American Central Bank gained control of the world's finances by setting the value of all currencies to the standard of the dollar. Through their financial backing, the Ten Kings have now been able to gain considerable control over all world central banks, and agricultural, munition, petroleum, pharmaceutical, mining, and transport industries, and all media outlets.

THE UNION OF ANTICHRIST AND THE TEN KINGS

The origin of the alliance between the Ten Kings and Antichrist outlined in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation may be traced back to 1787, when Mayer Amschel Rothschild, the founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty, invited Adam Weishaupt to establish the Illuminate in Bavaria. The Illuminate is a satanic organisation whose members believe that they have received the 'light of Lucifer', making them more capable than others to govern the world. Briefly, the aim of the Illuminate was to amass a body of super-intelligent, highly gifted and qualified persons (enlightened ones), and establish them in authoritative positions in places like parliaments, the media, universities, colleges, the CIA, The World Bank, The International

Monetary Fund, The Council on Foreign Relations, and The United Nations—places where they could exert the most international influence.

In the lower levels of the authority structure of the Illuminate, members believe that they are creating a better world, but in the highest levels, as is the case in Freemasonry, there is a direct worship of Lucifer.

When the Illuminate was exposed and banished from Bavaria, its organisation found refuge in Masonic Lodges and other secret societies, expanding its influence throughout Europe and then America.

The reason for the alliance between the Ten Kings and the Illuminate was that they share a common quest for power that would ultimately lead to their controlling the whole world. The Ten Kings supplied the essential finances to accomplish their purposes. The Illuminate, using its own satanic power and the satanically induced power of money, gave the power to compel people to cooperate with their activities. It is the inherent power of money, combined with the evil of Antichrist brought to bear in all administrative areas, which has enabled this alliance to control governments and economies, and adversely influence social and religious ethics throughout the world.

The presence and influence of the Illuminate has been dismissed by most people as another conspiracy theory, but George Washington wrote in 1798, *“It is not my intention to doubt that the doctrine of the Illuminate and the principles of the Jacobinism had not spread in the United States. On the contrary; no one is more satisfied of this fact than I am.”*

Although the whole world has been subjected to the influence of Antichrist and the Ten Kings, it is the Christian nations that bear the brunt of the attack because of their threat to Satan, whereas non-Christian nations are already under Satan’s control.

The Agenda of the Illuminate to Bring About World Control

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, it became obvious to the Illuminate that to facilitate their plan of world domination, they would have to initiate a series of world wars to fracture, disperse, and eliminate existing world governments, institutions, and authorities. The blueprint of this operation was outlined in a letter written in 1871 by Albert Pike, the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, and the top Illuminist in America, directed to Giuseppe Mazzini, a 33-degree Mason, and world head of the Illuminate.

The following are extracts from the letter:

“The First World War must be brought about in order to permit the Illuminate to overthrow the power of the Czars in Russia and of making that country a fortress of atheistic Communism. The divergences caused by the agentur [agents] of the Illuminate between the British and Germanic Empires will be used to foment this war. At the end of the war, Communism will be built and used in order to destroy the other governments and in order to weaken the religions.”

“The Second World War must be fomented by taking advantage of the differences between the Fascists and the political Zionists. This war must be brought about so that Nazism is destroyed and that the political Zionism be strong enough to institute a sovereign state of Israel in Palestine. During the Second World War, International Communism must become strong enough in order to balance Christendom, which would be then restrained and held in check until the time when we would need it for the final social cataclysm.”

“The Third World War must be fomented by taking advantage of the differences caused by the agentur of the Illuminate between the political Zionists and the leaders of Islamic World. The war must be conducted in such a way that Islam (the Moslem Arabic World) and political Zionism (the State of Israel) mutually destroy each other. Meanwhile the other nations, once more divided on this issue will be constrained to fight to the point of complete physical, moral, spiritual, and economical exhaustion... We shall unleash the nihilists and the atheists, and we shall provoke a formidable social cataclysm which in all its horror will show clearly to the nations the effect of absolute atheism, origin of savagery and of the most bloody turmoil. Then everywhere, the citizens, obliged to defend themselves against the world minority of revolutionaries, will exterminate those destroyers of civilisation, and the multitude, disillusioned with Christianity, whose deistic spirits will from that moment be without compass or direction, anxious for an ideal, but without knowing where to render its adoration, will receive the true light through the universal manifestation of the pure doctrine of Lucifer, brought finally out in the public view. This manifestation will result from the general reactionary movement, which will follow the destruction of Christianity and atheism, both conquered and exterminated at the same time.”

The success of this agenda may be viewed in the light of history. Illuminate agents have been involved in the precipitation of nearly all wars, revolutions, assassinations, and genocide during the past two centuries. The following are two examples:

Jacob Schiff, protégé of the Rothschilds, and part owner of Kuhn Loeb Bank, was charged by the Illuminate to organise and finance Leon Trotsky to conduct the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917, which destroyed the existing Czarist monarchy and established Communism in Russia. This was a fulfilment of the Illuminate’s plans divulged by Albert Pike, *“to permit the Illuminate to overthrow the power of the Czars in Russia and of making that country a fortress of atheistic Communism.”*

The Rothschilds financially supported the Illuminate controlled Zionist movement, which aimed to bring about the restoration of Israel in Palestine as a political rather than religious state. The return of the Jews and the establishment of the State of Israel, which was legalised in 1948, was for the most part made possible by Rothschild finances and the influence of the Illuminate. Their involvement in Zionism was to facilitate the Illuminate aims as set down by Albert Pike. *“The Third World War must be fomented by taking advantage of the differences caused by the ‘agentur’ of the ‘Illuminate’ between the political Zionists and the leaders of Islamic World.”*

THE CALLED, CHOSEN, AND FAITHFUL

When we consider the influence of The Harlot, Antichrist, and the Ten Kings, in the light of history and the state of the world today, we can see that much of the world has been brought under their control. However, we can take comfort in the final part of this reading.

“These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” Rev 17:12-14.

In essence, this reading of **“war with the Lamb”** is a condensed account of the Battle of Armageddon. Antichrist and the Ten Kings, with all of the hosts of wickedness supporting them, are at war against Christ, and His Church, and a select band who are named **“the called, chosen, and faithful.”** The called, chosen, and faithful, are not an organised body with visible ties, but individual members of the body of Christ who have been selected by the Lord, who knows all minds and hearts. Before being engaged in this war they have had a long preparation to eradicate the power of their carnal flesh, so that the Lord may have a complete headship.

They are called: The first call of the Lord by the Spirit is for individuals to embark on the ‘path of the cross,’ or holiness, by surrendering themselves to God’s workmanship and accepting His refining work with the suffering involved in putting to death their carnal self-orientated natures.

God’s refining work is often a long process that may take many years, and some may step off the path before the work is finished. Those who persevere experience the end of the domination of their flesh, and Christ is able to establish His complete reign in them. The more the flesh is eradicated, the more complete is the Lord’s reign, and the more He is able to use them to destroy the works of Satan. During this time of refinement, God’s hedge of protection may be removed, so that they may be well trained in spiritual warfare, and taught to wield the authority of the name of Jesus, and use the testimony of the Word in casting down strongholds.

They are chosen: The members of Christ’s end-time army are chosen by their perseverance in allowing God to complete His work, their honouring of the Lord’s headship, their capability to engage in warfare, and their spiritual capacity to undertake ministries allotted to them. In union with the Holy Spirit, the Lord trains all who are to unite with Him in this spiritual conflict and equips them with the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out their ministries.

They are faithful: They are faithful because their faith has been tested and remained steadfast. They have faith to be still and allow Christ to do the work without the intrusion of their flesh. They have faith to wait on Him, not pre-empting His initiations and working, and they act in obedience to His will.

The outcome of the battle is sure, for **“the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings.”**

CHAPTER 6

THE DRYING UP OF THE RIVER EUPHRATES

To understand the prophecy of the drying up of the river Euphrates, we need to unveil the meaning of the symbols used, and the relationship of the prophecy to other Scriptures.

THE SYMBOLOGY OF THE DRYING UP OF THE RIVER EUPHRATES

In the Key Bible Reading in chapter 2, the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the river Euphrates to dry up its waters, paving the way for the “**kings of the east**” to engage in the Battle of Armageddon.

In ancient warfare, all rivers were natural barriers that hindered the progress of armies with their horses and chariots. The river Euphrates was such a barrier between Babylon, and the nations to the southwest.

“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan], out of the mouth of the beast [Antichrist], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [or Spirit of the Antichrist]. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs [false signs], which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world...And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.” Rev 16:12.

Throughout history, from Nimrod, the first Chaldean emperor, to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon was renowned for her worship of pagan gods, for occult sacrifices, and gross idolatry, and as a consequence has become a symbol of Antichrist’s kingdom. In this reading, “**the kings from the east**” (Babylon) refers to the leaders of those in Antichrist’s kingdom who are in opposition to the Church, which represents Christ’s kingdom on the earth.

The river Euphrates symbolises a barrier of Scriptural truth that has always opposed the deceptions of Antichrist throughout the ages.

Demon spirits come out of the mouths of Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet, to the “**kings of the earth**”, and to the whole world, issuing forth a flood of deceit and deception that draws the whole world into the Battle of Armageddon. The perpetrators of deceit and deception are demon spirits, showing us that Armageddon is essentially a spiritual battle in which Satan opposes spiritual truth, replacing it with deceptions like false doctrines, false ministries, and lying signs and wonders.

In the light of the present spiritual state of the world, the drying up of the Euphrates has already happened and the way has been opened to allow Antichrist to exploit many avenues to attack the truth that the Church presents. It will be seen that the removal of this spiritual

barrier has been initiated by God, so that Antichrist and his working will be exposed and utterly defeated.

RELATED SCRIPTURAL ACCOUNTS OF THE DRYING UP OF THE RIVER EUPHRATES

The following readings from other Scriptures indirectly relate to the drying up of the River Euphrates and provide further spiritual insight into the way barriers have been withdrawn to allow Antichrist's forces to further oppose the Church and her doctrinal integrity.

The Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit's Presentation of Scriptural Truth

We have been shown that the spiritual barrier holding back Antichrist is the Holy Spirit's presentation of Scriptural truth. In the following reading we are shown that the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn, so that Antichrist's working will be brought out into the open and eventually destroyed forever.

“For the mystery of lawlessness [Antichrist's working] is already at work; only He who now restrains [the Holy Spirit] will do so until He is taken out of the way [His withdrawal relates to the drying up of the river Euphrates]. And then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” 2 Thess 2:7-8.

When the Holy Spirit, who has restrained Antichrist by His presentation of the truth, was deliberately withdrawn by God, spiritual truth began to be 'dried up', so that Antichrist and his works are becoming apparent.

Note that the reason for withdrawing the Holy Spirit and diminishing the light of truth is that **“the lawless one”** [Antichrist] **“will be revealed,”** so that his deceptions may be seen and refuted by the revelatory ministries in the Church.

The operation of Antichrist has been hidden to a large degree because his counterfeits have been difficult to detect, but now the working of Antichrist is being brought out into the light by Christ's end-time prophets and teachers. Truth is being revealed to the members of the Church, who will be equipped with the Word and the Spirit, so that they can be used by Christ in bringing about Antichrist's destruction.

Satan's Release from the Bottomless Pit

The following reading from Revelation reveals how an angel from heaven opened the bottomless pit to release Satan and allow hordes of demon spirits to enter the world and oppose Christ and His Church and turn prospective Christians away from receiving salvation.

“Then I saw an angel from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years [symbolically representing the Church age]; and he cast

him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, [the restraint of the Holy Spirit] so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while...Now when the thousand years have expired [the gospel having been preached to all nations], Satan will be released from his prison [relating to the drying up of the River Euphrates] and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth..." Rev 20 1-3 & 7-8.

Satan and his hordes of demon spirits being released to oppose the truth at the end of the Church age, is another example of the drying up of the River Euphrates.

The thousand years is the Church age. It is not a literal number, but symbolically represents the perfect time needed for God to present the gospel truth to the whole world. Here, we are told that Satan is bound or restrained during the Church age. Some argue that Satan has been active during the Church age, and therefore could not have been 'bound.' However, the Greek word 'deo,' translated as 'bound,' could also be translated 'restrained.' The same word is used to describe a woman unable to straighten her body. Jesus said to those objecting to His healing on the Sabbath, "**ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound [deo] - think of it - for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?**" Luke 13:16.

The woman was not completely bound from movement, but restrained from standing upright. Satan has been restrained during the Church age from deceiving the nations, or unbelievers, until the gospel truth has been preached throughout the whole world, and those who have a heart to receive salvation are not turned away by Satan's lies. It is after the gospel truth has been presented to all nations that Satan is released for a brief period to test the allegiance of those on the earth. The opening of the bottomless pit is another example of the drying up of the river Euphrates, and sheds light on why there is so much satanic activity in the world today.

THE RELEASE OF DEMON SPIRITS FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

At the sounding of the fifth trumpet in the ninth chapter of Revelation, an angel from heaven opened the bottomless pit and hordes of locusts were discharged.

"Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star [angel] fallen [can also be translated 'descend'] from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke [symbolising spiritual darkness, lies and deception] arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air [symbolising spiritual light and truth] were darkened because of the smoke of the pit." Rev 9:1-2/

In the light of Antichrist's endeavours to obscure and diminish the power of the word of God, this smoke of deception is the most damaging obstruction to the light of truth.

When the bottomless pit was opened, **"smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace."** Smoke symbolises spiritual darkness that promotes deception that obscures the light of spiritual truth. The obscuring of spiritual truth and replacing it with spiritual

darkness is another example of the drying up of the river Euphrates. We see it's effect in the near extinction of anointed spiritual teaching and prophecy in the present Church.

Locusts are Used to Symbolise Demon Spirits

Out of the smoke of spiritual darkness, locusts, symbolising demon spirits, emerge to torment all those on the earth.

“Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” Rev 9:3.

In the first and second chapters of Joel, and the fifth and sixth trumpets and bowls of wrath in Revelation, locusts are used as symbols for demon spirits because of their overwhelming numbers that can encompass the land and the swathe of destruction they leave behind them.

“They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months.” Rev 9:4-5.

The fact that they were not to eat any green thing (the normal diet of locusts), but to torment men, confirms that these are not normal locusts, but represent demon spirits. They were bound from harming those who have the seal of God's ownership.

The period of five months is a relatively short period, confined to “the day of the Lord,” in this case the day of God's judgemental dealing with individual people. Joel warned, **“For the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people [elsewhere in Joel they are referred to as locusts] come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them...”** Joel 2:1-3.

The Reality of Demon Spirits

Many Christians deny the reality of demon spirits or claim that Christians are immune from their attacks. The following are just three of the many Scriptures that declare otherwise.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness [demon spirits] in the heavenly places.” Eph 6:12.

“Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’” Luke 10:17.

“Behold, I give you the authority [of His name] to trample on serpents and scorpions [symbols for demon spirits], and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Luke 10:19-20.

The Characteristics of the Demon Spirits

In Revelation 9:7-11, we are given additional insight into the characteristics of demon spirits:

“The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle...” Horses and chariots are symbols of warfare, reminding us that we are engaged in a spiritual battle.

“...on their heads were crowns of something like gold...” Crowns of gold speak of God given authority and power, but these crowns are only something like gold, meaning that they have limited authority and power.

“...their faces were like the faces of men.” Demons are associated with human character flaws, and so we speak of ‘a spirit of greed,’ or a ‘spirit of fear,’ or a ‘spirit of lust,’ and so forth. Their task is to strengthen the power of these flaws until they become compulsive and difficult to overcome.

“They had hair like women's hair.” The temptations and thoughts they insert into our minds are enticing and seductive, appearing harmless, and yet having the power to captivate.

“...their teeth were like lions' teeth.” Despite the benign nature of their enticing temptations, their overall effect is that of destruction.

“And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron.” They cannot be overcome by human effort or will power, but only by the spiritual weapons entrusted to us, to be wielded in the authority of the name of Jesus.

“And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.” The name Apollyon means ‘Destroyer,’ a title ascribed to Satan by Jesus, verifying that these demon spirits are controlled by Satan.

The Torment Inflicted by Demon Spirits

Revelation 9 goes on to describe the nature of the torment inflicted by the demons on mankind.

“...Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.” Rev 9:5-6.

Scorpions sting with their tails, which are a symbol for lies and deception. The power of demon spirits rests in their capacity to deceive by lies and deception, false accusations, and by creating false symptoms that lead to physical, mental, and psychological torment, and in some cases is so severe that death appears better than living. Depression and all kinds of mental torment and suicidal tendencies, are prevalent in our modern society, and they are classified as forms of mental illness. This may be true, but what is not realised is that demon spirits may be

involved. Demon spirits have the capacity to insert thoughts into a person's mind—tormenting thoughts like our incapacity to rise above our circumstances, thoughts of hopelessness, negativity, introspection, causing despair and depression. The following reading from Isaiah is part of the commission given to Jesus Christ by God. The thing to note here is that heaviness or depression is called a spirit.

“He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness [or depression].” Isa 61:1&3.

Not only does God name depression as a spirit, He shows us a way of overcoming when our minds become captivated by negativity and depression. Firstly, we can use the authority of the name of Jesus entrusted to us, e.g., “Negative thoughts and depression, I reject you, and by the authority of the name of Jesus Christ entrusted to me, I order you to leave and not return.” Don't be alarmed if they are reluctant to leave or if they return. Declare your unity with Jesus and persist with determination until the battle is won. A battle is seldom won with one shot.

Secondly, we should ask God to lead us by His Spirit in putting on a garment of praise, bringing to mind Scriptures or gospel songs of praise that we may use until Satan's negative thoughts depart. Demon spirits cannot stand praise and worship, and so they are principal weapons in overcoming attacks. We should also learn to engage our thoughts on Jesus Christ, and all the blessings He has procured for us.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You...” Isa 26:3.

Demon Spirits are Used as a Means of God's Judgement

The effect of the invasion of demon spirits on individual people of the earth is easily discerned in daily broadcasts of wars, revolutions, terrorism, genocide, slavery, political corruption, drug trafficking, murders, suicides, paedophilia, rapes, domestic violence, homosexuality, pornography, depression, and other psychological torments. People in the world are shaking their heads, wondering what is happening. This is part of God's judgement of the present world order, and those who have obeyed the enticements of Satan.

“For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.” Ps 96:13.

People have chosen to ignore God and His salvation through Jesus Christ, and have embraced the humanistic world order that is under the power of Satan. They have become set in their ways and repentance is far from their thoughts, and so now God has taken away His protection and people are being tormented by the spirits they have entertained. God allows and measures this suffering to individuals, because it has the capacity to turn hearts to Him in repentance, leading to their eternal salvation. This torment by demon spirits is part of

Armageddon—of God’s just judgement of the world, which demands that individuals reap the recompense of their acceptance of Satan’s influence and ways into their lives.

The ‘Falling Away’ of the Church

Because the ‘drying up’ of the ‘River Euphrates’ has paved the way for Antichrist to contaminate the Church with all manner of deception that has dried up spiritual truth, there has been a ‘falling away’ of commitment and spiritual growth, prophesied in Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians, where he tells us that the end will not come until there is a ‘falling away’ of the Church and the working of Antichrist is revealed.

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition...” 2 Thess 2:3.

There is no doubt that the falling away has already happened. We only need to look at the physical evidence of empty and abandoned churches and the declining congregations. Later, we will see scriptural evidence of the Holy Spirit and the glory of the Lord departing from the Church. This falling away is a direct result of the drying up of the river Euphrates.

THE OVERCOMING LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

When we become Christians, it is imperative that we embrace the presence of the life of Jesus, who has invited us to partake of his life.

“He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing...If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” John 15:5-8.

It is by drawing on the power of His indwelling life that we can overcome Satan’s attacks. Three important attributes of Jesus that we may draw on to overcome dejection and depression are the love, peace, and the joy of the Lord. Here are some readings outlining the attributes of Christ in us, that we can use to overcome demonic attacks.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Tim 1:7. We can reject the spirit of fear in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive the love and sound mind of Christ.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” John 15:9. To abide in Christ’s love is to have a constant acceptance of His love in all of our circumstances.

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11-12.

“Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Neh 8:10.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27.

