

“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 1:9)



The Book of Revelation

A Devotional Commentary by Jeffrey Khoo, BTh, MDiv, STM, PhD

REVELATION: A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

*Expository Sermons Preached at True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church
from 29 August 2021 to 2 October 2022 by the Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo*

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I

WHY STUDY REVELATION?

Revelation 1:1-3

We now embark on our study of the book of Revelation. Let us turn to Revelation chapter one and examine the first three verses.

We all desire to know the future. It is natural to be interested and curious about what lies ahead. What will happen in the days to come?

If we want to know the future, we must not seek answers from fortune-tellers or horoscopes.

Instead, we should turn to the one who truly knows the future: God Himself. God has revealed the events of the future with certainty in His Word, the Holy Scriptures.

How we thank God that we have His Word in our hands today! God gave His Word by divine inspiration, and throughout the ages, He has preserved it and kept it pure for us. Not a single detail is lost.

In a road map, missing details can lead us astray. But God, in His perfect wisdom, ensured that His map for our lives—our journey to heaven—retains every detail. Not one jot or tittle is missing. Every important landmark is there, guiding us to our heavenly home surely and safely.

We are particularly grateful for this book of Revelation. God wants us to know what lies ahead, and this is why the very first verse begins with the words, “*The revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

The word “revelation” comes from the idea of revealing or making known. This applies not only to the book of Revelation but also to the entire Bible, which is the revelation of God. Through it, God reveals Himself and His good plan for us.

We have a good God, and He has a good plan for us.

God does not play hide-and-seek. He reveals clearly who He is, what He is, and how we can be saved from the judgement to come.

The phrase “*the revelation of Jesus Christ*” implies more than just revealing; it conveys the idea of uncovering or unveiling. In the past, certain truths were hidden or not fully understood. But now, they are unveiled so that this generation—especially end-time believers—might know and understand what God has revealed.

The Bible is filled with prophecy—one-quarter of it, in fact, is prophetic. God wants us to know what will happen, just as He revealed the future to the nation of Israel.

Many prophecies given to Israel have already been fulfilled in history, while others point to distant future events.

For example, in Daniel 2, God gave King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon a dream about a great image: a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay (see diagram on page 3 adapted from *A Pictorial Guide to Bible Prophecy* by Paul Lee Tan).

What did this image represent? Though the dream was mysterious, God did not keep it a secret. He revealed its meaning to Daniel, His servant, who then explained it to Nebuchadnezzar.

HEAD OF GOLD
BABYLONIAN
EMPIRE

BREAST AND
ARMS OF
SILVER
MEDO-
PERSIAN
EMPIRE

BELLY
AND
THIGHS
OF
BRASS

GRECIAN
EMPIRE

LEGS
OF
IRON

ROMAN
EMPIRE

666 YEARS

THE PRESENT DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY

PIRE 636

TIME IS NOT RECKONED WHERE ISRAEL IS LO-AMMI

DAN

1917

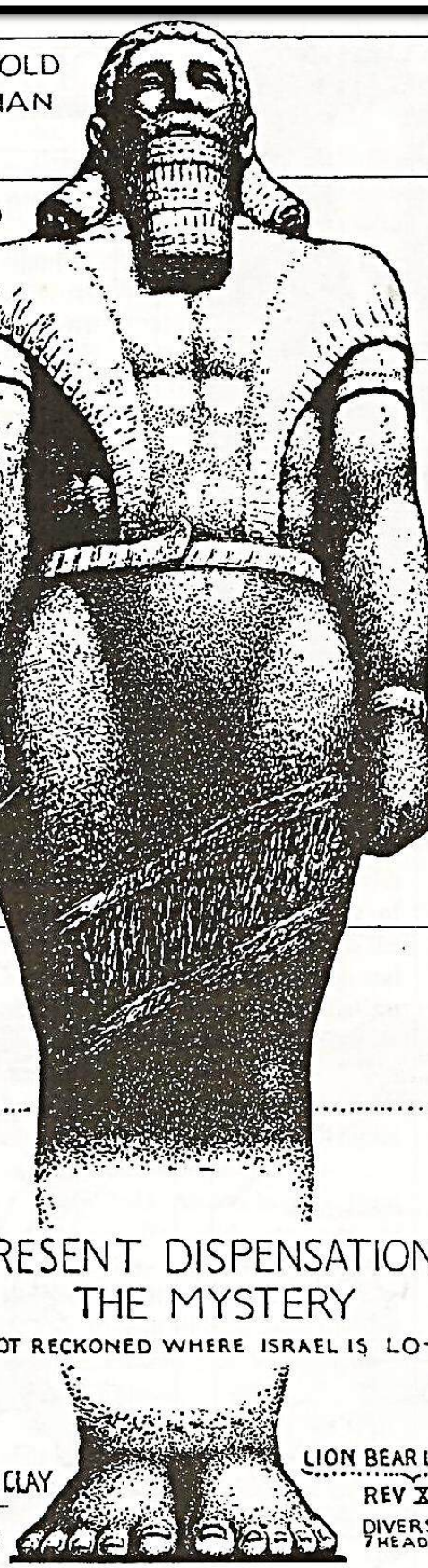
FEET OF IRON AND CLAY

TEN KINGS

LION BEAR LEOPARD

REV XIII

DIVERSE BEAST
7 HEADS 10 HORNS



This is why Daniel praised God in Daniel 2:20–23, saying: *“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king’s matter.”*

The king’s dream, as described in the book of Daniel, is a remarkable prophecy. Later, you will read how Daniel explained its meaning to Nebuchadnezzar. The wise men in Nebuchadnezzar’s court were unable to interpret the dream or even recount its content, but Daniel, by God’s revelation, was able to do both.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, *“You are the head of gold.”* This referred to the Babylonian Empire, with Nebuchadnezzar as its leader.

However, Daniel also prophesied that this kingdom would not last forever. It would eventually collapse and be replaced by another—the silver kingdom, which represented the Medo-Persian Empire.

The Medo-Persian Empire, too, would not endure.

It would be conquered by the bronze empire, which was the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great. Alexander’s worldwide conquest established Greece as a dominant power.

Yet, even this empire would fall, giving way to the iron kingdom—the Roman Empire.

Finally, Daniel’s prophecy spoke of a last world empire, described as part iron and part clay—a revived Roman Empire under the Antichrist, which is yet to come.

The first four kingdoms have already risen and fallen, just as prophesied. This gives us confidence that the final kingdom will also come to pass.

The rise of this final world empire signals the imminent return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Christ will come to judge the world and establish His millennial reign—a thousand-year kingdom where we, as believers and His children, will reign with Him. This is our glorious and blessed hope.

While many aspects of the prophecy were revealed to Daniel, some parts remained hidden. In Daniel 12:8–9, Daniel writes: *“And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”*

Certain elements of the prophecy were sealed, hidden even from Daniel. These truths were reserved for the time of the end—when the world’s final events would unfold.

Now, as we approach the end, these hidden things have been unveiled through the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is an uncovering—a full revelation of Jesus Christ. It provides clarity and understanding to many of the prophecies found in the book of Daniel.

For example, some prophecies in Daniel were difficult to interpret fully at the time. However, when we read Revelation alongside Daniel, we gain a clearer understanding of God’s plan for the end times.

Daniel, though greatly privileged to receive divine revelation, was not given full knowledge of God’s prophecies.

But, we, living closer to the end, are privileged to have the book of Revelation. It unveils what will soon take place, as described in Revelation 1:1: *“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.”*

These events are not only certain but will come to pass shortly.

The prophecies of Revelation are a gift to us, offering insight into God’s ultimate plan and the hope of Christ’s return.

The Book of Revelation was written in the first century, around AD 90. When the Lord says, *“These things must shortly come to pass”*.

It has been 2,000 years since then. These things were given to the believers of the first century, but the world hasn’t ended yet. In view of this, we might wonder what does *“must shortly come to pass”* really mean?

To understand this phrase, we must consider God’s perspective. In 2 Peter 3:8, we are reminded that *“one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”*

From God’s viewpoint, 2,000 years is equivalent to just two days—a short time. Thus, *“shortly come to pass”* refers to the imminence of these events, meaning they can happen at any moment.

While we do not know the exact day or hour, as believers, we are not in darkness. We are children of light, illuminated by God’s Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who helps us discern His truth.

The New Testament contains many prophecies regarding the end times and the second coming of Christ.

In Matthew 24, Jesus provided His disciples with signs of the end when they asked, *“When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”*

He listed events to watch for, and as we observe these signs today—whether in the news or global events—the Lord grants us understanding that *“the time is at hand.”*

Jesus warned of false Christs and false prophets, which we see in abundance today, alongside a proliferation of false Christianity.

He also mentioned pestilences. For instance, consider the COVID-19 pandemic, which spread across the globe. Scientists in Singapore recently discovered that the virus is highly adaptive. Once it enters the body, it studies our immune system, counteracts it, and mutates to evade resistance. Is this pandemic going to end soon? Likely not. God is using these events to warn humanity that judgement is coming. This pandemic is only a glimpse of what lies ahead.

Natural disasters—earthquakes, pestilences, and climate crises—align with Jesus’ predictions. Climate change discussions dominate headlines, and disasters are becoming increasingly severe.

Wars and rumours of wars are also prevalent. Tensions among superpowers, such as those in the South China Sea, the Middle East, and Afghanistan, highlight ongoing conflict. Iran recently threatened to attack Israel, a nation central to biblical prophecy.

These events are unfolding simultaneously, fulfilling the prophecies in Revelation and signalling that *“the time is at hand.”*

Therefore, it is vital to study the Book of Revelation and prepare for the Lord’s return.

God is warning the world to repent and believe in Him to escape the judgement to come. For believers, we must remain watchful, prayerful, and ready for His coming.

We are not blind, nor do we want to be blind. We want to see, and God wants us to see as well. If we want to escape the judgement to come, we must quickly repent and confess the Lord Jesus. I trust that most of us here are believers.

But if there is anyone among us who has not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that you believe in Him now. Without belief in the Lord Jesus, you are cursed. Don't remain under a curse—choose to be blessed instead.

This is why we study the Book of Revelation: so that we may be blessed.

Verse 3 says, "*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*"

The Lord's coming can happen at any moment, and it could be very soon. Therefore, we must strive to be a people blessed by God.

How? By reading, hearing, and keeping what is written in this book.

Verse 2 provides the context: we are to read, hear, and keep the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The word *blessed* is significant—it is a *beatitude*. You may recall the nine beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. But Scripture contains many other beatitudes, including this one in Revelation 1:3.

The Greek word for "*blessed*" here is *makarios*, which means happiness—but not just ordinary happiness. It refers to superlative happiness, a blessedness that comes from God, originating not from the world but from heaven itself. This blessing is exclusive to believers.

Unbelievers are described as cursed because of sin and the wrath to come. But we, as believers, are blessed.

If you are not yet a believer, don't remain cursed. Come to Christ, read, hear, and keep His Word, and you will experience God's blessings.

The three actions mentioned in verse 3—reading, hearing, and keeping—are characteristics of a true believer.

If you want to be saved from the judgement and wrath to come, you must have all three. It is not enough just to hear; you must also keep what is written.

What does it mean to read, hear, and keep?

To read means to know. Knowledge is essential, and you gain knowledge by reading. If you are unable to read, then you must hear. Hear what? Hear the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17).

The Christian faith is not a superstitious or ignorant religion; it is an intelligent faith. To be blessed by God, we must fill our minds with the truth of His Word.

This is why the pulpit ministry takes centre stage in our worship services. Worship is not just about singing or praying—it is also about knowing God's Word.

Do we read the Scriptures? Do we hear His Word preached?

Thank God for those who shared the Gospel with us, leading us to salvation. But now that we are saved, we must also share this knowledge with others. Have we been evangelising and witnessing for the Lord?

In Romans 10:14–15, we are reminded: *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.”*

Have we been sharing the good news with our family, friends, colleagues, and classmates? When was the last time you gave a tract to someone, prayed for the unsaved, or shared the Gospel with someone in need?

We live in times where people are searching for answers amid pain, suffering, and evil in the world. They may ask, “What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? Is life worth living?”

We have the answer: Yes, there is a God—a good and loving God—who sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins. If they believe in Him, they will be saved. People need to hear this good news.

Invite them to church. Encourage them to study the Book of Revelation, which is rich in both prophecy and the Gospel of Christ.

As we expound on the prophecies, we also proclaim the Gospel, praying that those who hear will understand and believe. Let us commit ourselves to the work of evangelism, especially in these last days.