Personally, I have found that when suffering severe oppression, claiming the joy of the Lord has been of great benefit in overcoming Satan’s attacks. But what about taking medication? On one occasion I enquired of the Lord about taking a medication, and His reply was, “The Lord God saves with His right hand, and with His left.” The medical profession with its vast knowledge and procedures are a gift from God, who has given all revelation to mankind as his development makes him capable of receiving it.

WHY DID GOD DRY UP THE WATERS OF THE EUPHRATES?

This is the question on the hearts of most people. Why did God release Satan and his demon spirits from the bottomless pit, so that the whole world is confronted with evil on every side? Below are listed some reasons for your consideration.

- If Christ is to come back to a glorious Church without blemish, all apostasies, false beliefs, and practices that have been accepted into the Church must be brought out into the open, so that there is true repentance and rejection of Antichrist’s works.
- Jesus told the faithful Church at Philadelphia, **“I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”** Rev 3:10-11. This time of tribulation is ordained by God to test the genuineness of our commitment and dedication.
- The time of trial that is already in evidence is to strengthen our faith and teach us to stand firm in adversity with patience and perseverance. It is to teach us to wait on God, trusting that all things are in His hands and are under His control. Peter wrote:

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” 1 Peter 4:12-14.
- This time of trial is to teach us to overcome, using the weapons of spiritual warfare entrusted to us. At the end of each address to the seven Churches of Asia in Revelation, Jesus pronounced a blessing on ‘the overcomers.’ In every valid Christian walk, there is opposition from Satan, which generates frustration and suffering. It is the will of the Lord that in times of trial, we learn to be overcomers by using the authority of His name to cast down opposition, and by drawing on His life in us. In particular, He wants us to appropriate His joy, **“for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”** Neh 8:10.
- Jesus warned the Church at Laodicea, **“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”** Rev 3:15-17. This is a time of purification and cleansing. Jesus warned that those who are lukewarm in their commitment will be vomited from His mouth.

- This is a time of tremendous shaking of all of man’s activities. All that is precipitated by the flesh or the world will be cast down, and only those things of the Spirit emanating from God will remain. **“Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven. Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made [are made by man through human effort], that the things which cannot be shaken may remain [things of God made by the Spirit].”** Heb 12:26-27.

- God’s judgement will be vindicated in that those who have persecuted His children will be punished, and those who have been troubled will enter into His rest in this time of trial. **“...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** 2 Thess 1:6-8.

- In His explanation of the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus said at the time of harvest at the end of the age, His angels would cast out all that offends, and that His righteous ones would shine as the sun in God’s kingdom. **“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”** Matt 13:41-44.

- The final result of this time of turmoil and tribulation is that the works of Satan and Antichrist will be exposed and eliminated, and Satan’s fate sealed in the lake of fire (the fire of judgement).

“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Rev 20:2-3 & 7-10.

CHAPTER 7

SIGNS ACCOMPANYING THE END TIMES

Old Testament prophets, and Jesus Himself, presented signs foreshadowing the close of the age. They predicted great tribulation, with fear and perplexity on every side, with many deceived by false prophets, and false christs. Portrayal of celestial disturbances is used to reflect the gigantic shaking of all institutions and worldly practices. Fear of God’s judgement will confront the haughty and those who have exploited the poor.

END OF AGE PROPHECIES BY JESUS

Speaking through Amos, God said, **“Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”** Amos 3:7. This is particularly true concerning events that are to occur before the close of the age. We find many such end-time prophecies presented by prophets in the Old and New Testament. Jesus presented a series of prophetic warning signs depicting what would precede His second coming, concluding with this stern warning. **“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”** Matt 24:42.

Just before His departure the disciples asked Jesus, **“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”** Matt 24:3. We find His answer in the thirteenth chapter of Mark, the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the twenty-first chapter of Luke. They are similar in content, and so we will present Matthew’s version as our key text.

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” Matt 24:3-14

There Will be False Christs

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” Matt 24:23-25.

Throughout the ages there have been many people deceived by Antichrist, those who have claimed to be the resurrected Christ and gathered to themselves gullible disciples. The following are two examples of such people in more recent times.

Alvaro Thais, better known as *Inri Cristo*, was born in 1948 in Brazil. He claims to be the reincarnation of Jesus, and has spoken on television and radio, and has lectured and entered into many debates, travelling through many countries. In 1982, he established a mystical order called SOUST.

Alan John Miller, born 1962, is the founder of Divine Truth, a new religious movement in Queensland, Australia. He claims to be the returned Jesus of Nazareth. On the Divine Truth's website, he is referred to as Jesus and his partners name is Mary.

As well as those who make a direct claim to be Christ Himself, there are many who adopt the role of Christ in their ministries.

The Office of Pope: The papal claim to the title 'Vicar of Christ' is interpreted as acting as Christ on earth. The doctrine of papal primacy asserts that due to his direct lineage to Peter, as the Bishop of Rome, the Pope has divine authority and rule over all Christendom. (The bible states, "**And He [God] put all things under His [Christ's] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church...**" Eph 1:22.)

The Confessional: Priests adopt the role of Christ when they ignore God's gracious forgiveness and prescribe penances as a punishment for committed sins. (The bible states, "**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" 1 John 1:9.)

Mary as Mediatrix: Although Mary herself never adopted the role of Christ, the Catholic Church has given her the role of Mediatrix, or mediator between God and man, and countless Catholics present their petitions through Mary instead of through Jesus Christ to God. The same can be said of prayers to canonised saints.

False Prophets

Regarding false prophets, Jesus warned, "**Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.**" Mat 24:11.

There have been, and will be, many false prophets, teachers, and evangelists, some presently having exalted world-wide television ministries. We are told to test all prophecies by the Scriptures, the outcome of their prophecies, and by the fruit they produce. There have been many false prophets pronouncing false dates for the close of the age. For example:

William Miller a Baptist preacher predicted that Christ would return before 21st March 1844.

Assemblies of God Church publications advertised that the end would come no later than 1935.

Charles Taze Russell of the Jehovah's Witnesses and JF Rutherford who succeeded him, made several predictions, the most famous one being that 1975 would be the end of the world.

There Will be Tribulation, Perplexity, and Disillusionment

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.” Matt 24:9-12.

“...on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring [continual warfare and angst among nations]; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth...” Luke 21:25-26.

Wars and Rumours of Wars

“You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”

In May 2020, Wikipedia reported that there were fifteen major wars and eighteen minor conflicts among the countries of the world. Jesus’ prophecy does not say that these wars indicate that we are in the last days but instead, **“but the end is not yet.”** The following end-time prophecy from Isaiah predicts that there will be a cessation of wars in the last days. **“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days...He [God] shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”** Isa 2:2 & 4.

Premillennialists believe that Christians will be spared from the tormenting sufferings of the tribulation. The readings above tell us that the Church will be involved in tribulation, and the shaking of all things that produce all manner of disharmony, anxiety, and disillusionment. Tribulation is a necessary catalyst needed to bring about refinement and repentance. These tribulation events are also a means of testing all minds and hearts, so that God can judge with justice and righteousness.

GLOBAL SHAKING AND CELESTIAL DISTURBANCES

Old and New Testament prophecies like Joel 2:31, 3:14-16, Isaiah 34, Ezek 32:7-8, Matt 24:29-30, describe celestial disturbances. The reading below from Revelation tells us that there will be a great shaking of the earth, the sun will be darkened, the moon will turn blood red, the stars will fall to the earth, and the sky rolled up like a scroll.

“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and

hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” Rev 6:12-17.

The Great Earthquake

We should understand that this prophecy is not literal, and we should not expect to see a literal earthquake, the sun going black, a blood red moon, and the stars falling out of the heavens. Secondly, if these things are symbolic, then they must be interpreted to discover the meaning of the prophecy.

The word ‘earthquake’ may also be translated ‘a shaking.’ Here, **“earthquake,”** symbolises a severe shaking of the world order Satan has created, and every facet of man’s living experience to test what is true and of God and what is under the power of Satan.

Such a shaking is prophesied in Hag 2:6, and this parallel prophecy below from Hebrews.

“...whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Heb 12:26-27.

The **“things that are made,”** refers to things of carnal man, compared to **“the things which cannot be shaken,”** which are of God, and consequently will survive the shaking. There will be a severe shaking of the world order, with its organisations and institutions, and their ideologies and practices. It will include all worldly beliefs that have opposed God’s commandments, and all world religions, including some doctrines and practice of Christianity, to the end that only those things of God will remain. The things that cannot stand the shaking precede from the carnal mind of man, and the spirit of the world under the control of Satan.

The Sun Will be Darkened

The sun symbolises spiritual light and truth from God, who is the source of all spiritual light and truth. Because people have deliberately turned their backs on the truth, God will withdraw the truth from them so that only the earnest seeker will find it. We are reminded that the prophet Amos predicted that in the last days God would send forth a famine, not of food, but of spiritual truth. This famine of truth will come about because people have rejected real truth, and have sought teachers who will tell them what they want to hear. Paul told Timothy, **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”** 2 Tim 4:3-4.

Daniel prophesied that at the time of the end men will run to and fro, seeking truth about what is happening, but the truth will be hidden from all but earnest seekers. To them,

knowledge shall increase. **“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”** Dan 12:4-13.

In this end-time prophecy from Isaiah, he forecasts that men will frantically seek truth from their elected ministers, but they will have to decline, admitting that they have no answers.

“When a man takes hold of his brother [spiritual brother] in the house of his father [the Church], saying, ‘You have clothing [authority]; you be our ruler, and let these ruins be under your power.’ In that day he will protest, saying, ‘I cannot cure your ills, for in my house [spiritual position] is neither food [spiritual truth] nor clothing [spiritual authority]; do not make me a ruler of the people.’” Isa 3:6-12.

The Moon Will Turn Blood Red

Whereas the sun symbolises the spiritual light of truth from God, the moon symbolises the reflected light of truth from the Church, directed to the world. Here the light of truth is blood red, showing that it has been contaminated, and instead of producing life, it brings forth spiritual death.

In chapter 8, when the third trumpet sounded, a satanic angel ‘burning like a torch’ (presenting false truth) contaminated the rivers and springs, symbols of the decimators of truth, such as bible colleges, seminaries, and universities, turning the light of truth into wormwood or bitterness of deception. This is another example of biblical truth being distorted by spirits of deception.

The Falling of the Stars

In the prophecy from Revelation 6, we read, **“the stars of heaven fell to the earth...”** Of course, we should not expect to see literal stars falling from the sky and landing on the earth. In the Scriptures, stars may have two symbolic meanings. Stars may represent angels, both those of God, and those of Satan, as when Satan drew a third of his stars or angels into his rebellion against God. **“And his [Satan’s] tail [the tail symbolises lies] drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.”** Revelation 12:4. The power of the angels of Satan will diminish during the Battle of Armageddon and eventually be eliminated. In Revelation 6, the fact that the stars, in this case Satan’s angels, fell to the earth indicates the diminishing of their power.

The second meaning is more appropriate to this reading. Stars may also represent earthly kings, princes, and dignitaries who shine by their power on earth. This prophecy forecasts both the demise and casting down of Satan’s rebellious angels, and the overthrowing of persons of high-ranking world authority.

The Sky Rolled up Like a Scroll

We are told, **“The sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.”** A parallel reading from Isaiah states, **“All the host of heaven [the atmosphere e - the domain of Satan’s hosts of wickedness], shall be dissolved**

and the heavens [the kingdom of Satan in the heavens] shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down. Isa 34:4-5.

The 'sky,' or 'heavens,' is the atmosphere, which is the domain of Satan's spirit beings, and the organised kingdom he has established there. Paul said, **"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places [the atmosphere]."** Eph 6:12.

The sky or heavens being rolled up signifies the dismantling and overthrow of Satan's kingdom in the heavens. The kingdom that Antichrist and the False Prophet have established here on earth will be rolled up, meaning that the world system or order they have created will be overthrown and banished forever.

We are told, **"Every mountain and island was moved out of its place..."** Mountains and islands symbolise mammoth companies, banking houses, and industrial consortiums. Each will be **"moved out of its place,"** meaning that they will no longer control the world order and destiny of mankind.

In the prophecy from the sixth chapter of Revelation, we are given a further picture of the effect of the demise of Antichrist's kingdom on the inhabitants of the earth, particularly on those wealthiest and most powerful persons, who have gained their wealth by ransacking the poor.

"...the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains [symbols for man devised refuges], and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Rev 6:15-17.

At last, all those who have had a part in Antichrist's kingdom will understand that they are facing the wrath of God, and there is no way of escaping His judgement.

CHAPTER 8

ANTICHRIST'S ATTACK ON SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT AND THE DISSEMINATION OF TRUTH

Antichrist uses the power of the flesh, or man's reliance on his intellect and natural abilities, rather than spiritually inspired teaching and prophecy. Antichrist's attack has been particularly directed to opposition of the veracity of the Scriptures.

ANTICHRIST GRANTED POWER TO OVERCOME THE SAINTS

From the following reading from Revelation, we see that Antichrist's attack on the Church was ordained by God. He has done this to bring Antichrist's working into the open, so that it may be refuted by the truth and destroyed.

“And he [the beast or Antichrist] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months... It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev 13:5-8.

Antichrist's overcoming of the saints can be discerned in the world's approval of the Harlot, and the gradual decline of the true Church throughout the ages, as the increase of apostasy, deception, and worldliness, has brought her to her present state of powerlessness to overcome Antichrist's undermining activities.

HOW CAN ANTICHRIST GAIN CONTROL OF A PERSON?

Satan has many avenues to draw man away from a true commitment to the Lord, but the two main ones are the enticements of the flesh, and the power of the world, which **“lies under the sway of the wicked one.”** 1 John 5:19.

The Flesh Opposes the Spirit

Apart from the obvious lusts of the flesh and imagination that can so easily captivate a person, Satan can exploit less apparent flaws in the human nature, like spiritual and intellectual pride that prevent him from accepting spiritual truth. Paul stated, **“But the natural man [governed by the flesh rather than the Spirit] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God...because they are spiritually discerned.”** 1 Cor 2:14.

In spiritual terminology, the ‘flesh’ refers to man’s natural characteristic mind and emotions. The natural or carnal man relies on his own intellect, emotions and understanding, to formulate truth. He resorts to his reservoir of stored knowledge and capabilities gained from past experiences.

The spiritual man is ever dependent on the Holy Spirit to reveal spiritual truth. Whereas the carnal man depends on his own mind to reveal truth, the spiritual man continually waits on the Spirit to settle his mind on the truth. Antichrist exploits human weaknesses of self-confidence, intellectual pride, and self-reliance to cause the carnal man to come to conclusions that are of the flesh rather than the Spirit.

From a worldly point of view, the apostle Paul was a scholar, possessing the academic knowledge of a Pharisee, and yet he laid aside all reliance on his acquired worldly learning and understanding, so that he might gain knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. He wrote:

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee...But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Phil 3:3-8.

To walk after the Spirit a person must learn to lay all reliance on the flesh on the altar of the cross daily, so that it may be put to death by the Spirit. The flesh does not readily abandon self-reliance, and it may require considerable time for the Spirit to bring a person to Paul’s state of abandonment of the flesh to seek spiritual guidance.

THE DEMISE OF THE TWO WITNESSES

Worldly Concepts and Values Incorporated into the Church

In this reading from Revelation 11, prior to the account of the Two Witnesses, John was given a measuring rod, and asked to measure the temple, which is a type of the Church, to see what was of God and what was under the control of Satan. He was told not to measure the outer court, which was not part of the original plan, but an addition by Herod for the use of Gentiles.

“But leave out the court which is outside the temple [the temple being a type of the Church], and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city [another representation of the Church] underfoot for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” Rev 11:2-3.

Two symbolic time periods of forty-two months, and one thousand two hundred and sixty days, are mentioned in this reading. They, with equivalent symbolic time periods in other prophecies, of three-and-a-half years, and time, times, and half a time, symbolise an indefinite time period of spiritual privation, measured and controlled by God.

The Gentiles were non-Jews, symbolising non-Christians or people of the world. Relating this to the state of the end-time Church, the outer court being incorporated into the temple, is a prophetic insight into worldly concepts and values being accepted as a valid part of the Church. During the Church age, the Church has been plagued with apostasy and worldliness, and so during this period the Two Witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, in mourning because of the corrupted state of the Church.

The Identity of the Two Witnesses

The Two Witnesses are first mentioned in the Fourth Chapter of Zechariah, pictured as two olive trees dispensing the oil of the Holy Spirit into the Church.

“...So I said, ‘I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps [symbology used by Jesus to represent the seven Churches]. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.’ So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying...‘What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?’ Then he answered me and said, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ And I said, ‘No, my lord.’ So he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.’” Zech 4:2-4 & 12-14.

The identity of the Two Witnesses is discerned when we examine this parallel reading from Revelation 11.

“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth...These [the two witnesses] have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy [this was done by Elijah]; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire [a reference to Moses creating the plagues of Egypt].” Rev 11:3-4 & 6.

The Two Witnesses are identified as Elijah, representing the voice of prophecy, and Moses, who gave the commandments of God to man, representing the presentation of the word, or spiritual teaching. Together they represent the ministry of prophetic teaching, in which prophecy is unveiled when symbology is explained and spiritual truth revealed. Unfortunately, we are told that towards the end of the age when the Church is attacked by Antichrist, that the ministry of the Two Witnesses will be ‘killed,’ and will remain dormant in the Church.

“When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in

the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” Rev 11:7-8.

Their dead bodies, or ministry, lie dormant in the spiritless Church, which is now likened to Sodom and Egypt. Sodom represents ungodliness, particularly in the acceptance of homosexuality, and Egypt, symbolising the world, or worldliness. It was predicted that the ministry of the Two Witnesses would be killed, accounting for its absence in the end-time Church.

ANTICHRIST’S ATTACK ON THE BIBLE AND DISPENSERS OF TRUTH

Dispensers of Spiritual Truth Become Polluted by Error

In Revelation 8, when the third trumpet sounded, a great star fell on the rivers and springs of water (symbols of the sources of spiritual truth), symbolically representing dispensers of truth, like bible colleges, teaching ministries, seminaries, and theological universities. Their presentation of truth becomes contaminated with the bitterness of deception.

“Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died [spiritually] from the water, because it was made bitter.” Rev 8:10-11.

In the early Church, men were enlightened by the Spirit as they read, studied, and meditated on the Scriptures, with some groomed by the Lord to be prophets and teachers. As the Church fell under the influence of the world, it became expedient and seemingly more productive to create bible ‘schools’ with set curricula, predetermined academically rather than spiritually. Now at this present age, it seems that in order to appear progressive, some colleges have encouraged students to expand their thinking by questioning generally accepted biblical facts. Personally, I have encountered bible college students who became unsettled when they were asked to query beliefs like the existence of Satan and Jesus being the Redeemer in Isaiah 53, who’s teachers suggested could have been an Eastern potentate. Another example is the teaching (expressed by an Archbishop) that we do not have to believe in the resurrection of Christ to be saved. This is in spite of Paul saying, **“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”** 1 Cor 15:17. This questioning the authenticity of the bible is a legacy from the Higher Criticism of the Bible, a method of interpreting the bible academically, which came into vogue in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Higher Criticism of the Bible

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were periods of spiritual growth in consecration and holiness, but they were also a time of academic study and intellectual enlightenment that was highly commended. It is not surprising that the bible began to be studied academically rather than spiritually to gauge its authenticity. This method of biblical

interpretation became known as the Higher Criticism of the Bible, where all Scriptures were academically examined to test their literary style and historical accuracy. Doubts were expressed about long accepted biblical truths like the divinity of Christ, His conception in Mary by the Holy Spirit, His death and resurrection, the authorship of texts, and historical accuracy of biblical events.

These studies were dubious because authors relied on their natural intellect and academic learning rather than spiritual discernment. Paul wrote, **“These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** 1 Cor 2:13-14.

Translation of the Old Testament

The Jews were guardians of the Scriptural word passed on to them by their prophets and scribes. This literature was not conceived by the natural mind, but directly received from God Himself by His Spirit. To compile the Old Testament, the Jews examined each book to validate its spiritual validity, and when this was established, the book was added to the sacred canon. When this process was completed, the collection we now call the Old Testament was declared canonically sealed or pronounced complete. The Old Testament compiled by the Jews contained all of the books we have in the Old Testament as we know it today. They were the same Scriptures used by Christ and the early Christians. Although it was spiritually unethical, the Catholic Church added a further fourteen non-canonical books called the Apocrypha to their Catholic bible.