It is not enough just to know the Scriptures. Equally important is understanding them. Some people may read and know what is written in the Bible, but they fail to grasp its meaning. Merely knowing is insufficient for salvation—you also need to understand what you have read.

In Revelation 1:3, it says, *“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.”*

The word *“hear”* here goes beyond the mere act of listening. In the original language, it carries the additional idea of understanding. In fact, this word can also be translated as *understand*.

Thus, we can read it as: *“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy.”* Understanding is essential, not just knowing.

There are many who read but do not understand. We must pray that as we read, we also understand what is written in this book.

If you are a believer, you have the Holy Spirit within you—the Spirit of Truth. This Word is the Word of Truth, and the Spirit will guide you into all truth. Every true believer is capable of understanding the contents of this book, for spiritual truths are spiritually discerned.

If you find yourself not understanding, something is dreadfully wrong. It may indicate a spiritual issue, as the Holy Spirit enables believers to discern and understand the Scriptures.

If you do understand, take comfort! This is one sign that the Holy Spirit dwells within you and that you are truly saved. Understanding the Word of God brings assurance and encouragement.

But what if you are not yet saved? If you pray earnestly for understanding, the Lord can be merciful to you. Through His Spirit, He can grant you understanding to convict your heart, leading you to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Understanding is a gift of God’s grace, enabling you to believe and be saved.

However, knowing and understanding alone are still not enough for salvation. There are those who know the Bible, who even understand its teachings and agree with them, yet remain unsaved.

They may profess to be Christians, saying, “Yes, I know the Bible. I understand it. I agree with it.” But mere agreement does not equate to saving faith.

God is not impressed by mere intellectual knowledge or understanding. True faith requires heart knowledge and obedience.

This is why we must not only read and hear God’s Word but also keep it.

Obedience to the Scriptures is essential. Without it, salvation remains incomplete.

Simply knowing and agreeing with the truths of Scripture is insufficient. This kind of faith mirrors that of Satan and his demons, who know and believe in God’s existence yet remain condemned.

James 2:19 highlights this: *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”*

The demons recognise God’s sovereignty, understand their eventual judgement, and agree with the facts of Scripture, but they are destined for destruction.

Similarly, there are those who claim belief but exhibit no change in their lives. This is not saving faith—it is a false, satanic faith. They exploit God’s grace as a license to sin, believing they can enjoy worldly pleasures and still gain heaven. Such self-deception leads to damnation.

True faith involves more than intellectual assent; it produces obedience. James reminds us that *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26). Genuine faith leads to repentance, confession of sin, and a desire to obey God.

While believers still struggle with sin and may falter, true faith drives them to seek forgiveness, turn from sin, and strive for holiness. They grieve over their sins, confess them, and resolve to live in obedience to God’s commands. This ongoing transformation is evidence of God’s work in their lives.

Revelation 1:3 emphasises this threefold response: *“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”*

It is not enough to read and hear; we must also obey. Obedience demonstrates the sincerity of our faith and secures God’s blessings.

Jesus said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). True love for Christ compels us to follow His Word.

Faith that does not produce obedience is like someone entering a restaurant, seeing and smelling the delicious food, but refusing to eat. It provides no nourishment or benefit. In the same way, intellectual knowledge without action is useless.

Saving faith engages the mind, heart, and will, resulting in a transformed life. Those who obey God’s Word experience spiritual growth, assurance of salvation, and the joy of belonging to Christ.

Let us examine our faith. Is it marked by obedience and a desire to honour God? True faith is a living, active faith that bears fruit, grows in grace, and reflects the character of Christ. *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”* (James 2:26). A living faith brings spiritual blessings and the assurance of eternal life.

II BEATITUDES OF REVELATION

Revelation 1:3

Revelation 1:3 says, “*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*”

This is the first beatitude in the book of Revelation. As you know, the word “beatitude” means blessing—divine blessing. Note that this word blessing is not found only once in the book of Revelation; it is found six other times. Altogether, there are seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation.

The number seven is significant. In Scripture, the number seven represents perfection—it is the number of God, and God is perfect. The number seven represents God, perfection, and completeness.

God is telling us that His blessings are perfect and complete in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who bestows all these blessings, and they come from Him. These blessings are seven times pure—pure, perfect, complete, and full.

Previously, we studied the first beatitude in Revelation 1:3. Today, we shall consider and meditate upon the six other beatitudes found in the book of Revelation.

The second beatitude is found in Revelation 14:13: “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*”

You may ask, “What blessing is there in death?” After all, death is not something we desire to experience.

Indeed, death is a curse. But here, we see that there is a blessing in death if you die in the Lord. The verse tells us, “*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*”

What does it mean to “*die in the Lord*”?

It means to die as a Christian, as a believer, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when you die believing and trusting in Christ, you do not truly die—you live! Death is not the end; death is really life.

That is why Paul could say, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” To die is to receive more life—more of Christ! That is why it is a blessed thing to die in the Lord.

Jesus Himself said, “*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*” (John 11:25-26).

For Christians, death is truly an entrance into life—eternal life. That is why it is such a great blessing, even a perfect blessing from the Lord, for those who die in the Lord.

It is such a blessing because eternal life is a gift. We do not deserve it, but God, in His love and grace, has given us this gift of eternal life in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If we believe, we are saved, and God grants us this gift of salvation.

However, the Lord wants to bless us even more. After we are saved and become His saints, we are saved to serve. We become His servants, and when we serve the Lord, our labour is not in vain.

THE SEVEN BEATITUDES OF REVELATION

I

Revelation 1:3

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

II

Revelation 14:13

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

III

Revelation 16:15

Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

IV

Revelation 19:9

Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

V

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

VI

Revelation 22:7

Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

VII

Revelation 22:14

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

The Lord will come with His rewards. Salvation is a gift, not a reward—we do not work for our salvation. Salvation has already been accomplished for us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we believe, we receive the gift of salvation. But after we are saved, we are called to serve the Lord, and God desires to bless us even more by rewarding us.

That is why Revelation 14:13 says, *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”*

Your works will follow you! What you do for the Lord—your labour and service for Him—will go with you into the life hereafter. God does not forget your labour of love for Him.

That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15 which is a classic chapter on the resurrection and the life hereafter, says: *“O death, where is thy sting?”*

Death is no longer a curse for us who believe. It is a curse for those who die outside of the Lord, but for those who die in the Lord, it is a blessing, not a curse.

“O death, where is thy sting?” There is no more sting. *“O grave, where is thy victory?”* There is no more victory.

Death has already been defeated for those of us in the Lord Jesus. *“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

“Therefore, my beloved brethren”—all fellow believers, brothers, and sisters in Christ—“be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

Because the Lord will come with His rewards, and He desires to bless us again and again. You see, we have such a good and generous God.

Are you serving the Lord? I trust that you are.

How I praise and thank the Lord that you are here this morning! Why are you here this morning? You are here to worship the Lord in this holy sanctuary. This hall becomes sacred when we invoke the name of the Lord and worship Him. You are serving the Lord right now as you worship Him.

But please know that service is not just about moving your hands and feet, running here and there, doing things. No.

Service to the Lord can also be very still and quiet. Right now, as you enter this hall, sit down, and silently meditate and pray unto the Lord, preparing your heart for worship—that is service. *“O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let all the earth keep silence before Him.”*

When the hymn is sung, and you stand because you want to honour the Lord—when you sing with all your heart, paying attention to the words, singing with sincerity and meaning—the Lord hears. The Lord delights in your singing, your praise, and He will bless you.

When we read the Scriptures, we must read them reverently, with our minds focused—not wandering. Even as the Word is preached to you right now, you must listen humbly and prayerfully, ready to receive His truth and examine yourself: How can I live for the Lord in these days? How can I live acceptably before Him? That is service. You are serving the Lord when you listen to His Word faithfully.

When you give unto the Lord, you give cheerfully and gratefully—and the Lord takes note of it.

That is why we call our worship gathering a “service”. You are here serving the Lord. And when we serve the Lord in holy worship—humbly, faithfully, sincerely, and righteously—the Lord in heaven takes note. He delights in us.

Our worship will be gold, silver, and precious stones before Him when we worship the Lord because we love Him. God takes note of our devotion, and when He returns, He will come with His rewards. Our worship and labour for Him will not be in vain.

What a blessing it is when we come each Lord’s Day! We come because we want to keep the Sabbath holy, because we delight in the Sabbath. We wake up early in the morning, looking forward to worshipping the Lord. It is not just a routine. We make sure we arrive early because we are meeting with the Lord. We come with the right heart and the right spirit to worship Him. That is service. You are serving the Lord, and the Lord takes note.

If He delights in you, you will receive a blessing—not only now but also when Jesus returns. When He comes, He will come with His rewards. Our service to Him is not in vain.

That is why we must worship Him rightly, according to His Word. Our worship service must not be driven by the flesh or worldly entertainment. It is not a rock concert to excite our emotions. It must be spiritual and godly, according to Scripture. Every part of our worship—the order of worship—must be based on Scripture. Otherwise, it is in vain.

But if we serve the Lord rightly and righteously, He promises a great blessing. Our labour and works will follow us when Jesus returns, and He will reward us accordingly.

He is such a good and generous God. Are we grateful? Do we truly worship Him? Do we really serve Him?

Pray that we are serving the Lord and serving Him in the right way. If so, then this beatitude is ours. Here we find: *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13).

The next beatitude is found in Revelation 16:15: *“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”*

Jesus says here, *“Behold, I come as a thief.”* This does not mean that Jesus is a thief, but that He comes like a thief. A thief, when he comes, does not ring your doorbell to announce his arrival.

In the same way, Jesus is saying that when He comes, it will be most unexpected and sudden.

If that is the case, then we must be ready. We must be alert, awake, and prepared for the Lord’s coming. We must not be found naked and ashamed, but clothed properly.

“Blessed is he that watcheth.” The word “watcheth” in the original Greek is *gregoreo*, from which we get the name Gregory. So, Gregory, your name has a good meaning—“be watchful.”

We must all be like Gregory—watchful! We must be alert and awake. We must always be on guard, like a sentry keeping watch over his life. We must ensure that we are not tainted by the world but live godly in the Lord.

Be a Gregory—watch your life, your beliefs, and your conduct, for all of these are important. We must be vigilant in guarding our lives, ensuring that we do not succumb to the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, lest we be found naked.

Every believer is clothed, not naked. We are all clothed, and once clothed, it is our duty to keep our garments clean. A believer *“keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”* What is this garment? It is the robe of righteousness which Jesus Himself gives to us.

We must also be clothed with the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord.

The Lord says, *“I will come as a thief in the night.”* He will come suddenly and unexpectedly, but His coming should not take us by surprise because we are not children of darkness but children of light. Although we do not know the exact day or hour, as Jesus has said, we can discern the nearness of His coming as children of God.

That is why we read from 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10: *“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”*

So, we are children of the day and not of the night. Be a Gregory—be watchful!

The Scriptures contain many prophecies that reveal what will soon take place. By knowing these things, we can understand what is happening in the world and order our lives accordingly. We must prioritise what truly matters—things that have eternal value.

Therefore, be watchful and ensure that you keep your garment pure and clean—the garment given to you by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Now, look at Revelation 19:9, the fourth beatitude of Revelation: *“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”*

“Blessed are they”—who are they? Here, “they” refers to all believers, from Genesis to Revelation.

All these believers will be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the wedding feast that will be held in heaven itself. To be part of this wedding feast, you must belong to Jesus—you must be His bride.

The church is the bride of Christ, and we know this from the context. Look at verse 7: *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come.”*

There will be a great wedding day in the future when Jesus will be joined with His wife, His bride—namely, the church. *“For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”*

How is she ready? She will be arrayed with a wedding gown. Look at verse 8: *“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”*

This righteousness does not come from within us. From within us, there is no righteousness at all. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* *“There is none righteous, no, not one”*.

This righteousness is given to us by God—the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. It is given to us when we say, “Yes, Lord, please save me, a sinner. Forgive me of my sins. I believe Jesus died for me and rose from the dead for me. Please, Lord, have mercy and save me.” When you pray that prayer of faith, God gives you this wedding gown, which is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

This wedding gown is not made by us—it is made by the Lord Jesus Himself. It took 33½ years for Him to make this gown when He was on earth. Every day of His life, He was tailoring, sewing, and putting this gown together for you and me—His righteousness.

How was this righteousness made for us? By His perfect obedience. Throughout His life, He kept the commandments of God perfectly for you and me.

God still requires this: *“ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”* (Leviticus 11:45).

If we want to live with God forever, we must be holy. But we are not holy—we are altogether sinful. Yet God requires holiness.

How can we be holy? Jesus must be holy for us. He is our representative. He kept the Ten Commandments and all of God’s laws perfectly for you and me. That is what Jesus did—He came to fulfil all righteousness.

He was sinless. He kept the commandments for us so that He could earn the righteousness we need to be accepted by God.

The righteousness and holiness we have are really not ours; they are the Lord’s. He worked it out for us and earned it for us. When we ask the Lord to give it to us, He graciously does so, clothing us in His robe of righteousness.

But this robe of righteousness, which is white and clean, is not only the perfect obedience of Christ in His life—it is also His perfect obedience in His death. Because we have sinned against God, there is a penalty: *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23).

That penalty must be paid. God, in His justice, demands punishment for sin. Jesus became our substitute—He took our place. He who had no sin became sin for us. He bore the sins of the world upon Himself on the cross, shedding His precious blood. *“Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission [forgiveness]”* (Hebrews 9:22).

Jesus had to shed His blood and die so that our righteous garment would be pure and clean. When we confess our sins, the Lord forgives us and applies the blood of Jesus to cleanse us, making us white—whiter than snow. The righteous garment, the wedding gown, is pure, white, and clean because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ in His life, His death, and His resurrection. He rose from the dead—our perfect Saviour.

We must be dressed in this wedding gown. The wedding gown is white. If you are a bride in a Christian wedding, do not choose any other colour—only one colour is acceptable. The bride must always be dressed in white—as white as can be. Do not choose off-white. Choose pure white.

A wedding is a testimony of the gospel and the blessing of God. It reminds us of the great wedding day in heaven when the bride (the church) will be joined to the groom (the Lord Jesus) and will be with Him forever.

Every wedding ceremony should remind us of that glorious day. It also reminds us to keep our garments clean—to live a godly life for the Lord.

“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

Take note: at this wedding feast, there are no guests. If you are invited, you must be the bride. Only the bride is invited. You cannot be a guest. If you want to be at this wedding, you must be the bride of Christ—you must be part of the church. You must belong to the Lord. Do not be a guest—be the bride. And the bride must not be naked; she must be dressed in the wedding

gown. You cannot buy this gown—it is given to you freely when you confess and believe in the Lord Jesus.

And now, the fifth beatitude is found in Revelation 20:6: *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

Those who have part in the first resurrection have no part in the second death. If there is a first resurrection, that means there is also a second. Likewise, if there is a second death, there must be a first death.

You do not want to be part of the second resurrection. You do not want to be among those who will experience the second death, for it is a cursed resurrection leading to a cursed death. You want to be part of the first resurrection, which is a blessed resurrection.

Know that there is not just one resurrection; there are two resurrections in the future. This is what Jesus Himself said in John 5:29: *“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

Those who have done good are all believers who have believed in the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ for that is the will of God for you. His command is to believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved. If you believe in Christ and continue to live godly in Him, keeping His word, you will experience the resurrection of life, a blessed resurrection, for it leads to eternal life in heaven.

On the other hand, those who die without Christ will also be raised from the dead bodily. Those who reject the Lord Jesus, refuse to believe in the good news, trust in themselves, worship other gods instead of the living and true God, and break His commandments remain in their sin. They have done evil, and they will face the resurrection of damnation. This resurrection leads to the lake of fire, where they will be punished and tormented forever. That is the second death—being cast into the lake of fire.

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

If you die without Christ, your soul immediately goes to hell. But one day, hell will give up its dead, and not only will you have a soul, but you will also have a body. You will be resurrected from the dead, body and soul, to stand before God’s great white throne in judgement. Those still in their sins, whose names are not found in the Lamb’s book of life, will be cast into the lake of fire, a permanent place of judgement and punishment.

However, for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the promise is clear: *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.”*

The first resurrection will take place when Christ returns in the clouds. At the sound of the last trumpet, the dead in Christ will rise first. Then, those who are still alive and remain will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

This is the first resurrection and the rapture—a blessed resurrection. The second death has no power over those who take part in this resurrection. We will live with the Lord forever in heaven and reign with Him for a thousand years when He returns to rule on earth.

Make sure you belong to this resurrection. Do not be part of the second death. God does not want anyone to perish but desires all to live. That is why He is still waiting. He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The gospel is now preached to you, dear friends. Why won't you believe? Why suffer the second death when you can live by trusting in Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life?

Jesus said: *"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"* (John 11:25-26).

Believe in Jesus and live. This is the blessing of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then we find another beatitude in Revelation 22:7, the sixth beatitude: *"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."* The word "quickly" here in the original Greek is *tachu*, from which we get the word "tachometer," a device used to measure speed. Jesus is saying, "I am coming speedily" or "I am coming soon". The context confirms this. In verse 6, we read, *"The things which must shortly come to pass,"* and in verse 10, *"For the time is at hand."* His return can happen at any time, at any moment. The Lord's return is just around the corner, and we are living in the tail end of the end times. The signs of the times—what is happening in the world today—all point to His soon return.

"I come quickly; you better be ready," the Lord tells us. If you prepare yourself, you will be blessed: *"Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."* The word "keepeth" goes back to what we read in Revelation 1:3—He who reads and hears and keeps.

The most important thing is to keep. *"Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."* You will be blessed indeed.

The word "keep" in the original Greek is written in the present tense, meaning continuous action. It is not a one-time event but a constant, ongoing obedience. You keep on keeping—you don't just keep once or twice but continually obey the Lord and believe in Him.

Keeping the faith means enduring to the end, and true faith is an enduring faith. If you have true faith, you will never say, "I quit." No matter what happens, you will keep on believing and trusting the Lord. You will keep on confessing Him until the very end because the Holy Spirit in you will not allow you to deny the Lord. Instead, you will confess your sins and continue believing, proving that your faith is real and persevering. Jesus says that those who endure to the end shall be saved. Every true believer will keep on keeping the sayings of the prophecy of this book—the Holy Scriptures, all of Scripture.

Then comes the last beatitude, the seventh, found in Revelation 22:14: *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."*

"Blessed are they that do his commandments." Faith without works is dead. If you say you have true faith, you must keep His commandments. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15).

Those who have true faith will delight in God's commandments and obey them. When you do His commandments and keep His law, you show yourself to be a true believer. Then you will have the privilege and right to eat from the tree of life, which is now in heaven, in paradise. Those who believe in the Lord will enjoy this privilege.

Adam and Eve, after they sinned, were banished from the Garden and could no longer eat from the tree of life. But for us who have believed, and for Adam and Eve, who later believed, the right to eat from this tree will be restored in heaven.

What a privilege it will be to eat from this wonderful tree! It is described in Revelation 22:2: *“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*

The tree of life symbolises eternal life. It represents perfect forgiveness and healing when Jesus returns. No more sin, no more pain, no more suffering. And we will keep on eating from this tree—not just one fruit, but twelve different kinds of fruit, yielding new fruit every month! Imagine how wonderful and delicious it will be.

And take note—there will be eating and drinking in heaven. Many Singaporeans love their food and call Singapore a food paradise. But the true food paradise is not on earth; it is in heaven!

Eating and drinking are gifts from God. If the Lord blesses you with good health to eat and drink, be thankful. This is why we give thanks before every meal. Each bite we take should be filled with gratitude to God. Eating physically, while also feasting spiritually with a thankful heart, is a foretaste of heaven on earth.

In heaven, there will be eating and drinking. There will be a wedding supper, and we will eat from the tree of life. And, of course, in that day, we will live to eat—whereas now, we eat to live. In heaven, we will no longer worry about cholesterol or calories. All the food in heaven will be perfectly healthy, and we will enjoy the blessings of our salvation fully.

Do you see how great our salvation is? Can you taste it even now? Do you look forward to it?

III BEHOLD HE COMES!

Revelation 1:7-8

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming again, and we know that His second coming is as sure and certain as His first coming.

The first coming of the Lord Jesus is a historical fact that no one can deny—not even unbelievers, not even secular historians. It is not just Christian or church historians who acknowledge His existence; even secular historians recognise that Jesus Christ lived on earth 2,000 years ago.

For instance, when I was in primary school, my history textbook included information about Jesus Christ and His earthly ministry. His life was recorded in our school's curriculum. Additionally, if you refer to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, you will find an entry on Jesus Christ. He was a historical person—He existed, He walked on earth, and no one can deny that, not even unbelievers. The only thing that unbelievers deny is His deity. They do not believe that He is God or that He is the Saviour, but they cannot deny the reality of His existence and the fact that He was crucified on the cross.

However, we know with certainty that Jesus is not only a true historical figure; He is also God and the Saviour. That is the truth. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* We thank God that He has given us the eyes of faith to see and know this truth so that we might be saved.

Jesus is coming back again. But how will He return? Verse 7 provides us with a glimpse of His return: *"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."*

The first significant word here is "Behold." This word is important—it is not just a casual glance or ordinary observation. If we truly desire to understand and be assured of the second coming of the Lord Jesus, we must behold Him. The word "behold" means to pay careful attention, to look closely, intently, and faithfully at this truth. It requires a careful, diligent examination of His person and His promise to return. Only then will we truly benefit from looking unto Jesus.

So, who is the one that is coming? It is the Lord Jesus. Scripture tells us to behold Him—the One who lived and died for our sins 2,000 years ago. The same Jesus who was crucified and rose from the dead is the one who is returning.

The verse also states: *"They also which pierced Him shall see Him."* Who were the ones who pierced Him? The Jews. Jesus came to His own, and His own received Him not. They rejected Him, crucified Him, and did great evil against Him—their God, their Saviour, and their Messiah. They cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Let His blood be on us and on our children." They rejected their Lord.

However, even though they committed such evil, God had a higher plan—He meant it for good.

The good that resulted was not only for the Jews but for all of us. Through His death, we have salvation. Because of His sacrifice, we are saved from our sins and spared from the judgement to come. We do not have to spend eternity in hell; we can live forever with God because Jesus has paid the full price for our redemption with His precious blood.

He is the one who will return—the same Jesus who was born on Christmas Day, who died on Good Friday, and who rose again on Easter Sunday. He is coming back—the very same person who is both God and Saviour.

PROPHECIES ON THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST AND THEIR FULFILMENT

Event	Prophecy	Fulfilment
His Divine Promise	Genesis 3:15	Galatians 4:4-5, Matthew 1:18
His Virgin Birth	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38
His Birthplace	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1-12, Luke 2:1-21
His Ancestry	Isaiah 11:1-10, 2 Samuel 7:12-16	Matthew 1:6, Luke 3:31-32
His Herald	Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6	Matthew 11:14
His Miracles	Isaiah 35:4-6	Matthew 15:31, Luke 7:22
His Betrayal	Psalms 41:9, Zechariah 11:12-13, 13:7	Luke 22:21, Matthew 26:15-27:5, Matthew 26:56
His Sufferings	Isaiah 53	John 1:10-11, Mark 9:12, 14:34
His Crucifixion	Psalms 22:7, 14-18, Isaiah 53:12	John 19:16-18, 34, Matthew 27:35, 38-39
His Burial	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57
His Resurrection	Psalms 16:10	Luke 24:6, Acts 3:15

Mathematical Improbability and Human Impossibility

In *Science Speaks*, Peter Stoner analysed the probability of just eight specific Messianic prophecies being fulfilled by one person, calculating the likelihood as 1 in 10¹⁷. Expanding this to 48 prophecies, he estimated the probability as 1 in 10¹⁵⁷.

This led him to conclude that the chance of the prophesied Messiah fulfilling all eight is one in 100,000,000,000,000,000, and the chance of Him fulfilling all 48 is one in 10 plus 157 zeroes.

According to *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* by J Barton Payne, there are 8,352 prophecies in the Bible, making up 27% of its content. What are the chances of all of them being fulfilled? None—unless it is God who prophesied and who will see to their fulfilment.

Just as all the prophecies about the first coming of Christ were precisely fulfilled, so will the prophecies about His second coming. God will see to it (Luke 24:44-53, Matthew 5:17, Exodus 6:6-8, and Acts 3:18).

“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

The passage also tells us that “*every eye shall see Him.*” When Jesus returns, we will see the nail prints in His hands and the wound on His side. The nails pierced His hands and feet, and the spear wounded His side. Even in His glorified and resurrected body, Jesus still bears these marks.