Translation of the New Testament

There are three main sources of these translations.

The Received Text was formulated by the comparison of a multiple number of manuscripts. It was the source of the King James Version of the New Testament, considered by many to be the most accurate bible translation.

The Critical Greek Text was derived by an academic analysis of a smaller number of older manuscripts, based on the premise that earliest manuscripts must be more accurate, but the older manuscripts contained many alterations and corrections. Most modern translations are derived from the Critical Greek Text.

Modern Language Bibles modify translations by simplifying biblical language to make it easier to read and understand by children or younger Christians. In essence, modern language versions are not a true translation of manuscripts, but a paraphrased personal interpretation of the bible.

Modern translations derived from the Critical Greek Text are generally considered by serious biblical scholars as being more unreliable, as the older manuscripts from which they were derived contained many added notes and alterations. In some texts they smooth over the more challenging aspects of commitment. We see an example when comparing the Critical Greek translation of Romans 8:1 with the King James Version.

The King James Version: **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”** KJV

From a Critical Greek Translation: **“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** NASU (and most modern translations).

Since we are all in Christ Jesus, leaving out the vital conditions for our justification leads many to believe that they have no condemnation in whatever state they are in, whether walking in the flesh or the Spirit.

Single Person Interpretations: Some modern translations are compiled by a single person, who uses study notes to present their own interpretation of the Scriptures. Because they present a single viewpoint, where there is no corrective balance presented by other views, the door is opened for Antichrist to insert error. We have an example in the Darby, Scofield, and Ryrie bibles, which present a bias toward Premillennialism. The Book of Acts shows us the necessity of having collective viewpoints. The first apostles were called the ‘apostles of the witness,’ because they were firsthand witnesses to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. When Judas departed from them, Peter said, **“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”** Acts 1:21-22.

When the gospels were compiled, there were differences in the details, but the central core of truth was consistent. To gain a solid account of the gospel story, we need to read all four gospels, discard differences, and retain the core truth.

Where does all of the above leave us as pursuers of truth? The bottom line is this, that there is no translation that is completely accurate. The original word delivered to prophets was perfect. **“The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.”** Ps 12:6. Errors crept in when they were entrusted into the human hands of prophets, scribes, and translators. Knowing this, we should be continually open to the Spirit’s guidance, and when He puts uncertainty in our spirits, we should be prepared to read and test other translations. This applies to our reading of bible commentaries and all Christian literature.

ANTICHRIST’S USE OF DECEIVING COUNTERFIETS

When early Christians suffered violent persecution and were dispersed with their gospel truth to other countries, Satan’s opposition took on a more subtle and effective way of combatting spiritual truth. Antichrist and the False Prophet have implanted the tares of false

christ, prophets, and teachers in our midst, spreading deceiving doctrines so like the truth that it is difficult to tell the difference.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

Jesus presented the parable of the wheat and the tares to warn us of the existence of false teachers, prophets, and ministries in our midst. Tares that commonly infested wheat fields looked so much like the wheat that it was only at the latter stage of its growing cycle that the black grains of the tares became apparent.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept [when there was no vigilance], his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” Matt 13:24-30.

When asked by His disciples, Jesus explained the parable. **“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Matt 13:37-43.**

Now at the close of the age, we are confronted with error presented by false teachers and prophets, alongside a body of truth presented by Christ’s true teachers and prophets. An example is the ministry of some widely acclaimed TV personalities. Although their ministry may be flawed, they have brought many thousands into the knowledge of Christ. If our efforts are directed towards exposing the faults of the person, and his ministry is shut down, his followers may become disillusioned and unteachable, making it almost impossible for genuine ministers to restore them. Our task is not to try to remove the tares, but to present spiritual truth, and allow the truth to do its work.

Why is spiritual deception hard to discern? False teachings usually have a kernel of truth that has been distorted or extended beyond its original meaning, and it may be included within sound teaching, making it difficult to detect the deception.

The Church has been flooded with incorrect interpretations of the Scriptures, leading to false doctrines, sects, and lying signs and wonders that have enough semblance to the real truth to deceive many.

False Signs and Wonders

The Charismatic renewal movements and the revivals they have initiated have had a wonderful effect in breathing much needed new life from the Spirit into the Church. All ministries that are initiated and controlled by the Lord are authentic, but false ministries occur when people endeavour to initiate spiritual ministries by the flesh. Jesus emphatically warned us that works of the flesh are acts of lawlessness, acts in which He has had no part.

“Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'” Matt 7:22-23.

It has been fairly common for people in Charismatic meetings to call down the fire of the Spirit to experience His miraculous power. If the falling of the Spirit is not initiated by Jesus, it opens the door to the Holy Spirit being counterfeited by spirits of Antichrist, who produces lying signs and wonders. Antichrist has taken advantage of a misbelief that if something is miraculous it must be of God, which promotes an unhealthy fleshly yearning for miraculous spiritual power. An unfortunate result is that many people call down the Holy Spirit with a willingness to accept and embrace into themselves whatever happens next. We are told by Paul to **“test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”** Thess 5:21-22.

Where we are confronted with bizarre happenings that seem out of order, we should ask ourselves, ‘Did this happen in the Scriptures?’ ‘Does it glorify Jesus Christ?’ Or ‘Does this truly represent Christ in our midst?’ Unfortunately, when there is no lasting beneficial fruit, people may become disillusioned, and it is then difficult for them to be restored to seeing the truth.

We Have an Anointing to Discern Truth from Error

In the next two readings, we are warned of the intrusion of false teachings from those who have subjected themselves to the power of Antichrist, and have embraced false teachings.

“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us...But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things [able to discern the truth].” 1 John 2:18-20.

In this reading, John assures the brethren in Christ that they have an anointing from the Holy Spirit that enables them to discern truth from error. However, this anointing only operates when we look to the Holy Spirit for guidance instead of our intellects. In this next reading from Paul, he tells us that this anointing operates in those who have a love of the truth.

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” 2 Thess 2:9-10.

CHAPTER 9

FALSE DOCTRINES... Premillennialism

False doctrines arise from the mind of man when Scriptures are distorted and made inconsistent with the whole body of Scripture. A particular area of difficulty is the discernment of what is to be viewed as literal or figurative. The doctrine of Premillennialism is used as an example.

THE NATURE OF FALSE DOCTRINES

A doctrine is a statement of a body of beliefs supporting a religion or philosophy. In the context of this study, we will determine a false doctrine to be one that proposes to be a valid Christian doctrine, but is at variance with the whole of Christian doctrine that has evolved from the Scriptures and has been accepted by the universal Church. We will see how Antichrist has attempted to falsify true doctrines by over emphasising truths and extending them beyond their intended meaning, or adding false look-a-like elements that may lead people astray.

False ministries and doctrines usually have such a semblance of validity that Jesus warned **“for false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”** Mark 13:22. Here are some suggested tests that we may consider.

- Does the doctrine come from God or from man? Both Jesus and Paul declared that their teaching was given to them by God. Jesus said, **“My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”** John 7:16. Paul told the Galatians, **“But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”** Gal 1:11-14. All false doctrines originate from the intellect of man rather than the Spirit of God.
- Sound doctrine stems from the Scriptures, and is consistent with the whole body of Scripture. False doctrines may be based on some unrelated Scripture that is not relevant to the subject under discussion, or may even come from other sources.
- Sound doctrines recognise the deity of Jesus and glorify His name. The apostle Paul warned about false teachers presenting another Christ, a different Spirit, and other means of salvation. **“For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it!”** 2 Cor 11:4.
- Sound doctrine produces spiritual life and growth. False doctrines produce stagnation and spiritual death.
- Throughout the Scriptures we are warned that in the last days there will be a flood of deception, generated by false prophets, teachers, and ministers that claim to have

revelation from God, but in fact are deceived by the spirit of Antichrist. Paul warned us to “**test all things; hold fast what is good.**” 1 Thess 5:21-22.

- In the one ministry there may be overall truth, but distortion in one area. We should not discard a whole ministry, but learn to retain truth and reject error. The following are some examples of false doctrines in ministries:

The prosperity teaching to give and receive super abundance in return.

The ‘name it and claim it’ faith teaching without reference to the will of God.

The ‘call down the fire’ Toronto mantra.

The distortion of our Christian liberty.

The New Age ‘you are gods’ and have the capacity within yourself to accomplish all things.

DISCERNING TEXT AS LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE

An area that has caused confusion and deception in the discernment of what is to be viewed as literal or figurative. Much of prophecy in the Old Testament is set out in poetic format and couched in figurative language, with symbols that have to be interpreted to unfold the true spiritual meaning. As well, because Israel is a type of the Church, many prophecies have a parallel significance, applying to Israel at the time of the prophecy, but are also relevant to what is to happen to the Church, particularly at the close of the age. All of this points to the necessity of relying on the Holy Spirit rather than the intellect to discern the spiritual truth. Perhaps the most widely accepted false doctrine based on its literal interpretation is that of Premillennialism, and so we will study it in some detail.

PREMILLENNIALISM

An undeveloped form of Premillennialism called **Chiliasm** was accepted by some members of the early Church who believed that Christ would return to the earth and set up a thousand-year reign of utopian bliss before the final judgement and rapture. Chiliasm fell out of favour when Augustine condemned it for the accent on the fleshly pleasures of the millennium, and it was dormant for centuries, apart from a few brief periods of persecution, when it held out the prospect of not having to be involved in tribulation.

The name ‘Premillennialism’ was introduced when a revised form of Chiliasm evolved in the nineteenth century when it developed into two forms - Historical or Classical Premillennialism and Dispensational Premillennialism. At the outset, I must say that the following descriptions of Premillennialism will not satisfy everyone. Because there are so many variants, it is difficult to set forth a consistent viewpoint.

Historical or Classical Premillennialism

Classical Premillennialism evolved in the mid-nineteenth century from the writings of British and American scholars, in the same period when Antichrist directed his attack on the bible through advocates of the Higher Criticism of the Bible.

The following description contains the main features of the doctrine of Classical Premillennialism.

Christ will return and rapture the saints before or during a literal seven-year period of tribulation. After the tribulation, Christ will return to the earth with His raptured saints, and establish a literal one-thousand-year reign of utopian blessedness.

The temple, the celebratory feasts, and animal sacrifices will be restored to reinstate their original or allegorical significance. At the end of the thousand-year reign, Satan will be released from the bottomless pit and there will be a brief period of warfare, culminating in a final battle in which the saints will be surrounded by the army of Antichrist in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Fire from God will come down from heaven and consume the army of Antichrist.

The satanic trio will be captured and cast into the lake of fire. Christ and His saints will then be raptured again to a new earth and heavens.

REVELATION 20 - A BIBLICAL BASIS USED FOR PREMILLENNIALISM

The First Six Verses of Revelation 20

The main basis for the doctrine of Classical Premillennialism relies on a literal interpretation of the first six verses of Revelation 20, which we will now study in detail to reveal their true meaning.

Verses 1-3

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.”

We saw in chapter 6 that Satan was not completely bound but restricted in his capacity to deceive the nations or all unbelievers. Revelation is prophetic and figurative in nature, and the thousand-year period is the Church age. It is a symbolic time, representing the perfectly complete time needed for God to evangelise the whole world. The thousand-year period will end when the **“gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”** Matt 24:14.

Verses 4-6

“But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had

been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Rev 20:4-6.

Premillennialism relies heavily on the statement in verse 6, **“And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years,”** but who is this referring to? Premillennialists argue that it is all believers, but the statement relates their identity back to **“those who had been beheaded...who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.”** Clearly this is not the whole Church, but those who had given up their soulish self-lives to the death, thereby enabling Christ to reign with them in their ministries without the interference of their flesh.

John’s attention was not drawn to the bodies of those who had been beheaded, but to their souls. It was not their bodies that were put to death, because John goes on to say of them, **“and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”** It was their soulish headship over their lives that was ‘beheaded,’ so that it could be replaced by the reign of Christ through their spirits.

The soul, which is primarily governed by our intellects and emotions, is the seat of our carnal self-life, and promotes the desire for self-recognition and self-importance, and satisfying the lusts of the body. The soul is the principal part of man that Satan uses to tempt him, and draw him into bondage to his will.

On the other hand, our spirit is the organ through which God reveals Himself, and guides us according to His will. In the soul being ‘beheaded,’ its capacity to dominate man’s self-life is put to death, so that Christ may reign in us through our spirits, and we are able to live in union with Him. It is important to know that the soul itself is not completely put to death, but only its headship or capacity to dominate man’s mind and emotions. For instance, if the soul, the organ through which we express our personalities and feelings was put to death, how could we express worship, praise, and joy to the Lord? The removal of the headship of the soul restores it to its right relationship with our spirit, by making the emotions, the intellect, and bodily desire subservient to the spirit, so that there is the harmony that God intended throughout our being.

The fact that the beheaded ones had not been overcome by the spirit of Antichrist, his mark, his name, or the number of his name, and they had not worshipped his image, indicates that they had embarked on the ‘path of the cross,’ or holiness, and had willingly submitted themselves to God’s refining hand.

“And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

In this verse, we are looking at a procession of saints throughout the Church age who had given up their soulful self-lives unto the death, so that Christ could have a complete reign in them, **“and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”**

“But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Rev 20:4-6.

In his vision, John saw two groups - the beheaded ones and the rest of the dead. Here, both groups are Christians, but only the ‘beheaded ones’ are fully empowered to reign with Christ in opposing and destroying the working of Antichrist. The rest of the dead have their place in the work of the Church and will take part in the resurrection of the saved.

Arguments Against Premillennialism

- The doctrine of Premillennialism relies heavily on this one statement: **“they reigned with Christ for a thousand years,”** with no other similar biblical statement to support it. Such a major doctrine that presents Christ reigning on earth for a thousand years should warrant some other statement by the Lord, the writers of the gospels, or the apostles, but there is none.
- **Premillennialist’s expectation** of a world kingdom is the same mistake made by the Jews when Jesus was here on earth, and Jesus refuted it by saying, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”**
- The recognition of Israel in 1948 was the outcome of a political manoeuvre to create a Zionist state for political and military purposes. Jesus’ kingdom is not from a nation armed with military hardware.
- The doctrine of Premillennialism presents at least two raptures, but the bible presents only one rapture of saints at the close of the age, as in this account by Paul. **“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”** 1 Thess 4:16-18.
- Premillennialists believe that Christians do not have to suffer the tribulation, but in His description of signs accompanying the end times, Jesus stated that the Church would suffer tribulation and persecution. Tribulation is a necessary element needed to refine the Church, and turn hearts back to God in repentance.
- It is difficult to find consistency in descriptions of Premillennialism, and a Christian doctrine should not promote confusion, but peace and harmony.

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

Dispensational Premillennialism was initiated towards the end of the nineteenth century by John Nelson Darby, a minister in the Plymouth Brethren Church. When Darby contemplated Old Testament promises of the restoration of the nation of Israel, he felt a tension between his own heavenly position in Christ, and the prophetic pictures of the restored kingdom of Israel. He reasoned that the biblical prophecies to Israel of a future kingdom should be regarded as the fulfillment of promises of their long-awaited physical kingdom. He then concluded that there are two separate dispensations - a heavenly one for the Church and an earthly one for Israel. Darby wrote, "The Church is in relationship with the Fathers [the apostles], and the Jews with Jehovah...The Jewish nation is never to enter the Church." (From "The Hopes of the Church of God")

Dispensationalists have divided God's dealings with mankind into several eras of time, or dispensations, and maintain that in each one God deals with the human race on the basis of one specific principle. They are:

- (i) Edenic - the age of innocence.
- (ii) Conscience - after the Fall man was held accountable.
- (iii) Human government - after the flood man was to govern the world.
- (iv) Promise - under the Abrahamic covenant.
- (v) The law and sacrifices.
- (vi) Grace - Christ and the New Covenant.
- (vii) The Kingdom - establishment of the kingdom.

It is their viewpoint of what constitutes "the kingdom" that sets the foundation of Dispensationalism.

The kingdom according to Dispensationalists is the restored kingdom of Israel, the literal fulfilling of the Old Testament prophecies of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, in which all the nations of the world will be subjected to Israel.

In the Dispensational Premillennialist model, the Church will be raptured first and reign with Christ in heaven during the thousand years. The expected 'Messiah' of the Jews will appear, and establish a millennial kingdom reign of peace and prosperity with the Jews on a restored earth.

During this period there will be marriage and bearing of children, age expectancy will increase to about the life of a tree, and animals will eat vegetation and live in harmony. The temple will be restored, and animal sacrifices and feasts will be reinstated. At the end of the thousand years the Jews will be judged according to their obedience to the Ten Commandments and the statutes of the Torah. After the thousand-year period, those who are to be saved will be raptured to a new earth and heavens with their Messiah, living throughout eternity according to

Old Testament rites and practices. It is conceded that towards the end of the thousand years some Jews will be converted to Christianity.

Darby documented his findings with extensive notes and bible references, and when his beliefs were accepted by Cyrus Scofield, and included in his reference bible in 1909, Premillennialism was accepted in some Protestant mainstream Churches. With the support of major publishing houses, the Scofield and Ryrie study bibles became models for future study bibles, entrenching Premillennialism among bible-believing churches - particularly in America.

What Does the Bible Say About the Jews Being Saved?

Zachariah prophesied that at the end of the age God will pour out on the Jews a Spirit of grace and supplication that will turn hearts to Him in repentance. They will recognise that they have crucified their promised Messiah, and hearts will be turned to mourning and repentance, paving the way for their salvation.

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves...all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.” Zech 12:10-14:1.

Paul likened unbelieving Israel to a branch broken off from an olive tree (the olive tree being a recognised symbol for national Israel). But he says, because they are of the stock of the original olive tree, the branch can more easily be grafted in again.

“And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree [Israel], how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? “...that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’” Rom 11:23-26.

Paul concluded that at the end of the age when the fullness of the Gentiles had come to salvation, the Deliverer, or the Spirit of Jesus Christ, will present the gospel truth, and all Jews who believe will be saved. The condition for their salvation is **“if they do not continue in unbelief.”** If they respond to the gospel message of the Deliverer coming out of Zion, they will be saved.

Amillennialism

Amillennials believe that there is no literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The one thousand years in Revelation 20 is symbolic, in harmony with the allegorical nature of the

rest of Revelation. The number one thousand represents the perfectly complete time for the whole world to be evangelised, and everyone who has the will to be saved will receive salvation. The one thousand years is the Church age when Christ is reigning with His saints in evangelising the whole world. The “**...gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.**” Matt 24:14.

The ‘beheaded ones’, or those who have laid their self-lives on the cross, will reign with Christ through the Church age in carrying on His commission, “**To preach good tidings to the poor... heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...**” Isa 61:1-2.

At the end of the age there is only one rapture, in which the Lord will come in the clouds and draw those who have been saved to Himself and transport them to live forever with Him on the new earth, which will be their heaven. The Amillennial doctrine is biblical and without confusion, passing the test of time for two thousand years.

CHAPTER 10

FALSE RELIGIONS... Islam

Christianity is the only religion that guarantees eternal salvation to its believers, and in this study the term ‘false’ refers to any religion that does not meet this basic requirement. To study the differences, the religion of Islam is used as a comparison to Christianity.

What Defines a Religion?

Webster’s Dictionary defines a religion as, “The belief in and worship of a supernatural controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.”

In 2014, it was estimated that there were over four thousand religions in the world. Virtually all of them would meet the conditions of the definition of a religion, and so you could not declare any one of them to be a false religion. For the purpose of this study, we will apply the word ‘false’ to any religion that is in disagreement with basic tenets of true Christian doctrine.

Using Christianity as our standard for legitimacy, we will discuss other religions on the basis of their capacity to meet the following requirements.

Is the God of this religion a spiritual being who is the eternal Creator of the universe and the source of all life and provision?

Does the religion originate from man or God?

Does the religion save a believer’s soul and spirit to eternal life after death?

Is salvation by works or belief and faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONLY RELIGION THAT ASSURES ETERNAL SALVATION

The following are some of the reasons why Christians believe that Christianity is the only religion that guarantees an eternal existence in heaven after death.