Remember when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection? He showed them the nail prints in His hands and invited them to touch His side. He assured them that He was the same person—not another, but the very one who died for their sins and rose again. He will come again, and when we see Him, we will behold those wounds for all eternity.

Why does Jesus still bear these wounds? He bears them so that we will always remember the great price He paid for our salvation. His suffering secured our eternal joy in heaven. When we see Him, we will be forever grateful for His sacrifice. This is why we worship Him now, and why we will worship Him even more in eternity.

Jesus has begun this great work of salvation, and He will surely bring it to completion on the final day. Our salvation is sure and secure in Him. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

And here we are also told that this same Jesus, who rose from the dead, is alive and well and is coming again. When He returns, He will come with clouds—a spectacular entrance filled with majesty and glory. Just as wedding couples sometimes use dry ice to create a cloud effect during their grand entrance, Jesus’ return will be infinitely more glorious. Every eye shall see Him, and all will marvel at His coming.

His return will be in the same manner as His ascension. In Acts 1, we read that after commissioning His disciples to be His witnesses not only in Jerusalem but also in Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth, He was taken up into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight: “*And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*” (Acts 1:9-11)

Just as the disciples were mesmerised by Jesus ascending into heaven, so too will His return be glorious. This will be fulfilled in time to come.

The Lord’s coming will be in the following manner:

He will come physically – Jesus will return with His resurrected and glorified body, the same body that could be touched and handled after His resurrection. Every eye shall see Him.

He will come visibly – He will not return as a spirit or an invisible force. His coming will be evident to all.

He will come publicly – His return will not be a secret event. Some false teachers claim that Christ has already come secretly, but this is a deception. When Jesus returns, all will see Him firsthand.

He will come gloriously – He will come with clouds, and His return will be accompanied by unparalleled majesty.

Some claim that Jesus’ second coming was fulfilled through the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This is false. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, distinct from Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. While Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, the second coming refers to His own bodily return, not the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we affirm with confidence that Christ will return physically, visibly, publicly, and gloriously.

Here, we are also told that when people see Him, they shall mourn. Every eye shall see Him, including those who pierced Him, and all the kindreds of the earth. This means that not only the Jews will see Him, but all people—including the Gentiles—will witness His return. They shall wail, mourn, and weep because of Him.

Why will they mourn? When Jesus returns, many will be filled with sorrow because they rejected Him. They refused to believe in Him and even blasphemed His name. The Gospel was preached to them, but they said, *“No, I don’t believe in Jesus. I only believe in myself. I can see myself, but I cannot see Jesus, so why should I believe in Him?”* They rejected the living and true God, choosing instead to worship their own gods. But when Jesus finally returns, they will realise the truth.

At that moment, they will say, *“Oh no! What the Bible says is true! What my Christian friend told me about salvation in Christ and His coming judgement is true! Judgement has come!”* They will mourn in deep regret.

However, while some will mourn, others will rejoice. Can there be joy when Jesus returns? Yes! Those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus will rejoice. They will be comforted, unlike those who mourn in unbelief.

We find this truth in 1 Thessalonians 4, which tells us: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

When Jesus returns, the dead in Christ will rise first. Their graves will be opened, the trumpet will sound, and they will ascend to meet the Lord. Then, those of us who are still alive will suddenly be caught up to meet Him in the air. Imagine if Jesus were to come now while we are all sitting here—suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, we would disappear and be caught up to be with Him in the clouds!

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

This is our great comfort. We will not mourn, but instead, we will rejoice! As verse 18 tells us: *“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*

So, do you want to mourn, or do you want to rejoice? Choose to be on the right side of Christ’s second coming.

Please know that the second coming of Christ consists of two parts. This is because there will be a great tribulation at the end of time. The Lord Jesus mentioned that this great tribulation will last for seven years, and we know this from Daniel 9:27. This seven-year period will be a time of God’s final judgement, during which He will pour out His wrath upon the earth. It will be a time of unparalleled suffering—a terrible time like never before. You do not want to be on earth during this period; you want to be with the Lord in heaven—and that is our great comfort.

We who believe in Christ will not be present during the great tribulation because when the Lord returns, He will take us up to be with Him. This is the first part of His coming.

We read in 1 Thessalonians 4 that when Jesus returns, He will not come all the way down to earth. Instead, He will descend from heaven and remain suspended in the air. At that moment, the trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then, we who are still alive will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

This is part one of Christ's second coming: He does not come all the way to earth, but we are taken up to meet Him in the air. This will be a glorious and blessed moment for all believers, for it is the day of our final redemption. We will receive our resurrected bodies and be with the Lord forever, just as He has promised.

When will this happen? This will take place before the great tribulation begins.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 assures us: *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The great tribulation is a time of God's wrath, and we who believe in Christ are not appointed to suffer this wrath.

Throughout the Book of Revelation, we see that God's wrath is poured out at the beginning (Revelation 6:17), the middle (Revelation 11:18), and the end of the great tribulation (Revelation 16:1, 19).

Thus, we can be confident that believers will not go through this terrible time. Instead, we will have already been taken up to be with the Lord. That is why Paul tells us to comfort one another with these words—because the Lord has delivered us from the great tribulation.

After seven years, the second part of Christ's return will take place. This time, He will come all the way down to earth. In part one, Christ meets us in the air. In part two, Christ descends fully to the earth.

Why does He return? To judge and destroy all His enemies. The Antichrist and his armies will be seeking to destroy Israel, but Israel will cry out to their Messiah for deliverance. The Lord Jesus will answer their cry—He will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Revelation 19:11-15 describes Him riding on a white horse and with a sharp sword proceeding from His mouth. With this, He will judge and destroy His enemies.

When Jesus returns, where will He land? Just as His first coming was prophesied—born of a virgin in Bethlehem—His second coming is also foretold. Zechariah 12:9-10 reveals this truth: *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."*

Does that sound familiar? We also read this in Revelation 1:7—*"every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him."*

On that day, the Jews will mourn, realising that Jesus is indeed their Messiah.

However, there are two kinds of mourning:

(1) A mourning that leads to condemnation – Some will mourn with worldly sorrow, but not repent. Like Judas Iscariot, who felt sorrow after betraying Jesus but did not truly believe, these people will mourn, but it will lead to death and destruction.

(2) A mourning that leads to salvation – Others will mourn with godly sorrow, which leads to repentance and salvation. The Jews who look upon Jesus and truly believe will be saved by His grace.

On that final day, those who refuse to repent will perish, but those who trust in Christ will be saved.

The Apostle Paul himself said in Romans 11, “*All Israel shall be saved.*” Yes, on that day, the Lord will come to deliver Jerusalem, and the Jews who mourn for their sins and believe in Him shall be saved.

Zechariah 12:11 tells us: “*In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.*”

Here we are told that Jesus will return to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. But where will this great battle take place?

In *Har Megiddo*—which is where we get the word Armageddon. *Har Megiddo* means the Mount of Megiddo. Megiddo is located in the north of Israel, near the Sea of Galilee and north of Haifa. Near Mount Megiddo lies the great Plain of Jezreel, which will be the beginning of the battleground.

Jesus will descend upon *Har Megiddo* to wage war against the Antichrist and his armies, delivering Israel and utterly defeating His enemies.

However, the battlefield will not be confined to Megiddo alone. In fact, the battle will extend from Megiddo in the north, down to the Red Sea in the south, near Eilat—a total battlefield length of about 200 miles (approximately 320 km) (see map on page 187).

This entire area will be covered in blood as the Lord, by His very word, destroys His enemies.

There is a solemn warning here. Better make peace with God now while there is still time.

You do not want to be on the side of those who fight against God. Fighting against God only leads to certain defeat. The wise choice is to make peace with Him now and be saved.

There are two mountains of Christ’s return. When Jesus comes back, He will step on two mountains: (1) Mount Megiddo (*Har Megiddo*) – Where He wages war and destroys His enemies. (2) The Mount of Olives – Where His feet will touch the ground, fulfilling prophecy.

This means that when Jesus returns, the Mount of Olives will split into two. We see this in Zechariah 14:3-4: “*Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.*”

If you visit Jerusalem today, the Mount of Olives is still intact. It has not yet split—because Jesus has not yet returned. Some claim that Christ has already come back, but if He had, you would see the Mount of Olives divided into two. Clearly, that has not happened yet.

We learn that there are two parts to Christ’s return.

Part One – The Rapture: Jesus comes for His saints. He appears in the air, and believers are caught up to meet Him. This happens before the great tribulation. It is a time of joy and deliverance for believers.

Part Two – The Second Coming to Judge: Jesus comes with His saints. He descends fully to earth and lands on Mount Megiddo. He wages war and destroys His enemies. He then stands on the Mount of Olives, which splits in two. It is a time of wrath and judgement for the ungodly.

Now that you understand what will happen, how should this knowledge influence you? Your sins must be forgiven—and there is only one way for that to happen. Jesus is the only way. Do not delay—make peace with God now. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31).

If you accept Christ today, you will be part of the first coming—the rapture. You will be caught up to meet Him in the air and spared from the great tribulation. You will then return with Him at the end to witness His great victory over Satan, the Antichrist, and all His enemies.

But if you reject Him, you will be left behind and face God’s wrath.

The time for salvation is now.

“Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” (Hebrews 3:15)

May the Lord help you to believe on Jesus today and be saved.

IV FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS

Revelation 1:9

In Revelation 1:9 we read: *“I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

As Christians, we are members of God’s family, which is why we call one another brothers and sisters in Christ. This is precisely what we see the Apostle John doing here. Though he was an apostle—the highest-ranking office in the church, equivalent to a five-star general in the military—he humbly calls himself “your brother.” The Apostle Paul, another high-ranking officer in the church, likewise demonstrated this humility.

John reminds his readers that he is a fellow disciple, a fellow pilgrim on the journey toward the promised land—heaven.

This resonates with me as a pastor. I, too, am a fellow pilgrim, a fellow disciple, and a brother in the Lord Jesus, traveling together with you. My duty as a pastor is to guide you along the way as we journey toward God’s kingdom. To do this faithfully, I must always be studying the roadmap—none other than God’s infallible and inerrant Scriptures. These Scriptures lead and guide us, ensuring we do not stray, become misled, or wander onto the wrong path. Instead, we remain steadfast on the strait and narrow way that leads to life.

We are traveling together. Just as you do not want to lose your way, I do not want to lose mine. However, I have an additional duty: to lead and guide you in the right direction through the study and exposition of God’s Word. I pray that we will walk closely together on this narrow path. Jesus Himself warns against the broad way—the wide gate that many enter, which leads to destruction. Instead, He shows us the good way, the strait and narrow way that leads to life.

This journey as fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord can be a wonderful experience. I am reminded of our Holy Land pilgrimages—journeys through the promised land. Each time we embark on such a pilgrimage with open Bibles, walking in the very places where Jesus walked, we witness the fulfilment of biblical history and prophecy. Many prophecies have already come to pass in that land, and many more will be fulfilled in the future.

Pilgrimage journeys are spiritually enriching and filled with joyful fellowship. Some have joined these trips not just once or twice, but three or four times, because every visit brings a fresh and new experience.

However, people often ask me, *“Pastor, is it safe to go to Israel?”* My answer remains the same: *“Israel is never completely safe; it is always at war.”* Yet, if we go with the Lord’s hand upon us, trusting in His protection, He will keep us safe. As we pray and study the Bible together on these journeys, we experience the Lord in the most wonderful way.

Right now, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to organise Holy Land pilgrimages. But, God willing, if the Lord allows in the future, we hope to visit the Holy Land again—with open Bibles, prayerful hearts, and the mindset of pilgrims and not tourists. Such a journey is truly spiritually refreshing.

Ultimately, this earthly life itself is a pilgrimage. We are all on this journey right now. And just like a Holy Land pilgrimage, this life can be a blessed experience—if we travel prayerfully, with open Bibles, meditating on God’s Word, and faithfully applying it to our lives.

Here, John does not simply state, “I am an apostle.” He also calls himself a brother in Christ, a fellow disciple, and a pilgrim. Moreover, he says that he is a *companion*—“*I, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation.*” The word “companion” here is derived from the Greek word *koinonia*, which means fellowship. Many of you may be familiar with this term, as you have heard it repeatedly—*koinonia*, fellowship.

In Greek, *koinonia* comes from the root word meaning “common”—to have things in common with one another. Therefore, the term “companion”, “fellow companion”, or even “fellowshipper” (if we may coin such a term) signifies that we are fellow partakers and sharers in the things of God. This is precisely what John expresses here when he calls himself a “*companion in tribulation*”.