- Christianity is the only religion based on God’s grace and the gift of faith that enables one to believe, and guarantees eternal salvation to all those who state their belief in Jesus Christ. **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** Acts 4:12.
- Christianity is the only religion that brings man into acceptance and fellowship with God as a father, who cares for us and establishes us in a right relationship with Jesus Christ, as our way and our truth and our life.

- God the Son was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, as prophesied by Isaiah centuries beforehand. **“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”** Isa 7:14. Jesus dwelt among us as a man, revealing God’s nature and will to us. None of the gods of other religions became man to reveal their nature and will.
- It is the only religion where the divine Saviour of mankind dwells in us by His Spirit, and imparts His life to us to meet our individual needs.
- Christ’s miraculous works and resurrection proved His divinity. When John the Baptist’s disciples asked Jesus to confirm His divinity, He said, **“The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”** Matt 11:5-6. Could any of the gods of other religions make such a claim? Christ’s resurrection is an historical fact, witnessed by over five hundred people, and recorded by Jewish and non-Jewish historians. Founders of other religions have died, and are buried in tombs on the earth.
- Christianity is the only religion that grants man an atoning sacrifice to pay the penalty for his sins. In short, salvation in Christianity is received by stating one’s belief that Jesus is the Son of God, who bore the punishment for our sins in His body on the cross, so that we are accepted as righteous by God, and eternally saved. It is the only religion that is based on belief and faith rather than on works. Other religions are based on good works or growth in spiritual enlightenment in this life, but with no real guarantee for eternal life after death.

ANTICHRIST HAS CREATED DIVISIONS IN THE TRUE CHURCH

The most obvious flaw introduced by Antichrist into the true Church to undermine Christianity is denominationalism. There were no such divisions in the early Church, where churches were named after their locations, and so we read of the Church at Corinth, and the Church at Jerusalem, and so forth. Paul warned the Corinthian Church against such divisions.

“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” 1 Cor 1:11-13. Even saying ‘I am of Christ’ in a divisive manner is wrong. In the present-day Church people are saying ‘I am a Baptist,’ or ‘I am a Presbyterian,’ or ‘I go to the New Life Church,’ etc.

The model of the true Church founded by Christ and the apostles was a pattern for future churches. When the Church became divided into denominations, and entities expressed and emphasised additional or alternative points of view, Antichrist took the opportunity to introduce doctrinal flaws, practices, and even sects.

Now at the end of the age we are confronted with mixture, in which some denominations are flawed in some areas, but otherwise have a sound doctrinal basis. Each denomination may present a common interpretation of core Christian beliefs, but individual biases in other areas, and so the doctrinal uniformity of the universal church is compromised.

Apart from these doctrinal variations, the core truth of Christianity is maintained, and so denominational churches should not be declared to be false churches.

Examples of Introduced Flaws that Oppose Doctrinal Integrity

John Nelson Darby was among the founders of the Plymouth Brethren, but the Plymouth Brethren became flawed when Darby went on to found The Exclusive Brethren, in which the following teaching on holiness made separation literal rather than spiritual. **“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”** 2 Cor 6:17. The Exclusive Brethren religion he founded called for its devotees to isolate themselves from other people and things of the world, taking away their capacity to present the love and fellowship of Christ to others.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is doctrinally sound in most areas, but adopts a literal interpretation of the Old Testament Sabbath, instead of its spiritual meaning of entering into God’s rest.

Some Examples of False Religions and Sects Founded by Individuals

Islam: founded by Muhammad. He believed that the Archangel Gabriel, who appeared to him in a cave, gave him revelations that became the basis of the Koran, the holy book of Islam.

Jehovah’s Witnesses: were founded by the teachings of Restorationist minister Charles Taze Russel, who led a branch of the Bible Student Movement that originated in the United States of America. After his death it was further developed by Joseph Rutherford, who was elected president.

Mormonism or the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints’: was founded by Joseph Smith who had visions of the angel Moroni, who guided him to hidden plates on which his teachings were recorded. The angel instructed him to translate the teachings into English, which eventually developed into The Book of Mormon.

Scientology: was founded by L. Ron Hubbard, who began by presenting ‘a science of the mind,’ which was adapted to the Church of Scientology in 1954.

With examination, it can be seen that these self-inspired religions have rejected basic Christian doctrines in matters like not accepting the Holy Spirit, the deity of Jesus, by making changes to the bible, and presenting false prophecies.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The reason for choosing this comparison is that Christianity and Islam have approximately the same number of believers in the world, and both Muslims and Christians can lay claim to be descendants of Abraham, who was the father of Isaac and Ishmael. Because of

God's love for Abraham, He promised that Ishmael would be the father of a great nation, one could assume that it was God's will for that nation to be united with Isaac's spiritual descendants in Jesus Christ. But now, by Antichrist's interference, we have two world-wide religions with vastly different beliefs.

God's Promise Was to Be Fulfilled Through Isaac

Isaac was the rightful heir because God promised Abraham that he would father a son, conceived by his wife Sarah, through whom all of the families of the world would be blessed. Ishmael was conceived after the flesh because Sarah did not wait on God to fulfill His promise to Abraham, and so presented Hagar, her Egyptian maid servant, to him to bring forth the promised heir. The fact that Isaac was miraculously conceived when Sarah was ninety and Abraham one hundred years old verified Isaac's birth was of God. However, the most pertinent proof of Isaac's legitimacy was that his 'sacrifice' paved the way for God to justly provide His Son Jesus as an atoning sacrifice to pay the debt for the sins of mankind.

A question often asked is, 'How could God justly provide Jesus as an atoning sacrifice with man having done nothing to balance the scales of justice?' But God did provide a way through Abraham and Isaac. From a Jewish point of view Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation. From a Christian point of view Abraham is the spiritual father of Christianity because Jesus Christ was of his lineage.

When Isaac was a lad, Abraham was told by God to take Isaac to a place of His appointing and offer him as a sacrifice to God. This appointed place happened to be Mount Moriah, the site of Solomon's temple, which was to be built centuries later. Abraham acted in obedience, and was about to slay Isaac when God intervened, saying that He would provide the sacrifice.

“And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me’... Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ‘In your seed [Jesus Christ] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”
Gen 22:12-18.

In other words, what God was saying is, 'Because you, as the father of future Christendom, was prepared to obey Me, and offer your son as a sacrifice to Me, I can now, in accordance with justice, offer My Son as a sacrifice to procure the salvation of all those of mankind who will believe in Him.'

Some Differences Between Islam and Christianity

- The most crucial question we may ask is, “do Christians and Muslims worship the same God”? The answer is no, for the following reasons. Christians believe that Jesus is the

Son of God and part of the Holy Trinity. Muslims reject the Holy Trinity and believe that Jesus was a prophet, and that anyone who worships Jesus is destined for hell. Muslims do not accept the fatherhood of God, believing Him to be more of a remote figurehead than a father who cares for us and dwells within us.

- Muhammad was a man who died and was buried in a tomb in Medina. Jesus was raised from the dead and enthroned with God the Father. That Jesus Christ was the divine Son of God was attested to by His resurrection, and by His many miraculous acts.
- Muhammad was a military commander, and the establishment of the Islamic faith was aided by force of arms. By comparison, the spread of Christianity is achieved by evangelism.
- In Christianity, men and women are one in spiritual status, women sharing in the ministry of the body. **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”** Gal 3:28. In Islam, the role of women is often one of repression and subjection.
- Toward the end of his life, Muhammad was asked if he was going to heaven. All that he could say was, ‘I am in Allah’s hands.’ Christians can say with certainty, ‘I am redeemed by the sacrificed body and shed blood of Jesus. I am righteous before God, and I am eternally saved.’
- Islam recognises the bible, but it is substituted by the Koran, which contains nearly a hundred verses that may be considered as encouraging violence. This has resulted in a number of radical extremists promoting terrorism, but this element does not reflect the true nature of most Muslims.

The Old Testament dispensation with its laws and prescribed punishments ended for Christians with the advent of the New Testament, which portrays the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and salvation through His sacrificial death on the cross. To find out Christianity’s attitude to opposition to its doctrine, and hatred towards themselves, we must give attention to what Jesus said.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven...” Matt 5:43-45.

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.” Luke 6:27-29.

By comparison, Islam’s attitude to those who oppose its doctrine is ongoing. The Koran has much to say about how to deal with a Kafir - translated in English as an unbeliever.

What Should our Christian Attitude be Toward Muslims?

Christians should remember that we have a common ancestor in Abraham, and that God blessed Ishmael, saying that He would make from him a great nation.

“Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, ‘What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad [Ishmael] where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.’” Gen 21:17-18.

But that is not the core issue. As true Christians, we should love Muslims, and any criticism of their faith should come from a sincere desire for them to know the truth, so that they might receive Christ’s salvation. We should remember that it is not by our worthiness that we were accepted by God, but by His grace. It is not God’s will for Muslims to be lost, but that they are brought into Christianity, so that we become one in Christ.

HOLD FAST TO THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

The gospel message is simple. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bore the punishment for our sins in His body on the cross, so that everyone who believes that His sacrifice applies to themselves personally, receives forgiveness of his sins and is eternally saved. It is so simple that every person, regardless of his personal status, may believe and receive salvation. It is so simple that carnal man may attempt to add conditions, like the Galatians who insisted that man had also to be circumcised. Paul was concerned that some would endeavour to add to the simplicity of the gospel message.

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Cor 11:3.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.” 1 Cor 15:1-2.

Paul urged us to hold fast to the simplicity of the gospel message presented to us and to remain steadfast in belief in our salvation through Jesus Christ, not by works, but by the grace of God.

CHAPTER 11

WORLD OPINION VERSES GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

The world is under the power of Satan, and we as Christians must choose whether to obey world opinion or the commandments of God. The problem is that in matters like women's equal rights, homosexuality, marriage equality, and Christian leadership determined by democratic vote, world opinion seems fair and reasonable and easy to accept.

WE MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD

It is not the purpose of this chapter to convert the world to Christian beliefs and ethics, but to encourage Christians to maintain obedience to biblical directives, rather than entertain and walk in the alternative views and ways of the world.

The world and Christianity are incompatible, one being under the control of God, and the other of Satan, as stated here by the apostle John.

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."
1 John 5:19.

John tells us that we cannot have our foot in two camps. We must make a choice to reject the standards of the world and obey those of God. He told us, **"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."** 1 John 2:15-17.

The apostle Paul rejected the enticements of the world as an act of his will. He told the Galatians, **"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."** Gal 6:14-15.

What Paul is saying is that by his union with Christ in His death, he is dead to the enticements of the world so that he might be one with Christ. All Christians must choose where their allegiance lies, to God by accepting His will as it is set forth in the bible or to be governed by worldly opinion. John went so far as to say, **"If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."** 1 John 2:16.

The problem facing us as Christians is when worldly precepts are so similar in nature to Christian principles, Antichrist has been able to use these similarities to persuade Christians to accept what seem to be reasonable worldly alternatives. We have given the example of the Church adopting the manner of the world in electing leaders democratically. This seems so fair and logical that many Churches elect elders and deacons in this manner, but it opposes the

Lord's headship in training His ministers by the Spirit and setting them in His body as He chooses.

EMBRACING WORLD OPINION IS A FORM OF IDOLATRY

Idolatry is the worship of the created rather than God the Creator. The Church is now plagued with idolatry, not so much by the worship of physical objects, but of honouring the precepts of the created world, making them more important than the commandments of God. We see this in the Church's changing attitude to homosexuality.

Homosexuality

God's view of homosexuality is consistently presented throughout the bible, most clearly shown in Paul's letter to the Romans.

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man...Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”
Rom 1:22-27.

Why did God have to 'give them up'? Because He is a God of justice and righteousness, when man chooses to obey world opinion rather than His commandments, He is obliged to give Satan, the ruler of this world, his right to implant homosexual demon spirits in those who have obeyed him rather than God.

By and large, world opinion expresses the view that sexual orientation is a quirk of nature that should be accepted and embraced as part of their life. Satan has taken advantage of this situation by putting doubtful thoughts into young minds concerning their sexuality. Some young people are now encouraged by 'counsellors' to examine their sexual orientation and accept the possibility of being homosexual. When a decision is made to accept an alternative sexuality, Satan can implant demon spirits like a homosexual spirit, or spirits of perversion, sodomy, or masculine or feminine spirits, which lead people to adopt a homosexual lifestyle.

Why has the tide of homosexuality increased so much in these last generations? The gay rights movement is very well organised and uses street processions, gay carnivals, and speeches from prominent personalities to press its case, inciting many to accept their views.

Another reason for the growth of the gay and lesbian movement is the influence of the media. Identification of sexual identity evolves when Satan inserts questions and doubts into young minds, creating an awareness of personal sexual orientation. Researchers have found that

those seeking to resolve their identity are influenced by media role models and films and programs featuring gay people.

Unfortunately, people who actively support the gay movement run the risk of being invested with a homosexual spirit that may be passed on to future children. Approving of homosexuality whilst knowing what the bible presents may open the door to receiving God's just judgement. "...who, **knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.**" Rom 1:32.

Loving the Sinner, But Not the Sin

To love one another is said to be one of the most important commandments in the bible, but in the case of sins like homosexuality, we are told to love the sinner but hate the sin. Of course, we should love homosexual people, but love also demands that we expose the sin of homosexuality so that people might be set free. Christians are put under much pressure when they are branded by the world as homophobic, which the world translates as 'hatred of' rather than 'a fear of.' I believe that true Christians neither hate nor fear homosexuals.

ADOPTION OF THE WORLD'S CONCEPT OF EQUAL RIGHTS

Marriage Equality

The world's quest for equality is commendable, but in some cases, like marriage equality, there is a conflict with what God has ordained. God has ordained that marriage is between a man and a woman.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Gen 2:24-25.

Gay rights advocates declare that in being equal, gay persons have the right to enter into a marriage covenant. Of course, gay persons may have a civil right to enter into a legal commitment to each other, but they have no right to sanctify it by equating it with the marriage covenant, which was ordained by God for the procreation of God-fearing children.

Religious Equality

By his spirit, Antichrist has convinced many in the world that all religions have the same God, who people worship in the manner of their own choosing. However, Christians believe that God has given them Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice to pay the debt for their sins. The following biblical reading reveals that Christianity is the only religion that gives assurance of eternal salvation.

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name [than Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:11.

On face value religious equality seems fair and reasonable, and that every person has the right to practice his or her own religion, but Antichrist has used religious equality and

‘political correctness’ as weapons to curtail speaking of Christianity in schools or public debate, using the excuse that it may be offensive to followers of other religions in our country.

ANTICHRIST’S ATTACK ON CHRIST’S HEADSHIP

A primary aim of Antichrist is to negate Christ’s authority and headship by replacing it with that of man. For example, Christ, as “**head of all things to the Church,**” uses the Holy Spirit to train and set all ministerial leaders in His body. This is explained in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift... And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Eph 4:7-12.

The Church, which commenced following this pattern, was eventually persuaded by those under the power of Antichrist, that it would be more expedient to train ministers in religious seminaries to attain a required qualification, which became the prerequisite for ordination. This led to the separation of church members into the clergy and the laity, with the clergy in charge of ministries. Elders are now usually elected democratically for a set term of about three years. This is at odds with the early Church pattern, where elders were chosen by Christ from the body of believers, trained and formed by the Spirit. They were then recognised by existing elders, who anointed them and established them in their ministry. Genuine elders formed by Christ have a lifetime tenure as long as they hold fast to the commitment of their calling. Of course, this applies to all ministerial leaders formed and anointed by Christ. In training and setting ministries in the body, the modern church has usurped Christ’s headship and replaced it with that of man.

Church Organisation

The pattern of church organisational structure we inherited from the early Church was set forth in the bible as follows:

Churches were local and autonomous, differentially named after their location, and so we read about the Church at Jerusalem, the Church at Pergamos, the Church at Corinth, and so forth. Paul warned the Corinthians against dividing the Church according to the teaching of different persons.

“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” 1 Cor 1:11-13. Even to say “I am of Christ” in a manner that is divisive is condemned.

Although autonomous, early Churches were committed to the universal doctrine of the whole Church. Churches were governed by elders (plural), who were supported by deacons,

apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, who were anointed by the oil of the Spirit and the laying on of hands. This procedure guaranteed that they were Spirit filled and under the headship of Jesus Christ.

Ecumenism

The true Church is not divided into visible organisations, but is an invisible body of believers in Christ, who are already united by His Spirit.

Satan, through Antichrist and his spirit, has an overall plan to create a one-world religion that replaces the true Christian Church with a counterfeit religion under the control of men of the world. The concept of a one-world religion is based on the erroneous thought that all religions are essentially beneficial and uniting them by the acceptance of doctrinal variations would remove religious conflict and create world harmony.

Satan's real aim is to create a universal crossless religion based on morality, rather than the gospel truth of salvation through belief in Jesus Christ, and His sacrificial death on the cross to atone for our sins and make us righteous before God. The truth of the cross of Jesus Christ is fundamental to Christianity. It is impossible to incorporate other crossless beliefs into Christianity without destroying its vital message.

Already we are seeing conferences where leaders of all world religions express their acceptance of each other's views, and an openness to unite under the headship of one leader like the Pope. Already we see attempts to unite the Church under the umbrella of a visible body like The World Council of Churches, which is not under the headship of Christ and His Spirit, but controlled by its elected members, essentially selected and influenced by academic and religious qualifications. As members of the body of Christ we are to "contend for the faith" and hold fast to the doctrine of Christian salvation, and oppose Antichrist's efforts to overcome its power and influence by absorbing it into the religion of the world. Paul told Timothy to "**Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**" 2 Tim 1:13-14.

CHAPTER 12

ANTICHRIST'S ATTACK ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The bible presents a clear chain of authority: “the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God,” and, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord.” This is not a matter of male superiority, but of roles ordained by God for the well-being of the whole family. Because the family is so important in expressing the authenticity of Christianity, Antichrist has made every endeavour to reverse the roles.

THE AUTHORITY STRUCTURE ORDAINED BY GOD

Male Headship is Ordained by God

In the following verses, Paul outlines a clear chain of authority ordained by God that is advantageous for the well-being of the whole family.

“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” Cor 11:3. Added to this chain is the instruction, **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”** Eph 6:1-2.

Paul continues his discourse on headship, using the analogy of a head covering, which in this case is a symbol for headship.

“Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered, dishonours his head [who is the Lord].” 1 Cor 11:4.

If Christ were physically present in the meeting, the man would have to cover his head to show that he was submitted to Christ. Because Christ was not physically present, a man with his head covered would be indicating that someone else at the meeting was his head rather than Christ.

In this reading, Paul is referring to the submission of a wife to her husband in a public meeting.

“But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head [her husband], for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn [signifying public shame].” 1 Cor 11:5.

In the case of the woman whose husband was present in the meeting, she was obliged to have her head covered, indicating that she honoured her husband as her head. Paul concluded by saying that to not have a covering to honour her husband would be akin to having her head shorn, as was done on some occasions to shame prostitutes.

Paul continues this dialogue in verse 10, by saying **“For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.”** The words ‘a symbol of’

in italics were added by translators, and so the original reading is “**a woman should have authority on her head because of the angels.**” The authority on her head was a submissive attitude that honoured her husband. Note that a woman may pray or prophecy in a public meeting as long as her demeanour shows that she is submissive to her husband.

God’s angels are entrusted with the protection of God’s children. In the chain of authority mentioned earlier, if every link is obedient to the authority above it, God is able to nurture and protect the whole family with His angels. If one link is broken, say if the wife refuses to be submissive to her husband, then the protection of the angels is removed, and the family is more vulnerable to Satan’s attacks.

If the husband does not accept his headship in the Lord, or if he exercises autocratic headship without reference to Jesus his head, the chain is also broken. Paul warned, “**And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.**” Eph 6:2.

In setting forth this chain of authority, God is not saying that man is superior to woman but is presenting an ordinance that is best for the well-being of the whole family. Not only is the family protected, but God is able to provide guidance in decisions made by the husband. Paul makes it clear that this is not a matter of male superiority in his next statement.

“Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.” Paul makes this point even clearer when he says in Galatians, “**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**” Gal 3:28.

Man cannot live a completely fulfilled life without woman, nor a woman without man, for each have characteristics that complement and complete one another.

Because God’s ordained authority structure for the family results in harmony and God’s overall protection and blessing of the whole family, Antichrist has made every effort to dismantle it by replacing it with the pattern endorsed by world society. The spirit of the world encourages equal rights for women and children, in particular in implanting in women a desire to replace men in positions of authority. In an overall sense, this striving for equal rights impacts on the willingness of wives to submit to their husbands and see the vital importance of their role in nurturing the children.

The Nature of Male Oversight

The nature of a man’s headship is not one of domination, but that of being a servant, as shown in this reading from Ephesians.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. Eph 5:22-29.

Jesus said that those wishing to have headship over others should adopt the role of a servant, putting the needs of others before their own.

“The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.” Luke 22:25-26.

The importance of adopting God’s pattern for headship is that He blesses that which He ordains and is committed into His hands. After instructing wives to be submissive to their own husbands, Peter issues a warning to husbands about their responsibility.

“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” 1 Peter 3:1&7.

First Peter says that husband and wife should be one in their spiritual walk and growth, and secondly, he warns husbands that if they dishonour their headship of love and nurture, their prayers will be hindered. Headship is a responsibility that carries with it, accountability before the Lord.

Antichrist’s Attack on Discipline in the Family

The family is the cornerstone of Christian society, and the bible sets out God’s will for its authority structure and the discipline of the children. Ideally, the father is the head of the family, parents jointly discipline the children in the love of the Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and children respond by being submissive to their parents.

Discipline of children is in accordance to the code of conduct outlined in the bible, particularly the New Testament. Children are taught to honour their parents, senior citizens, administrators, and civic leaders, to refrain from sexual immorality, and to love and give aid to those in need. In short, it is to instil the principles Jesus taught and expanded on by the letters of the apostles.

It is not surprising that Satan, and those who have subjected themselves to his power, have mounted a continual assault on Christian family values and moral ethics. Their ultimate aim is to destabilise moral values and to bring to an end all existing religions, replacing them with a one-world Luciferian religion where all behaviour is controlled by Satan. The Christian

code of conduct is far more righteous than that of the modern world, where there is little restraint on sexual promiscuity or the lifelong covenant commitment in marriage, and where success in life is measured by the ability to gain prominence and amass possessions. The end result is shown in the prophecy by Paul, concerning the state of society in the last days.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”
2 Tim 3:1-5.

Physical Punishment

Christian discipline is usually based on verbal counselling and encouragement of good behaviour. However, there may be times when ‘the rod of correction’ may be more appropriate, as pointed out in these Scriptures.

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.” Prov 22:15.

“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.”
Prov 13:24-25.

New Testament:

“For they [fathers] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them...Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Heb 12:10-11.

Physical discipline wrongly applied by a person without self-control may cause physical and psychological harm, and so the world has intervened by banishing corporal punishment altogether. Of course, this seems reasonable, but there must be a balance. Verbal advice to a rebellious child throwing a tantrum usually has little effect, whereas a judicious use of physical discipline usually has a more immediate and beneficial effect. A general lack of discipline instils a disrespect for authority and has led to the state depicted in these end-time prophecies by Isaiah:

“I [God’s judgment of disobedient parents] will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.” Isa 3:4.

“As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.” Isa 3:12.

CHAPTER 13

WOMAN'S LIBERATION AND THE SPIRIT OF WITCHCRAFT

God said to Eve after she had obeyed Satan rather than Him, “Your desire shall be for your husband [for your husband’s authority], and he shall rule over you.” Since then, there has been a consistent quest by women to strive for headship, a quest that, if not constrained, leads to spiritual witchcraft.

EVE TOOK HEADSHIP AT THE FALL

Because of justice and righteousness, God gave Satan the right to test Adam and Eve, to see who they would obey. The test was simple - they could eat any of the fruit in the Garden of Eden, except that of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve was a typical woman, and Adam a typical man, and they represented mankind in general. Satan’s attack was directed at Eve’s innate desire to live above her present station.

“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Gen 3:4-6.

Because Eve was susceptible to Satan’s enticement to be like God, and because of her disobedience to God’s direct command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and Adam’s compliance in joining her in disobedience, mankind became subjected to control by Satan. In obeying Satan and disobeying God, Satan was given the legitimate right to intrude into the lives of mankind and to take control of whatever was surrendered to him.

When questioned by God, Eve said, **“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”** Then God said to the woman, **“Your desire shall be for your husband [for your husband’s authority], and he shall rule over you.”** Gen 3:13-16.

From that point onward throughout the history of the world, there has been an endless desire in women to rise above the authority of her husband, and women in general to seek positions of authority and headship in the world. This striving for power is the basis for spiritual witchcraft in women. The bible states, **“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft...”** 1 Sam 15:23). This is because women are rebelling against God’s ordinance of male headship.

Unfortunately, the woman’s desire for headship has been accelerated by the husband’s readiness to give up his headship through indifference or to satisfy the wishes of his wife.

A similar example to Eve’s rebellion, with world changing consequences, was when Sarah endeavoured to hasten God’s promise to provide them with an heir by giving Abraham

her Egyptian maidservant as her substitute. Ishmael, the resultant child, became the head of the Arabian nation, from which the religion of Islam was spawned.

THE JEZEBEL SPIRIT OR SPIRIT OF WITCHCRAFT

The Nature of Spiritual Witchcraft

The force behind all witchcraft exercised by satanic practitioners is the desire to control others. In Christian circles, the fundamental desire is the same - to claim positions of ministerial authority not appointed to women by the Lord. In a marriage relationship, it causes the wife to usurp the husband's authority as head of the family and control all of its activities.

Jezebel, the Personification of Witchcraft

In the bible, one woman illustrates the essence of witchcraft so perfectly that a spirit of witchcraft is sometimes called a Jezebel spirit. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, king of Israel, and we shall see in this reading that Jezebel brushed aside the king's headship and took matters into her own hands.

“And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.” But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!’

So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, ‘Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?’ He said to her, ‘Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.’ Then Jezebel his wife said to him, ‘You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.’

And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal [exercising Ahab's authority]’, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, ‘Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honour among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die.

So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honour among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against

Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, ‘Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!’ Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned and is dead.’...Jezebel said to Ahab, ‘Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.’ So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” 1 Kings 21:1-16.

THE OPERATION OF WITCHCRAFT IN THE CHURCH

Although the Church at Thyatira was commended for her **“love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first,”** (Rev 2:19), she was admonished because she had been corrupted when she allowed a woman with a spirit of witchcraft to operate as a prophetess, without having been invested with that ministry from the Lord.

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write...Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” Rev 2:20.

“That woman Jezebel,” was not a reference to her real name, but to the spirit of witchcraft that dominated her nature. She may have actually committed sexual immorality, but in spiritual symbology, spiritual immorality or harlotry refers to participating in things of Satan rather than those of God. To **“eat things sacrificed to idols,”** was to partake of things or exercises under the control of Satan.

“And I [Jesus Christ] gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death [spiritual death], and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Rev 2:21-23.

When we studied **“the chain of authority,”** we saw that when there was obedience throughout the chain, every link was under God’s protection, but if there was disobedience in one link, the whole chain was open to satanic interference. It is a common occurrence for those who have succumbed to the power of the Jezebel spirit, for them and other members under her control, to be stricken with illness and even premature death because they have lost God’s protection.

Paul Forbade Women to Minister Without Male Oversight

James singles out teaching as a ministry that demands absolute truth, and consequently it is a ministry which cannot afford to be open to satanic deception. James wrote, **“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”** James 3:1-4.

As an apostle, Paul stated that he did not allow women to teach without male oversight, and then gave his reasons. **“And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”** 1 Tim 2:12. To be silent here did not mean that they were not permitted to speak, but that they should have a quiet disposition, only speaking when it was appropriate. Paul continued to give his reasons: **“For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”** 1 Tim 2:13.

“Adam was formed first” - In Hebrew culture, the first born was given authority and headship over his siblings.

“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived...” Eve was a typical woman, showing that by her temperament she was more easily deceived whereas Adam was not deceived, but was disobedient. By comparison, women are far more capable to minister care and nurture to those in need.

The fact that Adam willingly obeyed Eve shows man’s propensity to willingly accept woman to override his headship, a trait that has become more evident towards the close of the age. Women have been installed in some of the highest-ranking positions of authority in the world, even to the degree of being the heads of countries. The thing lacking in women’s headship is not her natural ability to undertake the role, but the lack of guidance given by God to those in positions ordained by Him.

Paul concluded his analysis with a controversial statement that appears to throw doubt about women’s salvation.

“Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.” 1 Tim 2:12-15. But this does not mean her eternal salvation, but being saved from the scourge of witchcraft.

God’s Judgement of Haughty Women

This end-time prophecy from Isaiah is directed at women in Zion, symbolising the Church. It is directed at “haughty women” who have spent much of their time in pursuits that dishonour the role of women that God intended. Isaiah’s prophecy highlights several areas where women are vulnerable to attacks from Satan.

The first area under judgement is directed at haughty women who flaunt their femininity in a seductive, brazen, and wanton manner, to promote an aura of femininity and sexuality that has worldly approval.

“Moreover the Lord says: “Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a jingling with their feet...” Isaiah then declares God’s judgement.

“Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will uncover their secret parts [hidden sins].” Isaiah 3:16-17.

A woman's hair crowns her with an aura of feminine softness and beauty. To **“strike with a scab the crown of the head,”** is to replace this aura of feminine softness with a sense of artificiality and hardness. The uncovering of their secret parts refers to the disclosure of hidden sins, previously hidden from public view.

“In that day the Lord will take away the finery: the jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the veils; the headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; the perfume boxes, the charms, and the rings; the nose jewels, the festal apparel, and the mantles; the outer garments, the purses, and the mirrors; the fine linen, the turbans, and the robes.” Isaiah 3:18 -23.

It is not the items mentioned that are under God's judgement, but the preoccupation with clothing fashions, footwear, beauty aids, and artificial female adornments that are supposed to promote feminine beauty, but in fact are a poor substitute for the **“incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit”** that is pleasing to the Lord. It was probably this preoccupation with feminine finery, garments, and adornments that prompted Peter to advise women to **“Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”** 1 Peter 3:3-4.

In the next part of Isaiah's prophecy, we see a list of judgements that should provoke the removal of haughtiness, the flaunting of unnatural femininity, and an unwarranted desire for authority and power.

“And so it shall be: instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench.” The fragrance of perfumes that promote an aura of femininity and gentleness will fail to produce their desired effect, and instead there will be an aura of artificiality and hardness.

“instead of a sash, a rope;” Instead of the sash, an ornament to promote beauty, there will be a rope, symbolising servitude.

“instead of well-set hair, baldness;” Well-set hair expresses nobility, and baldness in this case, low social status.

“instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth;” Instead of social prominence and sophistication, there will be sorrow and debasement.

“and branding instead of beauty.” Instead of people seeing beauty, they will see sullied womanhood.

“Her gates shall lament and mourn, and she being desolate shall sit on the ground.” Gates are a symbol of headship, for it is there that the elders of Israel congregated to carry out their delegated duties. In the proverb of the virtuous woman, **“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.”** Prov 31:22-23. Instead of being established in positions of headship, she shall sit on the ground, meaning that she will be stripped of all authority.

Isaiah 3:25 and 4:1.

Verse 25 is addressed to Israel, in this case symbolising the Church. It states, **“Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty in the war.”** This is a spiritual war directed towards removing the role of headship designated to man by God and placing it into the headship of women. We see that in this battle, **“Your men shall fall by the sword,”** telling us that by and large, the tide of headship has changed and is directed into the hands of women, who have been given control of organisations, companies, governments, and countries. **“And in that day seven women [the completeness of witchcraft] shall take hold of one man, saying, “we will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach.”** Isaiah 4:1.

In this reading, their reproach is witchcraft, and the only way it can be taken away is for the women to subject themselves to male oversight. Seven is not a literal number, but suggests that the totality of women holding illegitimate headship positions will become aware of their need to submit to male oversight. To be called by “your name” was to be submitted to a man in an authoritative position.

We should see the scourge of witchcraft as an integral part of the Battle of Armageddon that threatens God’s designated authority structure, and ultimately, the headship of Christ in the Church. When women are drawn into spiritual witchcraft, their adverse influence is not limited to gaining unauthorised authority, but by their control of the lives of other individuals, they remove their covering of God’s protection.

Fulfillment in Creating a Christian Household and Nurturing God-fearing Children

The following description of a virtuous wife in Proverbs 32 shows us that a virtuous wife need not be constrained by the responsibility of establishing a Christian household and bringing up God-fearing children. Rightly, she is given scope to engage in activities that are satisfying and fulfilling. A wise husband does not cling on to his authority and headship over all things, but is ready to share the responsibilities of headship with his wife.

“The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands...She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar...She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard...She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy...Her clothing is fine linen and purple...She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants...Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” Prov 31:11-28.

Of course, this description may be outdated, but its overall sense is still applicable to our times. As in the above proverb, the husband should trust the capabilities of his wife and trust their oversight into her hands. For instance, in her role of managing the household, it is often fitting, as in the above proverb, to trust the control of finances into her hands.

In the end times God will shed light on the presence of witchcraft in women who are vying for headship, and it will become a reproach. The last words in the Old Testament are significant:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet [the ministry of prophetic teaching] before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, [reinstate the headship of fathers] lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. [the curse of witchcraft]” Mal 4:5.

CHAPTER 14

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH UNDER JUDGEMENT

Prophetic Scriptures portray the end-time Church as spiritless, powerless, and ineffective. Complacency and worldliness have resulted in the end of the ministry of the Two Witnesses, the glory of the Lord has left the Church, there is a famine of truth, and the Church is likened to a valley full of dry bones.

THE CHURCH HAS BECOME LIKE A WORLD ORGANISATION

Earlier in this study, we saw that in the early Church, ministries were formed by Christ in members He chose from the body of believers. When their ministries had matured, they were recognised by the elders, anointed with oil and the laying on of hands, and set in place in the working body. In the modern Church, ministers have been trained in world institutions without the headship of Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Now, Churches are like any other world organisation, where leaders are elected in accordance with academic qualifications or by democratic vote, without any reference to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Church programs and practices are the result of discussion and group accent. There is little wonder that the modern Church has lost much of its power to present spiritual truth and change lives.

RESULTS OF THE CHURCH'S DISOBEDIENCE

Rejection of the Holy Spirit

The Book of Acts is an historical account of the working and growth of the early Church. Due to the falling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, early Christians were empowered with spiritual gifts and ministries that enabled them to minister in the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit to those in the world held captive by Satan. From that point onwards, the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit featured prominently throughout the whole Book of Acts, bringing thousands of converts into the Church. We also see that the headship of the Lord was honoured as He oversaw the working of the disciples, granting the empowerment of the Holy Spirit only to authentic works initiated by Himself.

“Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”
Acts 14:3.

Since that time there has been a decline in the acceptance of the Holy Spirit, and the end-time Church has become weakened in its capacity to minister by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to overcome Antichrist's attacks on the ministry of the Church.

Paul predicted that end-time Christians would be **“headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.”** 2

Tim 3:4-5. The truth of this prophecy is evidenced by the fact that many ministers do preach godliness, but deny the power of the Holy Spirit to bring it about, limiting His presence and power to the age of the early Church. The rejection of the Holy Spirit has left the Church as an essentially powerless instrument for the Lord to use in destroying the work of Satan and establishing His kingdom throughout the earth.

There are many prophecies like that of the valley of dry bones below that depict the decline of the power of the Holy Spirit and the absence of the glory of the Lord in the end-time Church.

The Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel presented a number of prophecies that are addressed to Israel and Judah, but in fact relate more to the end-time Church. At the time of these prophecies concerning the valley of dry bones, and the glory of the Lord leaving the temple (or Church), Israel had been conquered by Assyria and dispersed into other nations, ceasing to exist as a nation.

In the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, the Lord pictures the spiritless church as a valley full of dry bones.

“The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.” Eze 37:1-2.

Because the Church has rejected the Holy Spirit, His presence and life-giving ministry and power have been withdrawn, leaving the Church as dry and powerless as the valley of dry bones. As well as Ezekiel’s prophecy of the valley of dry bones, there are similar prophecies portraying the glory of the Lord leaving the Church, the demise of the ministry of the Two Witnesses, a famine of truth, and a lack of holiness and commitment.

The Glory of the Lord has Left the Church

The following prophecy by Ezekiel is a figurative account of the glory of the Lord leaving the temple, which in this case symbolises the Church. In effect, it depicts the state of the end-time Church, in which the glory and power of the name of Jesus Christ is seldom witnessed.

“Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even in the outer court, like the voice of Almighty God when He speaks...Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight.” Ezek 10:3-6, & 18-19.

The Two Witnesses Lay Dead in the Street of New Jerusalem

Earlier in this study, we identified the Two Witnesses in the eleventh chapter of Revelation as Moses and Elijah, symbolising the word of God and prophetic revelation, telling us their ministries had been imparted to the Church. We were shown that they prophesied during the Church age in sackcloth, mourning because of the spiritless state of the Church. Unfortunately, we were told that their ministries would suffer severe opposition from Antichrist, and their ministry cease to operated.

“When they finish their testimony, the beast [Antichrist] that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies [their ministries] will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem, signifying the Church] which spiritually is called Sodom [licentiousness] and Egypt [worldliness], where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves [prophetic truth is still there, but seldom visited]. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.” Rev 11:7-10.

People rejoice because they are not convicted to see the ills of the Church, nor challenged to address the shortcomings in their own spiritual walk.

A Famine of Hearing the Truth

We have been shown that in the last days there would be a famine of hearing and receiving the truth. Amos prophesied, **“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”** Amos 8:11.

Many dissatisfied churchgoers are venturing from fellowship to fellowship, vainly seeking truth or the latest word from the Lord. But notice from Paul’s warning to Timothy below, that it is not so much from the shortage of the truth itself, but a shortage of listening ears that are open to really hearing and receiving the truth.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” 2 Tim 4:3.

Isaiah’s Portrayal of the End-time Church

Although the first five chapters of Isaiah are addressed to Judah, they are parallel prophecies that apply to both Judah and to the end-time Church. The one presented below is taken from the first chapter, which is particularly scathing in its assessment of the state of Judah and the Church.

“The whole head [leadership] is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head [spiritless in every part of the church’s operation], there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment [spiritual truth].” Isa 1:5-6.

Once again, although the next prophecy is addressed to Israel, it is more applicable to the end-time Church. Israel was entrusted by God to be a perfected messenger to reveal His nature to the nations, but had utterly failed. The end-time Church has also been given the responsibility to reveal the nature of God to the unbelieving nations of the world, but like Israel, has fallen short as God’s messenger. Isaiah’s prophecy was also a justification of God’s judgement of Israel and a warning to the end-time Church. What makes it more applicable to the Church is the statement, **“Who will listen and hear for the time to come?”**

“Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake [His judgements are completely righteous]; He will exalt the law and make it honourable [God is satisfied with His judgement]. **But this is a people robbed and plundered [by Antichrist], all of them are snared in holes and they are hidden in prison houses [held captive by demon spirits]; they are for prey, and no one delivers; for plunder, and no one says, ‘Restore.’ Who among you will give ear to this? Who will listen and hear for the time to come?” Isa 42:18-23.**

The portions underlined describe the state of many in the Church who have been taken into bondage by Antichrist and his spirits. They have been taken as a prey, but no one undertakes the ministry of truth and deliverance or prayer for restoration.

Spiritual Growth is Negated by Complacency

Concerning signs of the close of the age, Jesus said, **“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near — at the doors!”** Matt 24:32-33.

At this crucial time when the signs of the end time are obvious, people are bound in complacency and indifference, giving little thought to life after death. In the following prophecy, Paul warned against complacency. 2 Cor 6:2.

“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Cor 6:1-2.

The horrendous happenings that have encompassed the earth should have had the effect of shaking man out of his complacency, but Antichrist uses complacency to dull our senses and stunt our spiritual perception. Having been saved and settled in a congregation, many Christians attend Sunday meetings regularly and endeavour to conduct their lives with moral

integrity, whilst others further their commitment by engaging in good works. They are persuaded by the spirit of Antichrist, that this is all that there is to the Christian walk. Complacency and self-satisfaction bind them from progressing further on the path of holiness that leads to a personal relationship with the Lord, and being used by Him in ministry. Spiritual growth should not be measured by the amount of good works we do, but how much of our carnal nature has been forsaken and replaced by the nature of Jesus Christ formed in us. Laying our carnal nature on the altar of the cross to be put to death by the Spirit should be a daily occurrence. Jesus said, **“whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”** Luke 14:33.