As believers, we will inevitably face tribulation, troubles, hardships, and difficulties in this life. Spiritual dangers surround us. John assures us that he, too, is a fellow sufferer—a partaker in their tribulations and trials. He shares in their afflictions, including persecution for the faith. At that moment, John himself was enduring persecution—exiled to the Isle of Patmos. In those days, Patmos was like today’s Alcatraz, a remote prison island where criminals were sent into exile. However, John was not imprisoned for any crime. Rather, he suffered for preaching the gospel of Christ and teaching the Word of God. That is why he states: “*For the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*”



Patmos

John endured tribulation, persecution, imprisonment, and exile—but he declares that it is worth it all. Just as his readers were facing persecution in their own ways, he, too, was enduring suffering. Thus, he reminds them: You are not alone in your suffering, and I am not alone in mine. We share in the fellowship of suffering as saints, believers, and members of God’s family.

This truth is deeply comforting. When we endure hardships, we are not alone. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are thinking of us, praying for us, and even supporting us in tangible ways. Why? Because we have something in common.

What is that common bond? We have common bond because we have (1) a common Saviour – the Lord Jesus Christ, (2) a common salvation – the same gift of salvation, the same forgiveness of sins, the same indwelling Holy Spirit, and the same hope of heaven, and (3) a common Scripture – the same Word of God with its unchanging promises.

This unity in Christ is profound. None of us receive a “greater” or “lesser” salvation. There are no first-class, second-class, or third-class Christians in the kingdom of God. Unlike an airplane where passengers are divided into classes, all believers share the same salvation and inheritance in Christ.

Furthermore, because we recognise that everything we have has been graciously given to us by God, we are not selfish. Instead, we willingly share with others. This is the essence of *koinonia*—true Christian fellowship. We see this lived out in the early church.

In Acts 2, we read about the first-century believers: “*Then they that gladly received his word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*” (Acts 2:41-42). Take note of verse 44: “*And all that believed were together and had all things common.*” Here, the root of the word *fellowship* (*koinonia*) is seen—they had *all things in common*. Because of this, they did not hoard their possessions selfishly. Instead, as verse 45 states: “*And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*”

The early church exemplified this spirit of generosity. Among them were both the wealthy and the destitute. Some were widows and orphans—women whose husbands had been imprisoned or martyred for their faith. Without their husbands and fathers, they were left with nothing. In those days, a Jew who believed in Christ could be disowned by their family, cast out of their home, and stripped of their inheritance. But even if their earthly families rejected them, they had a new family—the family of God. The church took care of them, just as Jesus had promised.

Some may ask, “Is this communism?” No, it is not communism—it is common-ism. Communism is forced and coerced; Christian fellowship is willing and loving. The early believers were not compelled by the state to share their wealth; they gladly and sacrificially did so out of love for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is the beauty of Christian fellowship—the *koinonia* we share as fellow pilgrims on this journey of faith. We are not alone. We have Christ, we have one another, and we have the unshakable promises of God.

I am thankful to see this kind of fellowship in action within our church. There are members who are sensitive to the needs of others. When you read the weekly bulletin, you see the needs, especially in areas like missions. You attend the prayer meetings, and we pray for one another, knowing the struggles of others. And it’s not just about praying; it’s about giving. When you give, you give as unto the Lord, and often, anonymously. That’s why we have our designated offerings. I’m grateful to see church members giving in this way.

Now, when we speak of *koinonia*, this is where we truly have all things in common. The Holy Spirit moves you to do what is good and necessary because you love the Lord and His church. This is a clear expression of your faith. I am thankful not just for the material gifts you’ve given, but for the faith that is demonstrated through your actions.

How we thank God for this fellowship of saints. May we continue in this. The early church is an example of this kind of unity. They didn't stop but continued daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house, eating with gladness and singleness of heart. They praised God and had favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. This is the fellowship of the saints—brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow disciples and pilgrims traveling together toward the same destination: God's kingdom.

As we walk together on this journey, we share a communion with one another. We have things in common. John, too, calls himself a *brother* and *companion* in the fellowship of saints. And he identifies three areas in which we fellowship: (1) in tribulation, (2) in the kingdom, and (3) in the patience of Jesus Christ.

Believers fellowship together in tribulation. The word "tribulation" refers to affliction—pain, suffering, sorrow—that we experience in life. The early church faced intense persecution, both physically and spiritually. They suffered greatly for their faith. Today, we thank God for sparing us from such severe persecution, though we may face small trials or inconveniences. For the early church, persecution was real. For example, John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos—he was alone, enduring hardship as an old man.

In those days, Christians faced persecution not only from the Romans but also from the Jews. Worshiping freely was dangerous; often, they had to meet in secret. If you visit the Bible lands, particularly modern-day Turkey (Asia Minor), you can see the caves in Cappadocia where early Christians hid. They carved out living spaces, kitchens, and worship rooms within the caves. Even their tunnels were low—they have to bend down to move around. Yet, they were willing to endure these conditions for the sake of their faith.

For us today, we worship in comfort—cushion chairs, air conditioning, and safe from harassment. We must remember how our brothers and sisters in the past suffered for the faith. We should be deeply grateful for the freedom to worship.

When the saints face tribulation, they know they are not alone. Yes, God is with us, but we also have fellow believers who support us in prayer and in action. The Apostle Paul experienced this when he was imprisoned. Not only did the church pray for him, but they also sent people to minister to his needs. Even though these individuals were free, they chose to visit Paul in prison and care for him.

In Philippians 2:25, Paul speaks of Epaphroditus, who was willing to stay in prison with him to minister to his needs: "*Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*"

Epaphroditus wasn't just delivering a message; he stayed with Paul in prison, attending to his needs. This is true fellowship.

The fellowship of the saints also involves sharing in God's kingdom, where we are co-heirs with Christ. Our shared hope is the coming kingdom, where we will reign with Him forever. This fellowship binds us together, not just in this life but in the life to come.

Lastly, we share in the *patience* of Christ. This refers to endurance—bearing up under suffering with hope. Just as Christ endured the cross for the joy set before Him, so too do we endure, knowing that the trials of this life are temporary, and that God's promises are eternal.

Let's be sensitive to the needs of our fellow members, especially those who may be suffering or in need. Offer a word of comfort, encouragement, or prayer. This is how we practice true fellowship—the fellowship of the saints, as demonstrated in the early church.

Our prayer meetings are incredibly important because in those moments, we experience true fellowship. But we don't stop there. We also respond to physical and financial needs as they arise. This is the fellowship of the saints in tribulation.

Now, let's move on to the fellowship of the saints in the kingdom. John, in his letter, writes that he is a brother and companion in the kingdom. But what does this kingdom refer to?

First, the kingdom of God within us. Jesus said in Luke 17:21, "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" This speaks of our faith in the Lord, our salvation, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is Jesus being enthroned as King in our hearts and lives. As His subjects, we are to submit to His rule with childlike faith, trusting in His goodness. Just as children believe without question that Jesus loves them, we, too, must have this simple, trusting faith.

To enter the kingdom, we must be born again—born of the Spirit. Once we are citizens of God's kingdom, we share in the fellowship of the saints. The kingdom within our hearts is just the beginning, though. There is more to come.

Second, the kingdom is on earth. This happens when Jesus returns to establish His millennial kingdom. In this kingdom, Jesus will rule for a thousand years, and we, as His priests and kings, will reign with Him. We pray for this in the Lord's Prayer: "*Thy kingdom come.*" This refers to the millennial kingdom, which will come when Jesus returns to rule on earth. We will have the privilege of ruling alongside Him. Revelation 20:6 describes this.

Finally, the kingdom of God includes the eternal kingdom after the millennium. After the thousand years, the present heaven and earth will be destroyed, and God will create a new heaven and a new earth. The New Jerusalem will descend, and we will live in eternal fellowship with God. This is what is promised in Revelation 21.

All believers are born again into God's kingdom. Jesus told Nicodemus, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" I trust that all of us are born again and are citizens of God's kingdom. Jesus is enthroned in our hearts, and when His kingdom comes on earth, we will rule with Him.

While we may experience tribulation and suffering now, it is worth it because of the eternal fellowship and blessings we will experience in God's kingdom. Our current afflictions are short-lived, but the glory to come is eternal—forever and ever. And that is why we persevere in patience, knowing that the kingdom of God is coming, and we will reign with Christ forever.

The word "patience" here is the same word we find in James 1:2-4. I'm sure you're familiar with these verses, where the apostle James encourages believers who are going through persecution, tribulation, or trials: "*Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.*" James explains that the testing of our faith produces patience. The Greek word for patience is *hupomone* which refers to the ability to endure immense weight and pressure without breaking, cracking, or collapsing. It speaks of resilience and endurance, the strength we develop as we go through tribulations and hardships in the name of the Lord.

This kind of patience is cultivated in the fellowship of the saints. It is through trials and testings that we experience God's grace and strength, which help us grow in our faith. As James says, "*Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.*" God is perfecting us, making us spiritually mature, equipping us to handle life's pressures and difficulties with strength. Not only do we become spiritually equipped to navigate these challenges, but we also become strong enough to help others along the way. This is the fellowship of the saints in the patience of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially during difficult times.

We find a powerful example of this in the life of Job. Job endured tremendous tribulation, suffering, and pain, with the Lord allowing Satan to afflict him in order to test his faith. Despite losing everything—his wealth, his children, his health—Job did not sin against God. He persevered in his faith, refusing to curse God, and declared, *“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”* Even when his wife urged him to curse God and die, Job rebuked her for her foolishness. He also said, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him”*. This is the patience, endurance, and steadfast faith that all of us must have.

And what was the outcome? Let’s look at James 5:11, which comments on Job’s experience: *“Behold, we count them happy which endure. You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.”* The Lord is compassionate and merciful. He understands our suffering and will come to our aid. When we trust in Him, He provides what we need, often quickly and abundantly.

In the final chapter of Job, we see the results of his patience. Job’s prayers for his friends were answered, and God restored his fortunes. The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning—he was given twice as much as he had before, including more livestock and a new family. He lived to see his children and grandchildren to the fourth generation. Job’s life is a testimony of God’s loving kindness and mercy, and it shows us that, though we may face tribulation, God’s ultimate plan is for our good.

As we journey through life’s tribulations, we, too, can trust that God will bless us. Our inheritance in heaven is far more valuable than anything we could ever accumulate on earth. Job’s story teaches us that God is good and faithful, and He will provide for us in our journey.

Though we cannot always socialise as much as we’d like, we can still support each other—through phone calls, cards, letters, and small group meetings. Prayer meetings and fellowship are vital in helping us make this journey together. Even though there will be difficulties and tears, we can also experience joy, knowing we are walking together as a family of God. Let’s encourage one another in the fellowship of the saints—in tribulation, in the kingdom, and in patience.

V

THE GOD OF REVELATION

Revelation 1:10-18

In Revelation 1:10–18, we read about the God of Revelation.

Chapter 1 deals with foundations. At this stage, we are laying the groundwork before moving into the other chapters of the book of Revelation. Foundations are crucial, for without them, we will neither stand firmly nor understand this book properly. In fact, foundations are necessary not just for this book but for understanding the entire Bible.

The Bible is a spiritual book, filled with spiritual words, and its truths must be spiritually discerned. To do so, we need the Holy Spirit to be within us. We need a spiritual mind and heart. This requires us to be born again. We must be born again spiritually to grasp the spiritual truths of God. A carnal, worldly, or unbelieving mind cannot comprehend the profound truths contained in God’s Word.

At the outset, the Lord emphasises the importance of being born again—born of the Spirit, born in His name. Jesus Christ is the foundation here—the foundation of our faith. If He is our foundation, our Saviour, and His Spirit dwells within our minds and hearts, then, and only then, will we be truly blessed. This is affirmed in verse 3, which we have already studied: *“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”*

You must be born again. Being born again is simple. It happens through sincere confession and faith, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Rom 10:9). Simply say, from your heart: “Lord Jesus, please save me. Forgive me of my sins. I repent of my sinful life and ask You to save me. I desire to live a new life in Christ. Lord Jesus, please save me.” If you pray this sincerely, He will save you, and the foundation will be laid. Then you will begin to appreciate, understand, and receive with gladness the truths God has for you in this blessed book.

Let us know the one and only living and true God—our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Saviour. In this passage, from verses 10 to 18, we learn much about Him: who He is, what He is, and what He is like. This truth was revealed to the Apostle John on the Lord’s Day. As John says in verse 10: *“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.”* If we are to appreciate the contents of this book, we too must be in the Spirit.