Zephaniah compares complacent church members to bottles of wine settled on their lees, retaining the original corruption of their fleshly nature. He declared that the trauma of the day of the Lord will shake people out of their complacency, so that they might grow spiritually.

“And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem [symbolising the Church] with candles, [the light of truth] and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, ‘The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil...The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness...” Zeph 1:12 & 13-15. KJV.

CHAPTER 15

JUDGEMENT OF THE CHURCH

To portray God's judgement, the Church is likened to a well-cared for vineyard that forth wild grapes. God withdraws His hedge of protection, allowing the Church to be harassed by satanic powers. God's purpose is to turn all hearts to repentance, which eventually leads to restoration.

GOD'S JUDGEMENT FOUNDED ON JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Because the fundamental basis for God's judgement is justice and righteousness, He will never violate these principles in all of His judgements. The two standards used to determine the just and righteous judgement of the Church are the Scriptures, and the early Church founded by Jesus Christ and the apostles, which provided a model for the formation of all future Churches. The Church is facing God's just judgement because of her disobedience to His will in both of these areas. The Church has accepted the lies and deceptions from spirits of Antichrist, instead of the truth of the Scriptures as revealed by the Holy Spirit to prophets and teachers, and has accepted the pattern of world organisations rather than that of the early Church.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT

Many people equate judgement with condemnation and punishment, but God's judgement is founded on His assessment of the hearts of people to determine their willingness to be obedient to His will, so that they may be justly given reward or punishment.

“The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.” Rev 11:18-19.

Jesus Christ has Been Entrusted with all Judgement

God the Father has entrusted all judgement into the hands of Jesus Christ His Son. This includes judgement of the Church, of individual members, and the end-time judgement of the world and the eternal destiny of its inhabitants.

“For the Father judges no one but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father.” John 5:22-23.

Jesus Christ, as ‘**the Son of God,**’ and the ‘**Son of Man,**’ took upon Himself the mantle of our human physicality, experiencing our temptations and weaknesses, thereby making Him a compassionate and merciful High Priest, and the only one fully qualified to be the judge of mankind.

“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren...Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Heb 2:11 & 17-18.

JUDGEMENT OF THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE

The Purpose of God’s Judgement

Before proceeding further in this study, we should be reminded that many of the Old Testament prophecies used in this chapter are parallel prophecies addressed to Israel, Jerusalem, or Judah, who may be seen as types of the Church. Although they have relevance to the current state of the nations at that time, the prophecies are also relevant to the state of the end-time Church at the close of the age.

The pattern of the early Church founded by Christ and the apostles left us with a model for the establishment of future Churches, and a basis for the judgement of existing Churches.

In the history of the Church, it was not long before the original pattern was replaced by church structures and organisations that were modelled in the likeness of institutions of the world. Even a casual look at the state of the modern Church should show us how far the Church has departed from the original pattern, and how ineffectual and powerless she has become. The overall purpose of God’s judgement of the Church is to reveal her debased state, so that hearts may turn to Him in repentance, to the end that He might justly restore her.

“Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.” Joel 2:12-13.

The Manner of God’s Judgement of the Church

Two end-time prophecies in the Old Testament are particularly relevant to the manner of God’s judgement of the Church. To many people they will be surprising, for they show that God may use the destructive power of demon spirits of Satan as a means to turn wayward hearts back to Him in repentance.

In the fifth chapter of Isaiah, God uses a picture of Jesus Christ planting a vineyard, which is used to symbolise the Church. Although He provided every means for it to flourish and bear fruit that would be pleasing to Him, it brought forth wild grapes.

“My Well-beloved [Jesus Christ] has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.” Isa 5:1-2.

The Lord asked, **“What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?”** Isa 5:4. The Lord then says how He will judge the keepers of the vineyard, or Church leaders, and the whole Church for succumbing to the flesh and the world instead of commitment to the Lord.

“And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge [of protection], and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.” Isa 5:5-6.

God’s judgement is twofold. Firstly, He will remove His hedge of angelic protection, opening the door to demonic disharmony and disorder, as warned by James. **“But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.”** James 3:14-15.

When our works are initiated by the Lord, they are protected by God’s angels, but when they are of the flesh, Satan’s spirits have a just right to incite divisive reactions that cause disharmony and division.

Secondly, God will withdraw the rain of the Spirit, as in withdrawing the spiritual truth presented by the prophetic and teaching ministries, creating the famine of truth mentioned in the previous chapters.

The Use of Demon Spirits to Turn Hearts to Repentance

The second chapter of Joel is even more forthright in its description of God’s use of demon spirits to judge the Church. In the First Chapter of Joel, we are told that the instruments used by God in His judgement are swarms of locusts that bring destruction and desolation.

“What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten...The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain [a symbol for truth] is ruined, the new wine [joy] is dried up, the oil [the Holy Spirit] fails.” Joel 1:4 & 10.

We are reminded that locusts are used as a symbol of demon spirits. This is shown clearly in a parallel reading in the ninth chapter of Revelation. When the fifth trumpet sounded, the bottomless pit is opened to release hordes of locusts to torment the inhabitants of the earth. Their leader is said to be ‘The Destroyer’ or Satan.

The second chapter of Joel tells us that this invasion of demon spirits is associated with God’s end-time judgement of the Church. The fact that the Lord calls these demon spirits **“His great army...”** Joel 2:25 shows that sometimes demon spirits are used by God as tools of judgement. This happens when people turn away from Him, and His hedge of protection is removed.

“For the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A

people [demon spirits] come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. A fire [symbolising judgement] devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them. Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of colour...The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?” Joel 2:1-7, 10-11.

The Church has allowed herself to be misled by Antichrist’s deceiving demon spirits rather than obeying the Lord, and so God justly removes His hedge of protection, which precipitates invasion by demon spirits.

JUDGEMENT LEADS TO REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

The judgements outlined above are part of the three stages in the process of restoration. Judgement leads to repentance, and repentance opens the door to restoration. This process has occurred consistently throughout the history of Israel. Time and again Israel rejected God and fell into the sin of worshipping the pagan gods of the surrounding nations. God removed His hedge of protection around Israel, allowing her to be taken captive and to endure hard servitude. When Israel finally repented and turned to God for help, He delivered her from her hard bondage, and restored her to her former prosperity.

When the crowd at Pentecost heard Peter’s sermon, they were convicted in their hearts, and cried out, “**What shall we do?**” Peter’s first response was to say “**repent!**”

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:19-20.

During the history of the Church there have been times of repentance, followed by times of refreshing revivals, which foreshadow the last great revival and restoration of all things, which will be accompanied by the falling of the latter rain of the Spirit.

A CALL FOR UNITED REPENTANCE

God’s prophecy in Joel of the judgement of Judah who represents the Church, is followed by a call for the whole land to repent. Joel calls on the whole nation, representing the Church, to unite, and with genuine heartfelt repentance, cry out to God to intervene and to deliver them from their grievous hardship. Joel’s prophecy is telling us that God is calling on the whole end-time Church to unite in repentance for her apostasies and return to Him, asking Him to forgive and restore the Church to its original glory.

“Now, therefore,’ says the Lord, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.’ So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him — A grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, “Spare Your people, O Lord, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” Joel 2:12-17.

This call to repentance is followed by an assurance from the Lord that He will restore their relationship, and drive their oppressors from their midst.

“Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, and pity His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, ‘Behold, I will send you grain [truth] and new wine [joy] and oil [the Holy Spirit], and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove far from you the northern army, and will drive him away into a barren and desolate land.’” Joel 2:18-20.

Next, through Joel, God promises to send forth the latter rain of the Spirit.

“Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He has given you the former rain [the rain of the Spirit at Pentecost] faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you — The former rain, and the latter rain [the latter rain of the Spirit to precipitate the end-time harvest] in the first month [of the agricultural cycle]. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.” Joel 1:22-14.

Accompanying the promise of the latter rain, there is an assurance of restoration of the damage caused by the invasion of the locusts, or demon spirits.

“So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel [the Church]: I am the Lord your God and there is no other.” Joel 2:12-27.

JUDGEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

What is God’s Ultimate Purpose in Creating Us?

We were saved by God by His grace, through faith that He provided, rather than by our good works. Paul tells us that we are God’s workmanship, being recreated into the image of Jesus Christ so that we might engage in good works.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:8-10.

The works that we are to walk in are God’s works, and to enable us to engage in them, we should be indwelt by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The good works that we are to walk in are not works initiated by fleshly zeal, but works preordained by God, that we might accomplish them in union with Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit as the Lord directs.

God requires us to submit to His workmanship, allowing our carnal natures to be burnt out by His refining fire as we consign them to the cross, so that the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ may be formed in us. God desires to create a body of believers willingly emptied of their carnal natures, to the end that the whole Trinity may dwell in them, producing fruitful works that last, and that glorify His name.

Suffering is the Catalyst that Delivers us From the Defilement of our Flesh

The next chapter will show us that the presence of the Lord’s Spirit will enter the end-time Church to oversee its judgement and restoration. This will not be His physical presence, but His presence in the power of His Spirit. People anticipate His coming with joy, but Malachi asks, **“who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi [ministry leaders], and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem [the Church] will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years.”** Mal 3:2-4.

Refinement through suffering is often rejected as a teaching by many, who declare that Jesus bore all necessary suffering for us on the cross. Christ’s suffering on the cross paid the debt for our sins, paving the way for our salvation. The refining suffering is for the restoration of our souls, that they might be rightly subjected to our spirits. These next readings from the Old and New Testaments show us that refinement through suffering has always been God’s way for delivering us from our carnal soulish natures.

“For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs.” Ps 66:10-11.

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, for My own sake I Will do it...” Isa 48:10-11.

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you

are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” 1 Peter 4:12-17.

“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.” Phil 1:29-30.

“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Acts 5:41.

God Chastens Those He Loves

Satan endeavours to condemn those who are being refined through suffering, telling them it is because they are unworthy. This next reading from Hebrews tells us that the opposite is the truth. God chastens those He loves, that they might become vessels of honour, used to His glory.

“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Heb 12:3-11.

THE CHURCH IS ALREADY BEING JUDGED

Peter warned us that God’s end-time judgement would begin with the judgement of the Church.

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” 1 Peter 4:17.

When most people think of the Church, their minds are taken to the organisation and denominations. But the true Church is an invisible body of believers in Jesus Christ. Both the true Church and its worldly counterpart are facing a time of testing and judgement as God’s restraining hand is removed and spirits of Antichrist are loosed to intensify all apostasy, so that the true state of the Church is brought to light. People are now being confronted with such issues as paedophilia, homosexuality, marriage equality, false ministries, lying signs and

wonders, false teachings and doctrines, corruption, immorality, lawlessness, and a complacency that stifles the authority of the Lord and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

God's judgement will fall on all divisiveness and break through clergy and laity barriers. Denominations may remain from an organisational point of view, but their power to divide will be broken and replaced by a spirit of unity that overcomes all divisions. Antichrist's attack on the Church has been directed on many fronts, and its chief aims are to cause disharmony and division, to destroy all moral values and negate its message of salvation. The facts presented in this study thus far should indicate to us that the Battle of Armageddon is already under way, and the Church herself is severely stressed.

Judgement of the Church will result in a severe testing of our faith, to the end that the lukewarm will fall by the wayside, earnest Christians will be strengthened in their faith and commitment, and many souls will be turned back to the Lord in repentance. Unfortunately, some will become disillusioned and abandon their faith altogether.

CHAPTER 16

THE RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH

The Lord will enter into the conflict of Armageddon, not in His physical presence, but in the power of His Spirit, and Antichrist will be destroyed by the “brightness of His coming.” The Lord will send forth the latter rain, the Two Witnesses are revived, the dry bones come to life, and the glory of the Lord will return to the Church.

RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH BEFORE THE FINAL RAPTURE

The restoration of the Church before the return of the Lord is not generally accepted, perhaps because there is no specific time allotted to it in end-time readings. In the tenth chapter of Revelation, an angel made the following declaration concerning the space of time to the coming of the Lord:

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:” Rev 10:5-6. KJV.

The King James Version, which records the words of the original manuscripts, states that **“there should be time no longer.”** Translators of other versions of the bible have changed the word ‘time’ to delay no longer. The KJV provides us with the correct meaning. ‘Time no longer’ means that this space of time will have no measurement as we know it, or in other words, no one on earth will be able to determine it, only the Father in heaven.

Before His final departure, the disciples asked the Lord about the time of His return, **“saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.”** Acts 1:6-7.

Based on the interpretation, ‘there shall be delay no longer,’ there has been continual statements that the time of the Lord is at hand, and numerous false predictions of His return. Peter presented this warning, **“knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?...But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”** 2 Peter 3: 2-4 & 8-9.

The Lord never predicted a definite time period, His advice being that we should make sure we were ministering with diligence at the time of His coming.

Another reason for the omission of restoration is that Premillennialists in particular do not accept the Church’s involvement in the tribulation, with its refining suffering that cleanses

the soul from carnality and deepens our faith and commitment. Suffering and refinement are not popular concepts, but Peter said, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”** 1 Peter 4:1-2.

Paul stated that Jesus Christ will return to a glorious Church without spot or blemish of any kind.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Eph 5:25-27.

This does not mean that individual believers will be perfected in morality and total obedience, but they will have a willingness to forsake their carnal self-natures, so that they can be put to death by the Spirit and Christ might reign in them and through them.

Organisationally, the Church may not completely adopt the pattern of the early Church, but the authority of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be re-established, and she will be cleansed from all apostasies and defilement. The power of the Holy Spirit will return to the Church, empowering believers to engage in miraculous ministries that destroy the works of Satan, and glorify the name of Jesus Christ. As the apostasies imposed on her by Antichrist are exposed by the truth and refuted, the purity of the Church’s doctrines and truths will be restored, and all corruption expunged from her midst by Spirit-inspired teaching.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that predict the restoration of the end-time Church, like this one from Isaiah.

“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles [unbelievers] shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea [the nations] shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you...” Isa 60:1-5.

This prophecy goes on to predict the influx of many lost souls into the Church, and the wealth of the nations flowing into her.

THE PROCESS OF RESTORATION

The Lord will Enter into the Conflict

At first the prophecy below by Zechariah pictures the Church despoiled and half of her members taken captive by Antichrist's deceptions. But the remnant whom the Lord will preserve will not depart from the truth and will be used by Him in overcoming Antichrist.

“Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem [the Church]; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished [taken out of their ordained role]. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”

Then we are shown that the Lord will enter into the conflict.

“Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east...” Zech 14:1-4.

What is the meaning of His feet standing on the Mount of Olives? We have this picture of Jesus standing on the Mount of Olives from whence He had departed, but the feet of the Lord standing on the Mount of Olives does not mean that He will be there in His physical presence, but in the power of His Spirit. We have a similar example in God's invisible presence 'standing' on the rock at Horeb.

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.’” Ex 17:5-6.

God's physical presence was not visible but His presence in Spirit was before Moses.

The Glory of the Lord Returns to the Church

In the fourteenth chapter of this study, we saw a picture of the glory of the Lord departing from the Church. Now in the forty-third chapter of Ezekiel, we are told that the glory of the Lord will return and fill the whole temple or Church.

“Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory...And the glory of the Lord came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.” Ezek 43:1-5.

Previously, we were shown by Ezekiel that the glory of the Lord would leave the Church, but now we are shown that at the end of the age the glory of the Lord will return to the Mount of Olives, the place of His departure, and then fill the temple or Church.

“So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of

the city and stood on the mountain [the Mount of Olives], which is on the east side of the city.” Ezek 11:22-23.

“And the glory of the Lord came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.” Ezek 43: 4-5.

The Result of the Glory of the Lord Returning to the Church

In the forty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, we are presented with another picture, this time showing us the result of the glory of the Lord entering the Church. Water, symbolising the Holy Spirit, flows out from the threshold of the temple (from the throne of God or His presence in the Church), and floods the whole land with its healing and restoring power.

“Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.”

A man measured the depth of the water coming out of the temple, and it was up to his ankles, then his knees, his waist, and finally a river in which he had to swim. This shows us that the outflowing of the Holy Spirit will be gradual, but finally growing in its intensity to overpower all in its path.

“And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed.”

Everywhere the water flows, all that it touches will be healed. Eventually it reaches the sea or nations of the world and their waters too are healed, meaning that all false doctrines and religions will be exposed by the Spirit of truth and many souls converted to the Lord.

We are told that there will be very many fish, or unsaved souls, and many fishermen, or evangelists, with places to spread their nets, or fruitful outreach centres, and their ‘nets’ will be full.

“There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many.”

Along the banks of the river there were all kinds of trees or ministries that provide spiritual food in all seasons for earnest seekers of truth.

“Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food [spiritual truth], and their leaves for medicine [or healing].” Ezek 47:1-12.

Trees are sometimes used in the Scriptures as symbols for men with ministries, as in Isaiah, **“That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”** Isa 61:3.

Unfortunately, there will be places entrenched in Antichrist’s false doctrines, or quashed by indifference, that will not respond to the Holy Spirit’s ministry. **“But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt.”**

A Parallel Reading from Revelation

A parallel reading from Revelation presents a figurative description of New Jerusalem, or the perfected Church. Here again, water, symbolising the Holy Spirit, flows out from the throne of God, enlivening ministries. represented by of the life-giving trees along its banks. This reading confirms that Ezekiel’s vision is applicable to the end-time Church.

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations [those unsaved].” Rev 22:1-2.

Combining the two readings, we may conclude that the leaves of the trees signify the gifts of the Spirit that empower the ministries that produce miraculous healings, deliverances, and the wonders commonly seen in the early Church. It was such ministries in the early Church that operated among the nations, or unbelievers, that revealed the divinity of the Lord and produced many thousands of converts. Both readings stress the constancy of the operation of the Spirit throughout every month of the year.

The Dry Bones Come to Life

In the fourteenth chapter, we were confronted with the vision of the valley full of dry bones, representing the state of the end-time Church. Now, in this time of restoration, we see that these bones are filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit and restored to life. We continue where we left off in the reading from Ezekiel.

“Again He said to me, “Prophecy [speak by the inspiration of the Spirit] to these bones [the dead Church], and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.” So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the

bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, ‘prophesy to the breath [the Holy Spirit], prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.” Ezek 37:4-14.

The instruction to prophesy to the dry bones, or dead Church, and to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to breathe life into the Church, may be directed to the end-time prophets, telling them to speak under the inspiration of the Spirit to the Church, exposing her deadness and turning hearts to repentance. This then will pave the way for the Spirit to fall on the Church, as in the latter rain. Church members must be informed of God’s plan to pour out His Spirit on the Church, so that they are prepared spiritually to receive His infilling and be involved in His ministry. Towards the end of the reading, we see that end-time prophets are told to pray to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to fulfill God’s purpose in breathing life into the Church, paving the way for revival and restoration.

The Lord will Send Forth the Latter Rain

The former rain of the Spirit fell at Pentecost. In agriculture the early rain is needed to precipitate germination and early growth of the crop. The latter rain is needed towards the end of the crop cycle to fill out the heads of grain, ensuring an abundant harvest. Joel prophesied that the Lord will send forth the latter rain of the Spirit at the close of the Church age to ensure an abundant harvest of lost souls to the Lord.

“Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God for He has given you the former rain [at Pentecost] faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you — the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month [of their agricultural calendar]. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. ‘So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God and there is no other.”
Joel 2:23-27.

The Two Witnesses are Revived

Previously, we saw that when spiritual darkness shrouded the Church, the ministry of the two witnesses were left lying dead in the street. When the glory of the Lord and His Spirit returns and enters the Church, the Two Witnesses are revived and their ministry of prophetic teaching is restored.

“Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here [receive spiritual power from heaven].’ And

they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them [The reinstatement of their ministries will be obvious to those who had opposed them].” Rev 11:11-13.

The importance of the revival of the Two Witnesses, and in particular, their prophetic ministry, is revealed by Jesus when He spoke to His disciples after coming down from the mountain where He was transfigured.

“And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah [the ministry of prophecy] is coming first and will restore all things.” Matt 17:10-11.

This tells us that the ministry of prophecy will be of paramount importance in the process of the restoration of the Church.

ANTICHRIST DESTROYED BY THE BRIGHTNESS OF CHRIST’S COMING

Paul presented this prophecy to the Church at Thessalonica.

“And then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth [the spiritually empowered word of truth entrusted to His prophets and teachers] and destroy with the brightness of His coming [the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit]. **The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” 2 Thess 2:8-12.**

Those who are sincere in their desire to know truth are invested with a love of the truth by the Holy Spirit. Those who are indifferent to the truth have no such anointing and consequently are deprived of the saving grace of God. The Lord’s Spirit will enter the Church, empowering His apostles, prophets, teachers, and evangelists, with convicting truth, authenticated by supporting miraculous signs and wonders done in Christ’s name.

ARISE SHINE FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME

Only the Lord God Almighty knows the times of all things, but Jesus warned us again and again to watch for the signs of His coming, and to be prepared. For God says, **“I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time.”** Isa 60:22.

The following end-time prophecy from Isaiah describes the glory of the Spirit of the Lord resting on all believers and calls on us to arise and be engaged in the work of the Spirit as He invests the Lord’s committed ones with truth and power to draw many lost souls into the Lord’s kingdom.

“Arise, shine; for your light has come! and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.” Isa 60:1-2.

Daniel depicts those who respond to the call of the Spirit as bright stars in a dark sky.

“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” Dan 12:3.

CHAPTER 17

THE CLEANSING OF THE CHURCH

The Church will be cleansed by washing of the word of God, presented through the testimonies of prophets and teachers. The word of truth will expose the deceptions and lies of Antichrist, and their power to deceive will be eliminated.

CLEANSED BY THE FIRE OF REFINEMENT

This passage describing the Lord coming into His temple does not refer to His physical coming as described in the gospels, where His coming refers to the rapture of His saints at the end the age. This reading refers to the Spirit of Christ coming into the Church to cleanse and restore her. This is another Scriptural reference testifying to the need for suffering and tribulation to purge out the persistent and resilient power of the flesh.

“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple [the Church], even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, ‘says the Lord of hosts.’ But who can endure the day of His coming? and who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi [those with ministries], and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. ‘Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem [members of the Church] will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien [an unbeliever] — because they do not fear Me,’ says the Lord of hosts.” Mal 3:3-4.

Again, this presents the need for the Church to suffer refining tribulation to cleanse her from sin. We are reminded that Peter said, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”** 1 Pet 4:1.

CLEANSED BY THE WATER BY THE WORD

The Power of the Spirit to Cleanse by the Word

In the reading below, Paul refers to Christ cleansing the Church **“with the washing of water by the word.”**

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...” Eph 5:25-26.

Notice that when Paul says, “**He might sanctify and cleanse her,**” this is in the continuous tense. This is a continuing work of Jesus in individuals and in the Church herself. The means by which Jesus accomplishes this cleansing work, is “**with the washing of water** [here ‘water’ symbolises the rhema word personalised and empowered to us by the Spirit] **by the word** [the logos or Scriptural word].”

In the Scriptures, water can be used as a symbol for the Holy Spirit and for the word of God. In this reading water signifies the ‘rhema’ word of God, which is a Scriptural reading which is personalised and made alive to us by the Spirit, with the power to convict us and change our lives. For instance, we may be reading the bible and a passage becomes living and active to us, convicting us of a sin that we have neglected to address. Without the empowering of the Spirit the Scriptures are like the words in other books, but with His empowering, they become the sword of the Spirit, which is “**living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart...**” Heb 4:12-13.

In the reading where the Church is cleansed “**with the washing of water by the word,**” washing is the action used to make the word operate. The washing is the working of the Holy Spirit making the truth of the word personal to us with the power to convict us to repentance and change our lives. Regarding the Church as a whole, the washing by the word enables members to recognise the apostasies that plague the Church, and the truth disarms the deceptions of Antichrist.

A common view is that the washing of the water refers to baptism, but without the true meaning of baptism revealed by anointed Scriptural truth, baptism is no more effective to people than any other experience of being submerged in water. It is by the anointed word that people are shown that they are baptised into Christ’s death, their old man with all of the sins of their past life buried in the waters of baptism, and that they are raised as new creations to live their new lives united with Jesus Christ, participants of the blessings of His atoning sacrifice and indwelling life.

Christ is cleansing His Church by the word of God, empowered by the Spirit, and made known to the Church by His anointed prophets and teachers, so that all false teachings and all manner of deception is destroyed by the light of truth. When the truth is revealed, Antichrist’s power to deceive people is greatly diminished, and the Church is gradually cleansed from all apostasy.

In the sixth chapter of John, Jesus said, “**The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**” John 6:63. The word of God is empowered by the Spirit, and when received with an earnest believing heart, has the capacity to convict hearts to repentance and reshape lives. This empowerment by the Spirit paves the way for all believers to participate in the cleansing of the Church.

The ‘Word of our Testimony’ is an Important Weapon in Cleansing the Church

When Judah was confronted by amassed armies from the surrounding nations, King Jehoshaphat verbally testified to God’s faithfulness, power, and invincibility.

“O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?” 2 Chron 20:6-7.

God responded to Jehoshaphat’s testimony by turning Judah’s adversaries against one another until they had completely destroyed each other.

God is all powerful and could annihilate Antichrist and his followers with one word. But God’s righteousness and justice demands that His response be governed by the state of the Church and her willingness to act in accordance with His will.

Nevertheless, despite her many shortcomings, God has given the responsibility of overcoming Antichrist’s assaults to the Church. It was the Church that succumbed to the deceptions of Antichrist and allowed herself to be taken captive and corrupted with all kinds of apostasies. Now God requires the Church to turn to Him in repentance and receive cleansing and anointing, so that He can use her to overthrow **“the desolations of many generations,”** (Isa 61:4), and restore the Church to her former purity.

Three Principal Weapons for Overcoming Antichrist

We should be reminded that as Christians we are combatants in this war between Christ and Antichrist, and that the word of God is our chief weapon. In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we are shown three principal ways of using the word in overcoming Satan.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Rev 12:11.

“The blood of the Lamb” is the most powerful weapon to be used in our testimonies to overcome Satan. No matter how grievously we (or the Church) have sinned, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** 1 John 1:9-10. **“...and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** 1 John 1:7. By the blood of Jesus, every claim of Satan against us is made null and void.

“They did not love their lives to the death” speaks of a willingness to forsake all, and make a total commitment of our lives to the Lord. It was Jesus’ righteousness and willingness to lay down His own life and face the death of the cross that negated any right of Satan to prevent His resurrection, **“having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [His resurrection].”** Col 2:15. Likewise, it is by the total surrender of our life to the death that Jesus is able to negate Satan’s claims against us and direct our lives as He wills. Important as these two overcoming tools are, without the word of our testimonies to activate them, there is no overcoming.

“The word of our testimony” is the use of the word of God in prayer statements, or testimonies, used **“for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high**

thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...” 2 Cor 10:4-5.

The word of our testimonies is recorded in heaven and endorsed by the empowering of the Holy Spirit. **“And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” 1 John 5:6-7.**

The word of our testimonies to the power of the cross relies on our identification with Christ in His death. Paul testified, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...” Gal 2:20.**

Of equal importance is faith in the efficacy of Jesus’ blood, which has tremendous power in negating and destroying the works of Satan.

CLEANSING THE CHURCH IN CHAPTERS 38 & 39 OF EZEKIEL

The thirty-eighth and ninth chapters of Ezekiel present us with a figurative account of the Battle of Armageddon, giving us further insight into the nature of the cleansing of the Church.

In Ezekiel and Revelation 20:8, **“Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal”** refer to the ruler of a confederacy of nations that harassed ancient Israel and consequently became a symbol of Antichrist and his confederacy. At the time of this prophecy, Israel had been defeated by Assyria and dispersed among the nations, and so Israel now symbolises the end-time Church.

In these two chapters, Ezekiel figuratively describes the last great conflict between the forces of Antichrist and the Church. As the Church experiences the beginnings of restoration, Antichrist endeavours to turn back those who have been restored to the Lord.

“In the latter years you [Antichrist] will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely.” Ezek 38:4.

Again, we are reminded that this is a spiritual battle in which Antichrist musters all of his powers of deceit and deception in order to distort truth and derail the newborn restoration. Firstly, we are shown that God draws Antichrist into this last conflict so that he and his forces will be destroyed forever.

“Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel.” Ezek 39:3-4.

The fate of Antichrist and his army is sealed, because God has pronounced their utter destruction.

“You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.” Ezekiel 38:16.

God is hallowed because He is justified in His righteous judgement of the Church that will bring about repentance and restoration, so that she can be used to bring about the defeat of Antichrist.

Antichrist’s Weapons are Destroyed by the Truth

The weapons Antichrist uses to combat the truth are false doctrines, false signs and wonders, false prophets, teachers, and ministries, and all manner of lies and deceptions. Ezekiel’s prophetic account declares that Antichrist’s weapons themselves will become the fuel used to set them on fire and destroy them. The fire that destroys the weapons is the judgement of God that results from exposure of their falseness.

“Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons... they will make fires with them for seven years [seven symbolises the perfect time needed to accomplish God’s purpose]. They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons...” Ezekiel 39:9-10.

The flaws of the apostasies and deceptions will be exposed when examined in the light of Scriptural truth, and this will bring about the fuel for their rejection and destruction. During the final stage of the Battle of Armageddon, the deceptiveness of all apostasies, false doctrines, and false ministries in the Church will be exposed by the Two Witnesses, or prophets and teachers. The truth will then be shared with the wider body of believers, so that they will be enabled to take part in the cleansing of the Church.

The Burial of the Weapons of Antichrist

In the following reading, Ezekiel uses the analogy of dead bodies and bones covering the land to represent the apostasies that still pollute the Church. A symbolic seven months (the complete time needed) is allotted to remove every trace of apostasy from the land, or Church. Everyone will undertake the responsibility of ridding the Church from all deception and apostasy. Watchmen, such as elders and anointed teachers, will maintain a constant vigil to ensure that no ‘bone’ or residue of apostasy reappears.

“For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land [the Church]. Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified,” says the Lord GOD. They will set apart men regularly employed, with the help of a search party, to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground [remaining evidence of Antichrist’s influence], in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. The search party will pass through the land; and when anyone sees a man’s bone [a residue of deception], he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers [e.g., elders] have buried it [by their testimonies].” Ezek 39:12-15.

The danger is that Antichrist's apostasies will resurface and again be entrenched in the Church. The whole Church will have the responsibility of maintaining a constant vigil, so that any trace of apostasy will be brought to the attention of the appropriate watchmen and buried permanently.

Jesus' purpose in cleansing the church is **“that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”** Eph 5:27.

CHAPTER 18

JUDGEMENT OF THE WORLD UNDER THE CONTROL OF SATAN

The world order established by Antichrist and the Ten Kings will be violently shaken and utterly destroyed. God's hedge of protection will be removed, and people will be overwhelmed by the evil they had entertained. All worldly securities will be removed, and all self-sufficiency and haughtiness will be cast down.

END-TIME JUDGEMENTS MAY HAVE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS

The end-time events we have studied so far are not in strict chronological order; some occurring concurrently, with others overlapping. This is so in the case of the judgement of the Church preceding the judgement of the rest of the inhabitants of the earth, but generally speaking, the Church needs to be set in order before she can minister to the needs of repentant souls or attract others into her midst.

Armageddon and the Apocalypse

As stated earlier, Armageddon is essentially a spiritual battle between truth and deception, but many people see Armageddon as synonymous with apocalypse and envisage end-time physical catastrophic disturbances. The word apocalypse comes from a Greek word meaning 'revelation', for instance a revelation of truth previously hidden. In this context, the Book of Revelation is an apocalypse. However, in modern terminology, in most people's eyes the word apocalypse refers to physical catastrophic events like an atomic holocaust, giant earthquakes, bush fires, wars and revolutions, abnormal climate events, and so forth. The inhabitants of the world who have been used by Antichrist to oppose the work of Christ in establishing His kingdom on the earth will have their share in these physical aspects of God's judgement.

Although these global apocalyptic events are predicted to appear at the close of the age in the Old and New Testaments as part of God's judgement of the unbelieving inhabitants of the earth, they are also a wakeup call to those in the Church who have been bound in lethargy. The following are examples of these prophetic warnings taken from Luke and Matthew.

“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring [great turbulence among the nations]; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Luke 21:25-26.

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.” Matt 24:5-8.

JUDGEMENT OF THE WORLD ORDER SATAN HAS ESTABLISHED

Antichrist and the Ten Kings have gained control of the world's finances and have used the power generated by them to establish a world order under their control. Their contaminating influence has extended into every facet of our living experience - governance, economics, industries, international relations, education, the music and film industries, social and moral ethics, religion, agriculture, pharmaceutical practices - all designed to destabilise and despoil.

Predicted in Old Testament Prophecies

Although the Battle of Armageddon is essentially spiritual in nature, God's judgement of the inhabitants of the world order will include a physical shaking of all facets of our worldly existence, so that when faced with the traumas of the times, many will begin to fear God and turn back to Him in repentance. There are many Old Testament prophecies that predict God's fearful judgement of those who have rejected Him by despoiling His creation and the spiritual order He established through Christ Jesus. Every aspect of the world order Satan has established, and the wayward manner in which its inhabitants conduct their lives, will be severely shaken, and fear, anguish, anxiety, and despair will be seen on every side. All haughtiness, pride, and self-exaltation will be stripped away, paving the way for genuine repentance and an earnest desire for Almighty God to intervene. The following are some examples:

“Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned [judged severely], and few men are left [that have not been made desolate].” Isa 24:6.

“The land shall be entirely emptied [of its former state] and utterly plundered, for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away, the world [the world order] languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish. The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” Isa 24:3-5.

“In the city desolation is left and the gate [a symbol of the covering and protection of leadership] is stricken with destruction. When it shall be thus in the midst of the land among the people, it shall be like the shaking of an olive tree, like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done.” Isa 24:10-13.

No One Will be Exempt

There will be no escaping from God's judgement.

“Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface [appearance] and scatters abroad its inhabitants. And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor.” Isa 24:1-25.

“Fear and the pit and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken.” Isa 24:17-18.

The World Order will be Shaken and Utterly Destroyed

“The earth [the world order] is violently broken, the earth is split open [having no cohesion], the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut [there will be no stability]; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again.” Isa 24:19-20.

JUDGEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE

How Does God Execute Judgement of Those Who Have Wittingly Disobeyed Him?

God has a hedge of protection [of His angels] around everyone who has the potential to receive Him as the Lord of their lives. He says of His angels, **“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?”** Heb 1:14.

We see an example of this ‘hedge’ in the story of Job.

“Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’ So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’” Job 1:8-12.

Next, we see how Satan has the power to create catastrophic disasters and to cause sickness, disease, and death. God gave Satan permission to aggress on all that belonged to Job, but he was not to touch his person. By the power of Satan, all of Job’s possessions, and even his children were destroyed.

“The oxen were ploughing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword...fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them...the Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away...Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's

house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead...” Job 1:14-15.

From this reading we see that Satan has the capacity to entice people under his control, as with the Sabeans, to cause all kinds of disasters and destruction, even to kill innocent people, as in the random murders we see in this day.

Job remained faithful to God, but Satan persisted and said, **“But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”** **And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.’** **So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.”** Job 2:5-7.

The world is quick to blame God for all disasters and sickness and disease, but from the reading from Job we see that Satan has the capacity to perpetrate all such calamities. That is why he is referred to in other Scriptures as ‘The Destroyer.’

Despite his outward appearance of goodness, Job did not truly know God as the source of his life and blessings and was tainted by self-righteousness, a trait that God was dealing with.

God Removes His Hedge of Protection to Turn Hearts to Repentance

When God removes His hedge of protection, Satan can aggress on those made vulnerable by their lack of commitment, but only in the measure God prescribes. It is not in God’s will that anyone should be eternally damned, but for all to repent and turn to Him and receive eternal life. Removing a person’s hedge of protection usually precipitates anxiety and suffering, the conditions needed to turn hearts back to God.

When we look at the present state of the world, we see domestic violence, drug addiction, rapes, homicides, terrorism, and so forth, but these events are not because of the hedge of protection being removed, but because the perpetrators have already been brought under the control of Satan.

We also see that God had a hedge of protection around Job and all of his possessions. We can expect to see a loss of personal possessions as part of God’s end-time judgement, but we can also be assured of God’s protection of people and their possessions who have put their trust in Him.

God May use Evil to Overcome Evil

Before proceeding, let us be clear that it is Satan who is the originator of all evil. Many people will recoil at the thought of God using evil to bring about His purposes, but is He not Sovereign God, whose ways and thoughts are far above ours? In the history of Israel there are many cases where God has allowed Israel to be defeated in warfare or be overcome with plagues and pestilence. Allowing these things to occur was necessary for Israel’s survival for without God’s intervention, the nation would lose its inheritance by adopting the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations. The following are two cases where God used evil to overcome evil.

The first is when God was involved in Joseph's brothers attempting to get rid of him. Later, when Joseph encountered his brothers in Egypt, he made this statement. **“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.”** Gen 50:20-21.

The most obvious example of God using evil to bring about good is in allowing the Jews to crucify His Son to bring about the salvation of mankind. That this was predetermined by God is stated in Peter's sermon. **“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”** Acts 2:23-25.

Judgement of Those Who are Destroying the Earth

Prophesied catastrophic events are beginning to appear in the world and are evidence of God's judgement of the disobedient people of the world who, through their insatiable desire to accumulate wealth, have rejected God's ways, by polluting and destroying His creation.

In the eleventh chapter of Revelation we read, **“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.”** Rev 11:17-18.

At the present time, the majority of the world's population is focusing their thoughts on ways of overcoming the destruction of the earth before it is too late. Whilst we do have to address the problems and change our ways of managing God's creation that He has entrusted to us, the real focus of our attention should be towards repentance to God, asking Him to intervene and to govern our lives and our care of His creation. Again, we stress that the overall purpose of God's judgemental actions towards us is that we might repent, commit our lives into His hands, knowing in our hearts that it is only through Him that devastation can be reversed.

Exalted Ones Will be Humbled

God will direct His judgement particularly to those who are exalted in their own eyes and the eyes of the world. God's consistent warning is, 'they will be debased.'

“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth. They will be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison; after many days they will be punished.” Isa 24:21-22.

The Removal of Things that Man Depends on for his Security and Well-being

Desolation is a common theme in the Old Testament readings on the trials and deprivation to occur at the end of the age. All things that man gathers around himself for his security and psychological well-being - possessions, entertainments, influential acquaintances, investments, reliance on military defences, political and economic stability, and the assurance given by respected commentators - all these things will be stripped away, leaving people desolate or without support they can trust. In this end-time reading from Isaiah, these securities are called the ‘stock and the store,’ meaning the basic things man depends on for his well-being.

“For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stock and the store, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water [bread and water are symbols of life’s essentials].” Isa 3:1.

Some of the things man has placed his dependence on are listed here with suggestions for what they symbolise.

“The mighty man [presidents and other world leaders] and the man of war [the nation’s military leaders], the judge [the justice system] and the prophet [forecasters of global future], and the diviner [soothsayers, clairvoyants, fortune tellers] and the elder [trusted personal advisers], the captain of fifty [bureaucrats] and the honourable man [trusted statesmen], the counsellor [like economic advisers] and the skilful artisan [world famous leaders of the arts], and the expert enchanter [world acclaimed speakers].” Isa 3:1-3.

In Revelation, when the angel opened the third seal, there was a picture of a scarcity of all things on the earth, as one would expect following an economic collapse.

“When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil [the Holy Spirit] and the wine [joy].” Rev 6:5-6.

Although there is a scarcity of all things, there is enough wheat and barley or essential provision to sustain livelihood. When it comes to our provision, our security, our satisfaction, fulfilment, and well-being, the majority of people turn to the world order rather than to God. He voices His displeasure in this verse from Isaiah.

“Woe to the rebellious children”, says the Lord, “who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to Egypt [a symbol for the world], and have not asked My advice...” Isa 30:1-2.