It is good that we are found in church every Lord’s Day. Every Sunday is the Lord’s Day because it commemorates His resurrection. Jesus died on a Friday, was buried that same day, remained in the tomb on Saturday, and, as He promised, rose on the third day—Sunday, the first day of the week. Since then, Christians have observed Sunday as the Lord’s Day, a day to remember the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.

On the Lord’s Day, when God’s people gather to worship Him, it is indeed a blessed time to study His Word, to know who Jesus is, and to understand what He has done. Let us be in the Spirit, filled with His Spirit, as we seek to know the Lord more deeply on this good day. Let us hear His voice—a voice of power and authority. May we be convicted by it, and for those who have yet to believe, I pray you will be converted and experience the great blessings of salvation.

In this passage, we discover three essential truths about our God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. What are these truths? They form the foundation of our faith, as the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to us as our perfect God and Saviour.

Jesus is fully God—He is the only living and true God. This is evident in verse 11, where Jesus says: *“I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.”* The phrase *“I am”* is particularly significant. In the original Greek, the word *“I”* occurs twice, emphasising the declaration. It reads literally as: *“I, I am.”*

When Jesus says, *“I am,”* He directs us back to the Old Testament, to the burning bush at Mount Sinai. When Moses asked God His name, God replied: *“I AM THAT I AM.”* (Exodus 3:14). Here, Jesus is claiming the same divine identity. He is saying: *“I am Jehovah. I am the everlasting, ever-living, and ever-existing One. I am always present.”*

Jesus transcends time. He is present in the past, the present, and the future. For Him, all of history is *“I AM.”* This truth emphasises His omnipresence and eternal nature. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament—the God of Israel is also the God of the Church.

Some people mistakenly claim that the God of the Old Testament, who seems angry and full of judgement, is different from the loving and forgiving God of the New Testament. This is not true. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The God who judged sin in the past is the same God who offers mercy and salvation to the repentant today. And He is still the God of righteous judgement, as revealed in the book of Revelation, where He will pour out His wrath on those who rebel against Him.

Jehovah God revealed Himself fully in the person of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, God’s name *“I AM THAT I AM”* might seem cryptic. But when Jesus came, He filled in the blanks. Jesus said: *“Before Abraham was, I AM.”* (John 8:58).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes seven *“I AM”* statements that reveal His nature and mission: (1) *“I am the Bread of Life.”* (2) *“I am the Light of the World.”* (3) *“I am the Door of the Sheep.”* (4) *“I am the Good Shepherd.”* (5) *“I am the Resurrection and the Life.”* (6) *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”* (7) *“I am the True Vine.”*

These statements show Jesus as our perfect Saviour, meeting all our spiritual needs. The number seven, representing perfection, underscores that Jesus is the complete and perfect Saviour.

As the Alpha and Omega—the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet—Jesus identifies Himself as the author and finisher of our faith. This title signifies that He is the author of Scripture. Every book, chapter, verse, word, syllable, and letter of the Bible is divinely inspired, infallible, and inerrant.

The Bible is not merely human words about God; it is the Word of God. As believers, we affirm its perfection. Church leaders take the Dean Burgon Oath, which declares: *“The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne: every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it is the direct utterance of the Most High.”*

Jesus, the originator of all languages, has given us His Word as the Word of Life so that we might live. Let us, therefore, read, hear, and obey His Word, for in doing so, we will be truly blessed.

Jesus is not only the Alpha and the Omega, He is also the First and the Last. What does this mean? It means that everything begins with Him: *“Everything begins with Me, and everything will also end with Me.”* He is the Creator.

We know that the Lord Jesus was there in the beginning. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) Jesus was there—He was the Creator. *“In the beginning*

was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1) He was present from the very start, and He created the entire universe.

As the Creator, He has the right to bring His creation to an end. One day, He will destroy this world. This world will come to an end, and God Himself will bring that end. Scripture tells us that the world must be destroyed by fire. That is what the Lord has declared.

So, as the Creator, He is also the Judge and Destroyer. He will destroy this world because of its sinfulness, wickedness, and rebellion against Him. People refuse to repent, and therefore, judgement must come.

However, we thank God that, although He will judge and destroy this world, for us who are believers, this destruction is not defeat. The destruction of this world is, in fact, victory for us because He is our Saviour. How we thank God for this hope in Him!

The God who created all things in the beginning—who made everything good—is not defeated by sin. We, as humanity, have spoiled His creation by sinning against Him. All the pain, suffering, sickness, disease, and death in this world are a result of sin. We brought this upon ourselves. What God originally created as good and beautiful, we have corrupted and made bad.

Yet, God will not be defeated by sin. Yes, He will judge this sin-cursed world, but then He will create again. *“I am the first and the last.”* (Revelation 1:17) He creates, He destroys, and He creates anew. One day, the Lord will create a new heaven and a new earth.

The first creation, in the beginning, was very good. But in the future, God will make a better one. The word “new” means that it will surpass the first creation. Although we have ruined what God originally made, He will not be overcome. He will create again, and those who belong to Him will enjoy the new heaven and new earth.

Yes, God will destroy, but for us, this is not defeat—it is victory in the Lord! If our foundation is firmly laid in Jesus Christ and His Word, we are safe and secure.

Why is He able to do all these things? Because He is almighty. That is what we read in Revelation 1:17-18: *“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”*

This truth also connects to Revelation 1:8, where the Lord Jesus declares: *“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”*

He is not just mighty; He is the Almighty God!

This is important because, in this world, there exists a cult—a false Christian group—called the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Have you heard of them before? The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach a deadly heresy: they claim that only the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, is truly God. According to them, God the Son, the Lord Jesus, is not Almighty God. They say He is only “god” with a small “g,” not “God” with a capital “G.” They argue that He is merely a “mighty god,” not the Almighty God. In fact, they claim that Jesus is a glorified creature, not the Creator.

Additionally, they deny the deity of the Holy Spirit, asserting that He is neither God nor a person but merely an influence or a force.

Furthermore, there are others who argue similarly. When I was in Bible college, there was a lecturer who taught that Jesus never called Himself God or the Son of God during His earthly ministry. He insisted that Jesus always referred to Himself as the Son of Man, emphasising His

humanity, but never claimed to be divine. This is the argument of liberals and modernists—they claim that Jesus' followers later deified Him, making Him God, even though He never identified Himself as such. According to them, Christianity is merely a human invention, not a revelation from heaven or from God, because Jesus Himself never professed to be divine.

Of course, this is all nonsense. The truth is that Jesus is God Himself. The Bible declares it, and Jesus Himself affirmed it. Who says that Jesus never called Himself God? I have already quoted John 8:58, where Jesus told the Jews: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*" The Jews understood that Jesus was claiming to be God—Jehovah Himself!

Another instance is found in Revelation 1:8, where Jesus declares: "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*" Here, Jesus explicitly calls Himself the Almighty—all-powerful and omnipotent—not just "mighty God" with a lowercase "m" and "g," but "the Almighty God" with a capital "A" and "G".

This thoroughly refutes the claims of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the liberals who argue that Jesus never identified Himself as God. On the contrary, Jesus did claim to be God in no uncertain terms. During His earthly ministry, He was fully aware that He is God and taught with divine authority, as only God can. At the same time, He was also fully man.

When that Bible College lecturer taught such erroneous doctrine, the students could not accept his teachings. Eventually, he had to resign because no one wanted to listen to him. The truth is the truth, and you can do nothing against the truth but for the truth (2 Corinthians 13:8).

Jesus is God! We did not make Him God—He is God Himself. We did not create Him—He created us. He Himself said: "I am God." He is God with us—*Emmanuel*—who came to save us from our sins. Jesus is 100% God but also 100% man.

This is further emphasised in Revelation 1:13–16: "*And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man...*". Here, Jesus is called the Son of Man, a title that emphasises His humanity. Just as "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14) speaks of His deity, so "Son of Man" affirms His true humanity.

This theme is particularly emphasised in the Gospel of Luke, which highlights Jesus' humanity more than any other Gospel. In fact, the term "Son of Man" appears 26 times in Luke, pointing to Jesus' full humanity. Luke records details about His virgin birth, His childhood, and His growth—clear evidence of His true human nature.

However, there is one major difference between Jesus and all other human beings: He is without sin. While we are all sinful, He was sinless. He was 100% man yet totally without sin because He is also the Son of God. He had to be sinless in order to save us from our sins.

John 1:1 declares this truth: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" Then, in verse 14: "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*"

This is critical: Jesus must be both the Son of God and the Son of Man in order to save us.

Why did Jesus have to become a man? Because He had to represent us. To be our representative, He had to take our place and fulfil the Law. He had to keep the Ten Commandments perfectly in order to attain righteousness on our behalf. God, as a Spirit, could only represent Himself—but to represent us, He had to become a human being.

Just as an athlete must be a citizen of Singapore to represent Singapore in the Olympics, so too, God had to become man to represent mankind. Jesus, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God became the Son of Man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God.

Furthermore, He had to be a man to be our substitute. He had to die in our place, bearing the punishment for our sins.

God, as Spirit, cannot die. No nails could pierce Him. But as flesh, He could die. The nails could go through His hands and feet, and He could shed blood for the remission of sins. *“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22). Thus, Jesus had to be fully man—the sinless Son of Man—to save us. He is the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

This is why Revelation 1 describes Him in glorious terms. Verse 13 says: *“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”* This describes His royalty, dignity, and authority. Those clothed in such long robes were kings, priests, and judges—figures of great honour and power.

Verse 14 says: *“His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow...”* White symbolises holiness, purity, and longevity. It signifies that Jesus is morally perfect and eternal—the Ancient of Days.

His eyes were as a flame of fire (Revelation 1:14), symbolising His omniscience and perfect judgement. He sees all things—visible and invisible—and will judge righteously. Unlike earthly judges, who may lack full knowledge, Jesus knows all things and will judge with absolute fairness.

Thus, let us worship Him as Almighty God and Sovereign Judge. He alone is worthy!

In verse 15, His feet are described as fine brass: *“And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters.”* The imagery of fine brass signifies strength, stability, and judgement. He moves with divine authority, overseeing and ruling over this world, ensuring that all things work for the good of His children. Additionally, the burning furnace represents purification and judgement. The feet of brass will trample the wicked, bringing destruction upon His enemies and condemning them to the lake of fire in perfect judgement.

Furthermore, His voice is as the sound of many waters. Water in Scripture often symbolises both salvation and judgement. The voice of many waters can be understood as the voice of salvation—offering the living water of eternal life to those who believe. As Jesus said, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink”* (John 7:37). Those who receive His word will find life. However, the same voice can also represent judgement, as seen in the great flood of Genesis, where water was used to destroy the wicked. Similarly, those who reject the living water of Christ will face His righteous judgement.

In verse 16, we read about His right hand: *“And he had in his right hand seven stars.”* The right hand symbolises power and authority. Jesus holds the seven stars, which represent the messengers of the seven churches—His apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These are His appointed messengers, sent with divine authority to proclaim His word. As confirmed in verse 20, *“The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.”* The term “angels” (Greek: *angeloi*) means messengers, which can refer not only to angelic beings but also to human ministers of God’s word.

Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword. This symbolises the Word of God, which is described in Hebrews 4:12 as *“sharper than any two-edged sword.”* The Word of God has

the power to save or to judge. For believers, it is the sword of salvation, cutting away sin and bondage, bringing life and freedom. For unbelievers, it is the sword of judgement, bringing condemnation to those who reject the truth. The Word of God is living and active; how one responds to it determines whether it saves or condemns.

In verses 17–18, we see John’s reaction: *“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.”* Confronted with the holiness and majesty of Christ, John was overwhelmed with fear. Scripture teaches that no sinful man can stand before the presence of a thrice-holy God and live. However, Jesus, in His grace, reassures John: *“And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”*

Jesus, the eternal and living God, became man, died for our sins, and rose again in victory over death. He holds the keys of hell and death, signifying His absolute authority over life and eternity. With these keys, He can set free those who are imprisoned by sin, Satan, and death. Salvation is found in Him alone.

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus extends an invitation: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”* He desires fellowship with those who will receive Him. The question is: will you open the door of your heart to Him?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. He is 100% God, who became 100% man, making Him our perfect Saviour. Trust Him now, and He will save you. Understanding this foundation will make the rest of the book of Revelation even more meaningful, leading you to praise and glorify God.

VI

UNDERSTANDING REVELATION

Revelation 1:19-20

It is important that we understand the book of Revelation when we read it. There is no point in reading the book of Revelation without understanding what God wants us to know. He wants us to understand what His words mean. We thank God that He is a living God who speaks. Our God is not dead wood or stone; He is a living God who speaks. Not only does He speak, but when He speaks, He wants not only the people at that time to hear Him, but also people from every generation to hear Him, to know Him, and to know His words. This is why what God has spoken has been put in writing.

In verse 9, God tells His servant, the apostle John, to write the things which he has seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. Writing and committing His spoken words to writing is so important, necessary, and good for us because words that are spoken may only be heard by people at that time. If you want people in the future, in subsequent generations, to know, then the words must be put in writing. God saw to it that His inspired words are put in writing, so that we may have the Holy Scriptures in our hands today to know what He said thousands of years ago. And what He said thousands of years ago is still very relevant for us today.

When God says, *“Write these things,”* He is telling us that the words He had spoken and now the words in Scripture are most important. He wants us to know them. That’s why, when we have important documents or when someone tells us something important, we don’t just want it verbally—we tell them, “All right, put this in writing. It must be recorded so that it may be referred to again in the future.” This is what you say, and you are held accountable for it.

What God speaks and what He says are extremely important, and He wants us to take note and put it in writing. I urge you, if you have important documents, don’t just save them on your computer or smartphone and think they will always be there. They can go missing, get lost, or become corrupted. Nowadays, everyone wants to go paperless, everything must be digitised. I’m not against digitisation, but I don’t think we can go without paper. Paper is so important. If you have important documents, you better print them out and file them properly so that they won’t be lost, and they will remain there.

This is why God’s word is in writing. He doesn’t want His words to get lost. They must be available to every generation. He has inspired His words. These are God-breathed words. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Not only men of the past, but men today may be perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works—for you and for me today. That is why God put His words in writing, and we thank God that His words have been preserved, kept pure, and intact throughout the ages, so that we can continue to have His words today, know what they are, and gain wisdom on how to live for Him in these last days.

God has kept His promise to preserve His inspired words. Jesus Himself said, *“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.”* (Matthew 5:18). Not one of God’s words will ever disappear, go missing, or become corrupted. God has preserved His words. Psalm 12:6-7 tells us, *“The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.”*

FOUR VIEWS ON THE INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION

View	Description	Key Interpretations	Evaluation
Preterist	Believes most or all of Revelation was <i>fulfilled in the 1st century AD</i> , particularly in the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) or the fall of Rome.	<i>The Beast</i> = Nero or the Roman Empire. <i>The Great Tribulation</i> = Jewish War (66-70 AD). <i>Second Coming</i> = Symbolic or partially fulfilled.	<i>Downplays future</i> aspects of prophecy. Requires <i>symbolic interpretations</i> of Christ's return.
Historicist	Views Revelation as an <i>ongoing timeline of church history</i> from the 1st century to the present.	<i>The Beast</i> = Papacy. <i>The Seven Churches</i> = Different church ages. <i>The Great Tribulation</i> = Various persecutions through history.	<i>Highly subjective</i> interpretations. <i>No consensus</i> on exact event fulfilments.
Idealist	Views Revelation as a symbolic depiction of the <i>cosmic struggle between good and evil</i> , applicable to all ages.	The Beast = Any anti-Christian system. The Great Tribulation = Ongoing spiritual warfare. Second Coming = Ultimate triumph of Christ.	<i>Lacks concrete historical fulfilment.</i> Can be <i>overly abstract.</i>
Futurist	Believes most of Revelation (chapters 4-22) refers to <i>future events, particularly the end times.</i>	<i>The Beast</i> = Future Antichrist. <i>The Great Tribulation</i> = Yet-to-come 7-year period. <i>Second Coming</i> = Literal return of Christ.	Takes prophetic passages <i>at face value.</i> - <i>Aligns with other eschatological passages</i> (eg, Daniel, 2 Thessalonians)

We thank God that we have the Bible in our hands, in writing, on paper. Even in this age of digital technology, I urge you to make sure you read your Bible, a hardcopy of the Bible, and read from the paper. The ink and paper are Scripture. When you come to church, bring a hardcopy of your Bible. I'm glad to see many of you with a hardcopy of your Bible, reading from the written page rather than from your smartphone. I'm not against using smartphones, but when you read the Bible as a book, you know this is an important, very important document, and you must read it carefully.

Our smartphones contain all kinds of information, much of it trivial and unimportant. We scroll through it quickly, often browsing casually. But the Bible cannot be read like this. Make sure you have your Bible. Feel the weight of this book and the weightiness of its contents. Take the Bible seriously, not just by scrolling through the pages. Read every word carefully, studying it in its immediate context and in the context of the entire Bible.

Words have meaning. We must make sure we know the meaning of these words that come from God, not from our own minds or what we think the words mean. We must understand what God meant by what He said originally—the original intent or meaning of these words from the Scriptures themselves. We don't read our thoughts or feelings into the Scriptures; we must read out of the Scripture what God originally intended His words to mean. And there is only one meaning, not many.

Today, some people think the Scripture is open to anyone's interpretation—"I interpret it this way, and you may interpret it another way." This leads to the notion that there can be a whole lot of interpretations, and they may all be different. But that is not the case. The Bible is not open for anyone to interpret however they like. God means what He says and says what He means, and we must carefully and correctly understand what God intends His words to mean. Otherwise, we read and study the Bible in vain.

The Bible does tell us how we ought to read the Scriptures and how we ought to understand the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is not easy to understand, but it is understandable if we pay attention to how God teaches us and tells us how we should read and understand this book. In verses 19 and 20, it gives us important guidelines to follow if we want to read, study, and understand the book of Revelation properly.

To understand the book of Revelation, we must bear in mind three things as we read it:

First, know that the book of Revelation is primarily concerned with the future. It is a prophetic book, and we know this from verse 19 when it says, "*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*" Here in verse 19, we find an outline of the book of Revelation. It has to do with the past, the present, and the future.

"*The things which thou hast seen*" refers to the past, and this is found in chapter 1, where John records what he saw.

"*The things which are*" refers to the present and is found in chapters 2 and 3, which contain the seven letters to the seven churches. These letters are relevant for us as well, as the church still exists today. They represent how we must live as Christians and what the church must be like today to be ready for the Lord's return.

"*The things which shall be hereafter*" refers to the future, which is found from chapter 4 onwards. This concerns the last seven years of this world's history, the time of the great tribulation. Chapters 4 through 22 describe the events of the tribulation, the second coming of Christ, His thousand-year reign in the millennium, and the eternity that follows.

So, when reading the book of Revelation, it is important not to confuse the past with the present, the present with the future, or the future with the past. What is past is covered in chapter 1,

what is present is in chapters 2 and 3, and what is future starts in chapter 4 and continues through to the end.

Second, know that there are incorrect interpretations of Revelation. Some people wrongly interpret the book of Revelation as being only about the past. They say the book of Revelation concerns events from the first century, and all the things written here have already been completed. They claim it deals with the nation of Israel in the first century and how it was finally judged by God and destroyed in AD 70. While it's true that in AD 70, the Roman army led by General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Jews, the book of Revelation is not just about those events.

Revelation was written around AD 90, which was after AD 70. The bulk of the book of Revelation, from chapter 4 onwards, concerns future things. This is clearly prophetic, and it cannot be confined to past events. We see much prophetic language throughout the book that is clearly speaking about the future, not history.

Third, know that the book of Revelation is not just about a local situation in Israel or Palestine. It is not only about one nation; it speaks of many nations. It is an international and global situation, as the entire world will be affected in the future. The focus is not solely on Israel, but on the whole world.

By understanding these key points, we can avoid misinterpreting the book of Revelation and recognise that it speaks to us not just about the past but also about the future.

For instance, in Revelation chapter 8, you definitely cannot interpret this to mean something happening in Israel that was fulfilled at that time. The language here is so global; it concerns the whole earth and what will happen to this earth. In Revelation 8:6-9, we read: *“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.”*

Here we see a global catastrophe, a global judgement—one third of the earth destroyed. How? A third of the trees and the grass will be burned up. The sea will become poisoned, and a third of sea creatures will die. The sea will become blood, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions—this is a glimpse of what will happen in the future during the great tribulation when God pours out His wrath and judges this world. Today, we see many climate-related issues like global warming, unusual temperatures, high temperatures, forest fires—just a small preview of what will happen when God's judgement falls.

This has to do with the whole world and its future, not just the past or Israel. It concerns the entire earth, and the destruction will be on a global scale—not just one nation, but many nations will be affected. The whole world will be affected, and it is important for us to understand this.

It is also important for us to know that while the book of Revelation is primarily about the future, it also pertains to the nation of Israel. Some say that the book of Revelation is about Israel's destruction—that Israel has been cast away because of its sins, such as crucifying their Messiah. They believe that God has judged Israel and now Israel is no more, forgotten and forsaken by God. Is this true? Has God cast away Israel?

If you believe that God has cast away Israel, you will interpret the Bible wrongly in many ways. In fact, one-quarter of the Bible is prophetic, and you will misinterpret many of the prophecies.

Many prophecies in the Bible concern the nation of Israel, and what is described in the book of Revelation involves Israel.

For instance, in Revelation chapter 7, we read about the 144,000 that God will seal. Where do they come from? They come from all the tribes of the nation of Israel. Yes, God has punished Israel, and Israel is currently being chastised and suffering many things, but God has not forgotten Israel. Israel is still very much in God's mind, and God will fulfil all His promises and prophecies to the nation of Israel.

The book of Revelation is about the restoration of Israel. Israel has not been destroyed; it is being punished right now, but one day it will be restored. Israel will be delivered, and they will believe in the Lord Jesus. They will confess Him as their Lord, Messiah, and Saviour—the one whom they crucified two thousand years ago. In the future, their eyes will be opened, and they will believe, just as we have believed in the Jewish Messiah. One day, the Jews themselves will believe. God will save them, and all Israel shall be saved.

Take note that the great tribulation, the last seven years of this present world's history before the Lord comes back, concerns Israel. It is a time of Israel's trouble—not the church, but Israel. How do we know this? Turn to Jeremiah chapter 30, verse 7. It says, "*Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble...*" This refers to the Great Tribulation, a time of unprecedented sorrow and judgement. It is described as the time of Jacob's trouble, and Jacob refers to Israel. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, so this has to do with the nation of Israel. The Great Tribulation is a time of Israel's trouble because God is going to purge, cleanse, and sanctify Israel through all the trouble and tribulation. But in the end, Israel will be saved out of it. Indeed, Israel shall be saved.

God has not forgotten Israel. He has not forsaken Israel. He is still dealing with Israel, chastising Israel. The Bible says, "*Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth*" (Hebrews 12:6). God loves His chosen nation, and He is chastising them right now. One day, He will restore the nation of Israel. He will keep His promises, and that will happen when He returns.

There are those who wrongly interpret the Scriptures and claim that Israel is no more, that the church has replaced Israel and is now the new Israel. They say the church is spiritual Israel and that Israel no longer has a role in God's plan. But when you read the book of Revelation, you cannot think only of the church. The church is seen in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, but from chapter 4 onwards, the focus shifts to Israel, specifically the time of Jacob's trouble—Israel's trouble.

In the future, we will see how God will deliver Israel from the Antichrist, a future Pharaoh who will persecute Israel and try to destroy her. God will gather the nations of the world to fight against Israel, and Israel will cry out to God. Their Messiah, the Lord Jesus, the greater Moses, will come down to deliver Israel. Just as God used Moses in the past to deliver Israel out of Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land, the greater Moses, the Lord Jesus, will return to deliver Israel and lead them into the Promised Land during the Millennium. Jerusalem will be the capital city of the world, Israel will become a great nation once more, and the Lord Jesus will rule over the whole world for a thousand years.

God has not forgotten Israel, and the church has not replaced Israel. Right now, the church is fulfilling what Israel was supposed to fulfil as a witness for God, but because Israel failed as a witness, the church is now the evangelist of God. Israel is temporarily set aside, and God is dealing with her, chastising her. Israel has gone through many troubles since the day they crucified the Lord, and the fact that God has not forsaken Israel is evident in the fact that Israel is back in the land today. It was reconstituted as a nation after 1,900 years of dispersion. What nation in the world has experienced what Israel has and survived?

If Singapore went through what Israel went through, would there be a Singapore today? No, it would be long gone, but Israel, a small nation, was scattered, its land taken over by other nations. After 1,900 years, the Jews were gathered back to their land, and the nation of Israel exists today. They have a flag, an army, a government, and they still maintain their cultural, religious, and ethnic identity. This shows us that the God of the Christian faith, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is watching over Israel just as He watches over us, and He will preserve Israel to the very end.