Take Refuge from the Coming Judgement

The next reading suggests that when a momentous catastrophic event occurs, causing universal anxiety and panic that will shake and destabilise the majority of the world’s population, Christians may feel obliged to minister to those in such great distress. But in such

a distressed state people will not be open or capable of receiving ministry, and so Christians are advised to be still, and wait for things to settle, and then minister as the Lord directs them.

“Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood [those causing violence and death], and will no more cover her slain. [Those who have engaged in war mongering, genocide, slavery, and the multitude of activities causing death to the innocent will have their identities and sins disclosed].” Isa 26:20-27.

The Righteous will be Kept by God in the Time of Tribulation

Many end-time prophecies like these two from Joel and Isaiah assure us that when God’s judgement falls and the earth is violently shaken, that the Lord will be a shelter for His children and sustain them in all of their circumstances.

“Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” Isa 3:10-11.

“The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” Joel 3:16.

God will Bless the Church

After describing the judgement and downfall of the nations, Joel presents this picture of restoration and blessing of the Church.

“So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem [the Church] shall be holy, and no aliens [those who reject Christ] shall ever pass through her again.’ And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; a fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Acacias...But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.” Joel 3:17-18& 20.

CHAPTER 19

THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTICHRIST'S KINGDOM

God's intervention causes disharmony and self-destruction in Antichrist's army. The Ten Kings are made to hate the Harlot and bring about her total destruction. The satanic trio is defeated and cast into the lake of fire. God issues a warning for all who have been associated with the Harlot to "come out of her" to avoid partaking of her punishment.

DISINTEGRATION THROUGH SELF-DESTRUCTION

In Revelation 17, we are told that the Ten Kings set up an alliance with the beast, or Antichrist, to accomplish their common aim of world domination. Then we see an unexpected development. Antichrist's confederates had been under Satan's strict discipline, which had kept them in perfect cohesion. Now God causes their cohesion to be removed, and they turn on one another in self-destruction.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE HARLOT

In the following prophecy from Revelation, we see an example of self-destruction in the midst of Antichrist's kingdom. In this case it is the destruction of the Harlot.

"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled." Rev 17:16-17.

We are told that the ten horns or Ten Kings will **"hate the harlot," "make her desolate," "naked," "eat her flesh,"** and **"burn her with fire."**

The Ten Kings will **hate the Harlot**: We are told that this is caused by God's intervention, for **"God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose."** The time will have arrived for God's righteous judgement of the Harlot, resulting in her total destruction.

Antichrist and the Ten Kings had used the Harlot or the office of the Pope with its spurious proclamations to undermine the validity of the true Church by introducing many false doctrines and practices that were unscriptural. Having fulfilled their purpose, the Ten Kings will see that the Catholic Church had become such a powerful influence in the world, socially, religiously, and financially, and that she now posed a threat to their quest for complete domination of the world.

She will be made desolate: The Catholic Church has millions of devoted followers, who are unaware of her gross apostasy and blasphemy against God. When the truth is revealed, as is beginning to happen, she will eventually be stripped of her devotees and left desolate.

She will be made naked: From a spiritual point of view, being made naked is for all sins to be exposed and to be stripped of all integrity. Again, this is starting to happen as the Harlot's many sins are being brought into public view, sins such as the horrendous paedophilia and abuses committed by clergy against vulnerable young people entrusted to their care, and the cover-ups to protect the reputation of the church. Other matters, like the role of the Pope and his papal decrees, doctrinal flaws, and the financial dealings of the Vatican Bank, are being brought under public scrutiny.

They will eat her flesh: Since it is the Ten Kings, or controllers of the finances of the world, who are made to hate the Harlot, we may expect to see that she will be made impoverished as they withdraw their financial support.

They will burn her with fire: So extensive will be God's judgement of the Harlot that she will be annihilated and cease to exist as an authentic Christian Church.

Self-destruction in the Ranks of Those Under Antichrist's Control

In Revelation 18 there is a proclamation of the fall of 'Babylon the Great' or Antichrist's kingdom, declaring that it will be home to every kind of demon spirit, who will cause destructive animosity in its ranks.

"Babylon the great [a reference to Antichrist's kingdom] is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!" Rev 18:2-3.

The following reading reveals that when God's judgement begins to fall on Antichrist's kingdom, the animosity caused by the demon spirits will lead to enmity and self-destruction.

"I will call for a sword against Gog [Antichrist's kingdom] throughout all My mountains,' says the Lord God. 'Every man's sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone [symbols of severe judgement]." Ezek 38:21-22.

Peter tells us that false teachers and prophets will **"bring in destructive heresies"** and bring on themselves swift destruction.

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." 2 Peter 2:2.1.

Satanic Spirits will Feast on Antichrist's Defeated Army

The nineteenth chapter of Revelation describes the final consequence of obeying Antichrist rather than God. The **"birds that fly in the midst of heaven"** are symbols of demon spirits who are invited by God to feast on those who have aligned themselves with Antichrist.

To feast on Antichrist's followers is to bring them under demonic control, filling them with their presence, and inflicting incapacitating torment. This judgement is an indication of God's triumphant victory, as all who gave their allegiance to Antichrist are now devastated by the spirits they had yielded to. No one is exempt from this judgement, for all must suffer the consequences of the choices they have made in rejecting God.

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds [symbols for demon spirits] that fly in the midst of heaven [the atmosphere], ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses [symbols for instruments of warfare] and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.’” Rev 19:17-18.

THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF ANTICHRIST'S ARMY

God's Intervention

The following proclamation by Daniel assures us that God will intervene and destroy Antichrist's kingdom and replace it with His own everlasting kingdom. Included in this judgement will be the destruction of Satan's control of the world and the world order he created and the restoration of the Church. The whole world with all of its kingdoms will be subjected to God, and their destiny will be in His hands. It is important to see from this reading that this is brought about by God Himself.

“But the court shall be seated and they shall take away his [Antichrist's] dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” Dan 7:26-27.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SATANIC TRIO

Revelation forecasts the final outcome of Antichrist's war against Christ and His army of **“called, chosen, and faithful”** saints who had been engaged in spiritual warfare with Him.

“And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him [the Lord] who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest [of their spiritual and physical allies] were killed with the sword [the sword of the Spirit using the word of God] which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” Rev 19:17-21.

The rest of Antichrist's followers were 'killed' or rendered spiritually powerless by the word of God, presented in testimonies by Christ's faithful followers. Revelation 20 extends this:

“Now when the thousand years have expired [the end of the Church age], Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog [Antichrist’s army], to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints [the whole Church] and the beloved city. And fire [God’s judgement] came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Rev 20:7-10.

COME OUT OF HER

In the eighteenth chapter of Revelation, we have a stern warning to those who have been involved in Antichrist’s kingdom.

“For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” Rev 18:1-5.

This warning applies to those who have wittingly or unwittingly accepted the false doctrines and practices of Antichrist that have been exposed in this study. There is no alternative than to repent and return to the teachings of Christ as they are revealed in the Scriptures.

CHAPTER 20

RESTORATION TO THE PATTERN OF THE SPIRITFILLED EARLY CHURCH

To restore the Church is to restore it to the pattern of the early Church founded by Christ and the apostles. This chapter describes the operation of the Spirit in the early Church and in the lives of the early Christians. We are shown the importance of love to engender faith in ministry, and the necessity of keeping our eyes on our spiritual blessings rather than our physical and spiritual inadequacies.

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

When the crowd heard Peter's sermon at Pentecost, they repented and asked Peter what they should do. He replied, **"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing [revivals] may come from the presence of the Lord [His Spirit], and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."** Acts 3:19-21.

Peter's first instruction was to repent and receive the Lord's salvation. He then predicted three main occurrences that would confront the Church in the future.

1. The need for restoration implies that there would be a period of decline accompanied by spiritual dryness and deadness. Of course, this has happened, as Antichrist has succeeded in replacing the ministries of the Lord with worldly alternatives and the operation of the Spirit with works of the flesh.
2. There would be times of refreshing, or revivals, which would temporally restore the power of the Holy Spirit to the life of the Church. Each of these revivals has been vehemently opposed by Antichrist and brought to a premature end. An example is the Charismatic revival, which was counteracted by lawlessness and false signs and wonders.
3. There will be a time of restoration of all things when the Spirit of Christ will restore the Church to the pattern of the early Church that He and the apostles founded.

THE LATTER RAIN

We have been shown in the Scriptures that restoration will be precipitated by the falling of the latter rain of the Spirit. This was prophesied by Joel and by Zechariah, who encourages us to pray for the latter rain of the Spirit, which will fall in the last days to generate the restoration of all things.

"Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone." Zech 10:1.

Since restoration of all things means to restore to the pattern of the early Church, we will now turn our attention to the way the Holy Spirit operated in the early Church.

THE OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The following spiritual empowerments were normal in the early Church, but many have been neglected or banished from our present-day Church.

The Regeneration of the Spirit

All believers who have confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and received salvation have received an impartation of the Holy Spirit that has regenerated their own spirit, enabling them to understand spiritual truth and grow in the knowledge of the Lord. This regeneration of the spirit is for personal spiritual growth that enables a person to understand the Scriptures and enter into a personal relationship with the Lord. This should not be equated with the baptism with the Spirit and receiving the gifts of the Spirit. The regeneration of the Spirit is for personal spiritual growth, whereas the baptism with the Spirit is being equipped by the Holy Spirit to minister to the needs of other members of the body of Christ.

Baptism with the Spirit

In studying the Book of Acts, a history of the early Church, we cannot find an iron clad rule for receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit with accompanying gifts. The following are examples of varying ways that the baptism with the Spirit was received.

Pentecost

Before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised baptism with the Spirit.

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” Acts 1:4-5.

About one hundred and twenty gathered in Jerusalem, waiting on the Lord with prayer and supplication for seven days until the Spirit fell on them.

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4.

The statement, **“when the Day of Pentecost had fully come”** is significant, suggesting that the Holy Spirit could not fall until the souls of those waiting disciples were well prepared and in one accord in their desire to be selfless bond servants of the Lord. This

preparation of self-denial and total commitment to the Lord's will is a necessary element in receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Falling on the Gentiles

The normal order for being baptised with the Spirit was to declare one's belief in Jesus Christ, be baptised in water, and then later be baptised with the Holy Spirit, mostly by the laying on of hands. Because of the reluctance of the Jews to believe that salvation was for the Gentiles as well, God reversed the order to demonstrate His approval of salvation for the Gentiles by directing the Spirit to fall on them before they were baptised in water.

A centurion called Cornelius, **“a devout man and one who feared God with all his household,”** was told by an angel to send for Peter and to listen to what he would say. Peter was reluctant to go at first, because Jews had no dealings with Gentiles, but he was shown by a series of visions that it was God's will. When Peter began to present the gospel message to Cornelius and his assembled guests, the Spirit fell while Peter was speaking.

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision [the Jews with Peter] who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” Acts 10:44-48.

The Baptism with the Spirit on New Converts at Samaria

This account of the baptism with the Spirit on new converts in Samaria is probably the best model for us to follow for guidance. Philip the evangelist preached the gospel to the people of Samaria, and they all believed and were baptised in water.

“Then Philip [an evangelist] went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralysed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city... But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.”

They believed, they were baptised in water, but at this point no one had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” Acts 8:5-8, 12, & 14-17.

The power to lay hands on people to receive the baptism with the Spirit is a gift given by God according to His will - in this case given to Peter and John but not to Philip, even though he had the ministry of an evangelist and had been baptised with the Spirit himself. Insight into this gift of imparting the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands is revealed in what happened next.

“And when Simon [the sorcerer] saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!” Acts 8: 18-20.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Generally, the gifts of the Holy Spirit accompany the baptism with the Holy Spirit. One indication that the gifts have been imparted is that the recipient is enabled to speak in ‘tongues,’ a spiritual language of praise and worship. However, this is not universal, because Paul asked, “Do all speak in tongues?”

The Basic Nine Gifts of the Spirit

The nine basic gifts of the Spirit are outlined in this reading from the twelfth chapter of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian Church.

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit [the Holy Spirit is in charge of imparting the gifts of the Spirit]. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord [the Lord imparts ministries]. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all [God directs activities of the Church]. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Cor 12:4-11.

Other Gifts of the Spirit Associated with General Ministering

Apart from the nine basic gifts, Paul and Peter list empowerments for general ministries as gifts of the Spirit.

“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.” 1 Cor 12:28.

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” Rom: 12:4-8.

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.” 1 Peter 4:10-13.

An Answer to Prayer for Boldness Under Persecution

Peter and John were threatened by Jewish leaders when they refused to stop speaking in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Later they and the rest of the disciples prayed for strengthening to speak ‘with all boldness,’ and the Lord responded by filling them afresh with the Holy Spirit.

“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:28-31.

Being Continually Filled with the Spirit

Even though the members of the early Church were baptised with the Spirit, believers were expected to be continually filled with the Spirit. Paul told the Ephesian believers “**And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...**” Eph 5:18. Paul’s instruction was not a word of advice, but a command. There are a number of ways for believers to be continually filled and strengthened with the Spirit:

- Using the gifts of the Spirit, which also strengthens our spirits.
- Praying in the Spirit with the gift of tongues. Paul told the Corinthians, “**He who speaks in a tongue edifies** [strengthens his spirit, like recharging a battery] **himself...**” 1 Cor 14:4-6.
- Reading and meditating on the Scriptures.

- Prayer, particularly with praise and worship.
- Sharing in the sacrament of communion.
- Attending fellowship meetings with other Christians, **“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.”** Heb 10:25.

Further Infilling to Equip for Ministry

As we grow spiritually, we may encounter sterner trials or be entrusted with another ministry and require a further anointing to strengthen and empower us. Timothy received a further empowerment to engage in his ministry as an evangelist. **“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”** 2 Tim 1:6.

Now, at the end of the age, the bottomless pit has been opened, and the shaking of the earth is beginning to be apparent, and we are already witnessing a world population under severe psychological stress, with people unable to see or understand the spiritual reality behind what is happening. It seems that everywhere we look we see a desperate need for truth to be revealed and people to receive spiritual counselling, healing, and deliverance from satanic oppression. There is so much need, and so few Christians are empowered with the infilling of the Spirit to equip them for this type of ministry. We have already seen prophecies of the falling of the Spirit in the latter days, and every Christian should have a yearning in his heart to be filled with the Spirit and be available to the Lord to minister as He directs us according to His will.

THE WORLD WILL KNOW US BY OUR LOVE

After listing the nine basic gifts of the Spirit, Paul presents an astounding conclusion - that without love, the gifts of the Spirit are useless.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” 1 Cor 13:1-3.

The reason that a lack of love makes our ministering profitless is that love engenders faith. When a person receiving ministry is confronted by the love of the Lord, and there is no sense of being judged, condemned, or spoken down to, their faith rises in response to our love and genuine care for their well-being.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” Gal 5:5.

Paul then described the nature of the love that should be manifested by all Christians.

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” 1 Cor 13:4-8.

It is apparent that this love is not ordinary human love, which would fail often when faced with the opposing attitudes listed above. This is divine love, or ‘agape’ love, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is in us and may flow out from us. For instance, when confronted by a contentious person, our love usually fails, but when we inwardly draw on the love of the Lord, His love begins to flow out from us, overcoming all contention. In His last addresses to us, Jesus stresses the absolute necessity to love one another.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35.

Jesus then told us to abide or receive His love in every part of our living experience.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.” John 15:9-10.

OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN HEAVENLY PLACES

In addressing the Church at Ephesus, Paul assured her and all believers that they have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...” Eph 1:3.

The word ‘places’ was added by translators to enhance readability, but does not seem to convey the original sense Paul intended, as it suggests locations. The sense of the phrase is all blessings that Christ has acquired for us are set aside in heaven for us to claim. The spiritual things by which God has blessed us are all that Christ has acquired for us by His sacrificed body and shed blood. They are all potentially ours and are laid up in heaven for us to claim. Paul then goes on to list some of these spiritual blessings.

“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...” Eph 1:4.

“...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself...” Eph 1:5.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...” Eph 1:7.

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...” Eph 1:13.

“...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...” Eph 1:17.

“...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...” Eph 1:18.

“...what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named...” Eph 1:19-21

Our spiritual position relates to where our attention lies - on our physical condition with its weaknesses and suffering, or our ability to walk in the spiritual blessings Christ has acquired for us. To know peace and victory in overcoming, our spiritual position should be raised in Christ, and united with Him in the spiritual realm of our blessings, far above all principalities and powers of darkness.

Other Blessing Readings

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor 5:21.

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — if indeed you continue in the faith...” Col 1:21-23.

WALKING IN SPIRITUAL RATHER THAN PHYSICAL TRUTH

Having been eternally saved, baptised in water and with the Spirit, we are recipients of many spiritual blessings, like being **“the righteousness of God in Him,”** and **“holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight?”**

However, when we look at ourselves from a physical point of view, our Christian walk is one of continually sinning, repenting, and praying for forgiveness. So, what is the truth then? Are we the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ or are we continual sinners? Actually, both are true, depending on whether we are looking at ourselves from a physical point of view or walking in the light of what Jesus has procured for us by His sacrificed body and shed blood.

Whatever point of view we generally regard ourselves greatly affects our spiritual walk and well-being. A mind set on physical reality may lead to negativity, disillusionment, and even depression. A mind set on spiritual blessings results in spiritual life and peace. Where Paul set his mind when under severe opposition is made apparent in this next reading. First Paul describes their continual afflictions.

“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” 2 Cor 4:8-9.

He then shows where his mind was focused. **“...we do not look at the things which are seen [physical reality], but at the things which are not seen [spiritual reality]. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor 4:18.**

Similarly, Paul told the Colossians, **“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, [baptised into Christ’s death and raised in His resurrection as new creations] and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Col 3:2-4.**

Our spiritual position should be united with Christ, with our minds set on the blessings He procured for us, so that we are able to walk in them.

Without the Spirit There Is No Restoration

Zerubbabel rebuilding the temple is also a type of the restoration of the end-time Church. Zechariah was told to say to Zerubbabel, **“Not by might nor by power [the works of man], but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” Zech 4:6.** It is through the power of the Holy Spirit operating in the lives of believers that God will accomplish the restoration of the Church.

We have seen that Antichrist’s demise will be brought about by the brightness of the Lord’s coming. This brightness will be precipitated by the falling of the ‘latter rain’ of the Spirit empowering believers to minister with miraculous power, and to discern and destroy the works of Antichrist.

The Effect of the Latter Rain at the Close of the Age

When the latter rain begins to fall on the Church at the close of the age, the influence of the Spirit will be greatly accelerated, and the whole Church and the world will come under its influence. To gauge its effect, we should turn our attention to what happened when the early rain fell at Pentecost. The early apostles and disciples were comparatively new Christians, although their spiritual maturity would have been greatly enhanced by their association with Jesus and His teaching. The following accounts from the Book of Acts demonstrate the effect of the Spirit falling and convicting multitudes of unbelievers.

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:41-46.

“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.” Acts 4:33.

“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people...And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and

women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, **and they were all healed.**” Acts 5:12-16.

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY “COME!”

The bridal members prepare the way for the Church to be filled with the Spirit, but it is the will of the Lord that the whole Church be engaged in the ministries that follow. The Holy Spirit and the members of the bride beckon us to be filled with the Spirit and be involved in the final defeat of Antichrist and the restoration of the Church.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” Rev 22:17.

There is no demand for recipients to have attained a certain level of maturity, only to have an unquenchable desire to be a dedicated bond servant of the Lord in this time of restoration. The empowerment for this cannot be earned by good works or moral purity, only by the grace of God. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will be freely given to those who thirst: **“I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.”** Rev 21:6.

We should have an unquenchable desire for the infilling of the Spirit, for the Spirit will not impose Himself on the indifferent or half hearted. Our desire for the Spirit should not be as a means of personal gratification, but to be a fully equipped vessel that the Lord can use.

All those who thirst for the Spirit will be involved in the glory of the Lord being reinstated in the Church, but above all, this will be a sovereign work of God in casting down all those who have opposed Jesus Christ, to establish His sovereignty throughout the earth.

This will be the victorious outcome of the Battle of Armageddon: **“These [the confederacy of Antichrist] will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”** Rev 17:14.