Israel's return as a nation is a fulfilment of prophecy, as found in Isaiah chapter 11. You can read it for yourself. God will regather Israel from the four corners of the earth, and once gathered, Israel will no longer be uprooted. Since 1948, Israel has faced wars and attacks from surrounding nations that sought to destroy her, but every time they tried, they were defeated. Israel remains today because of God. God is behind Israel, and this is evident from what Paul says in Romans chapter 11.

In Romans 11:1, Paul says, *"I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid!"* The strongest way to say no in the original language is "May it never be!" Then, in verse 25, Paul says, *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."* Right now, the Gentile church is being completed. We, as Gentiles, are part of the church, and we have believed in the Jewish Messiah, who is the Saviour of the world. When this present church age is over, the Great Tribulation will come, and that is when God will deliver Israel from all her troubles.

Take note of this mystery. Israel is temporarily blinded, but one day God will open their eyes, and they will see that the Lord Jesus is truly the Messiah and Saviour. *"And so all Israel shall be saved"* (Romans 11:26). As it is written, *"There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."*

The fact that Israel is now a nation again shows us that the stage is set for Jesus to come back. When He returns, He will step on two mountains: Mount Megiddo, where He will fight the battle against the Antichrist and his enemies, and the Mount of Olives, where He will establish His kingdom on earth. Jerusalem will be the world's capital, and the Mount of Olives will split in two. All of this will happen in Israel. So, if we want to understand the book of Revelation and the prophecies about the end times, we must banish the idea that Israel is no more and that the church has replaced Israel. Many things in the Bible concern the church, but many things also concern the nation of Israel. There is a distinction between Israel and the church. If you do not see this distinction, you will misinterpret much of Scripture, and this will lead to confusion and misapplication in your life.

So, we pray for the peace of Israel because God will save Israel in the end. And the book of Revelation is relevant to us today. In Revelation 1:20, the Lord talks about the church's role in the end times. The church has a part to play today. In verse 20, it says, *"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."* The candlesticks here represent the church, which is meant to be the light of the world, shining the gospel light to be evangelists and witnesses for God. We must tell others the good news of salvation in Christ so they may be ready for the judgement to come. If they want to escape the judgement, they must believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved. This is our duty today—we are the candlesticks.

The letters to the seven churches have much to teach us about how we should live today and be ready when the Lord returns. One repeated theme in these letters is overcoming. Are we

being overcomers? In Revelation 2:7, it says, *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”* Seven times, this theme is repeated: to him that overcomes. The word “overcomer” comes from the Greek word *nikao*, meaning to conquer, and that’s where we get the brand name “Nike.” Are you an overcomer? As Christians, we must be overcomers, ready for the Lord’s return. We will learn more about being overcomers as we study the seven churches in the weeks to come.

So, I pray that the Lord will help us read and understand the book of Revelation for our own benefit. Let’s take stock of our lives and be ready, for the Lord is coming back soon. The signs in the world today are pointing to His return.

VII RETURN TO FIRST LOVE

Revelation 2:1-7

We have seen that the Lord is coming back soon. He is returning for sure. Now, the question is: Are we ready? We must make sure that we are prepared when the Lord comes back.

So, how can we be prepared? Revelation chapters 2 and 3 provide guidance on how we can be ready for the Lord's imminent return. In these chapters, the Lord speaks to His church through seven letters addressed to seven churches. These seven churches were local congregations, just as True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church is a local church on earth.

It is important to note that the church on earth is a mixed multitude. What does that mean? While many people attend church, are all of them true believers? Surely, there are those in the church who are genuine believers—I pray that many, if not most, are true believers, born-again citizens of the Kingdom of God, and members of the family of Christ. However, there may also be false believers—those who profess faith but do not truly possess it. They think they are believers, but they are not. They attend church but have not been born again.

Are there any among us like that? If you are merely a professing believer—a Christian in name but not in truth—then you are not ready for the Lord's return. When the Lord comes back, you will not be with Him. You do not want to be left behind as a false believer. Instead, you must make sure that you are a true believer, that you have truly believed in Christ.

Additionally, there may be those who come to church week after week but still remain unbelieving. They have yet to confess the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, though they attend services regularly. Are there any among us like that—still unbelieving?

A local church consists of a mixed group of people: true believers, false believers, and non-believers. The letters to the seven churches address this reality. Their purpose is to make us examine our faith, consider who and what we truly are, and ensure that we are indeed children of God and citizens of heaven. Otherwise, when the Lord finally comes, instead of salvation, there will be judgement. You want God to be your Saviour, not your Judge.

The letters to the seven churches are, therefore, very important for us to read, study, understand, and apply in our lives. We want to be ready, right? The Lord has already said that in His kingdom on earth, the wheat and the tares grow together. True believers are the wheat. False believers are the tares—they look like wheat but are not. You do not want to be a tare because, in the end, tares will be uprooted. You want to be wheat so that when the Lord comes to harvest His crop, you will be gathered to Him.

As we study Revelation chapters 2 and 3 over the coming weeks, let us be reflective and engage in self-examination. We must make sure that when the Lord returns, we will go up to be with Him.

Now, let us look at the first church mentioned—the church of Ephesus. In Revelation 2:1, we read: *“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write...”*. It is good for us to understand some background about the church of Ephesus and even the city itself.

Ephesus was a very important city in the Roman Empire. In fact, it was the capital city of Asia Minor. Today, Asia Minor is known as Turkey, and in those days, Ephesus was the chief city of that region. It was a wealthy city because of its thriving seaport—Ephesus was the number one seaport in Asia Minor. As a result, it became a hub for business and trade, much like Singapore, which is one of the busiest seaports in the world today.

The city of Ephesus had a population of about 250,000, which was quite sizable in those days. In addition to being a major commercial centre, Ephesus was also known for its idolatry. The city was home to the grand Temple of Diana (also known as Artemis). The Temple of Diana was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and the worship of Diana was widespread in Ephesus. The city became a centre for idolatry and superstition, filled with occult practices and spiritual darkness.



Artemis/Diana



Ruins of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus

In the midst of this pagan city, a church was established. It was the Apostle Paul whom the Lord used to found and establish a church in Ephesus. Indeed, this city, full of spiritual darkness, desperately needed the light of the Gospel. God, in His grace, sent His servant, the Apostle Paul, to preach in Ephesus, and the Lord was merciful in saving souls so that a church could be planted to shine forth the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

This happened around AD 50. The Book of Revelation, however, was written around AD 90. That means the church in Ephesus had already existed for 40 years by the time the Lord addressed it in Revelation. How had the church fared during those years? We will examine that later. However, we know that in its early years, the church did very well.

To understand the beginnings of the Ephesian church, let us turn to Acts 19. In Acts chapter 19, we find the founding of the church in Ephesus. In verses 8 to 10, we read: *“And he [ie, the apostle Paul] went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.”*

This was the custom of the apostle Paul. When he entered a city, he would go into the synagogue to preach the gospel to the Jews first and then later to the Greeks, or Gentiles. For three months, he preached the gospel, proclaiming Christ from the Hebrew Scriptures. Take note: the Hebrew Scriptures are full of references to the Lord Jesus. Paul preached to them concerning their promised Messiah, their Saviour, who had already come.

And who is this Messiah? None other than the Lord Jesus, whom they crucified on the cross. Yet through His crucifixion, salvation is found. Paul also had a powerful testimony. He could say: “I once persecuted the church, but now I have been graciously and wonderfully saved. And now I preach! Please do not think that I know nothing about the Christian way—I know it well. I once persecuted the church, and I also know the Hebrew Scriptures because I was a

Pharisee, a religious teacher by profession. I know, and I tell you, I testify and bear witness to you who truly is the Son of God and the only Saviour of the world.”

Paul preached powerfully for these three months. Many were saved, but some refused to believe. In verse 9, we read: *“But when some were hardened and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples.”*

There were those who believed, and in order to teach them in a peaceful environment, Paul took them out of the synagogue and taught them in the school of one Tyrannus, where he disputed daily. This continued for two years: *“And this continued for the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”* (verse 10).

What a wonderful beginning! The gospel preaching was not in vain—there were great results. A church was founded in the school of Tyrannus. In verses 18 to 20, we see how the church continued to grow, and many more believed: *“And many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds.”* (verse 18).

Those who believed exhibited genuine faith—sincere faith. It was not just a profession of faith; they truly possessed faith because they demonstrated it through their deeds—through their good and godly works. As Scripture says, faith without works is dead. True faith saves, and after salvation, a changed life follows.

This was evident in verse 19: *“Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men.”* What were these books? The city of Ephesus was known for the worship of the goddess Diana. This religion was filled with occult practices—black magic, sorcery, and witchcraft. The people of Ephesus published books called the *Ephesian Letters*, which contained spells, hexes, and curses. Many had practiced these dark arts.

But when they were saved, they rejected these things. They now saw the light, and they recognised the darkness in which they had lived. They wanted no part in it. Not only did they throw away these books, but they burned them, destroying them completely. They did not want to sell or give them away, for they knew these books would destroy others’ lives as well.

This was true repentance—turning away from their wicked ways, from unbelief to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These books were not cheap; they were very expensive. Yet they did not hesitate: *“And they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”* (verse 19) Fifty thousand pieces of silver! How much is that? One piece of silver was equivalent to one day’s wage. If one day’s wage today is, say, \$100, then fifty thousand pieces of silver would amount to \$5 million! That was a huge sum, but to them, it did not matter. They had found the pearl of great price. Invaluable. Priceless. They gladly gave up everything to embrace and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you have that kind of faith? That kind of love for God? Later on, the Lord Jesus would rebuke them for leaving their first love, but at that time, they loved the Lord deeply. These books had once been costly and precious to them, yet they were now only too happy to get rid of them, because they loved the Lord and wanted to obey His Word.

Thus, the church in Ephesus had a strong and faithful beginning. Their testimony impacted the city. Many were converted, and fewer and fewer people worshipped idols, turning instead to the living and true God.

The church was well-grounded in the faith and in the truth, having been taught by Paul for two years in the school of Tyrannus. Later, in Revelation 2:2, we see the Lord commending them: *“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which*

are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars.”

The Lord began with a commendation—He praised them: *“I know thy works and thy labour. You work very hard for me.”* Indeed, they engaged in much church work. They were a missionary church. They did not keep the gospel to themselves. Being a seaport and a centre of trade, the believers travelled from city to city for business, but they also brought their faith with them. They evangelised as they worked, and through their witness and testimony, other churches were founded in Asia Minor.

In Revelation chapter 19, we read how Paul says that during the space of two years, as they grew in their faith and in their knowledge of God’s Word, they did not just sit still. They went about so that those who dwelt in Asia—Asia Minor and other parts—heard the word of the Lord Jesus because they went out preaching and evangelising for the Lord. Both Jews and Greeks heard the word, believed, and churches were founded in other cities—cities that Paul did not visit in this missionary journey.

Among these cities in Asia Minor were churches like Smyrna, Pergamos, and Philadelphia. These are the churches listed in chapters two and three. How did they come into existence? The very fact that the Ephesian church is mentioned first must mean that they were the leading church, the mother church of the others. They were very evangelistic and missions-minded; they were a missionary church.

That was commendable. The Lord praised them for their labour and all the work they put into witnessing for Him. What else did the Lord commend them for? The second thing here is their patience. *“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience”* (Revelation 2:2).

The Greek word for patience here is *hupomone*, meaning endurance. It refers to being under great stress and pressure yet remaining resilient, not breaking but growing stronger. The Ephesians endured; they exercised great patience. In other words, they kept believing. They did not stop believing in the Lord, nor did they quit their faith, even when they faced great persecution and tribulation.

Indeed, the Ephesian church suffered for their testimony. In the beginning, they burned all their occultic books, making their testimony bright and shining. They did this publicly, without shame. Many got converted and saved. However, those who profited from selling magic books and idols became furious because they were losing customers. Fewer and fewer people bought their goods.

Then Demetrius stirred up hatred and anger in the city, inciting a riot against the Christians (Acts 19). The whole city turned against them, beating them and dragging them into the theatre, wanting to kill them. But the Lord did not allow His church to be destroyed. He had mercy on Ephesus and wanted the church to remain as a shining witness and gospel light.

The church was delivered—by whom? By the town clerk, who was like a mayor or local MP. He rebuked Demetrius and the rioters, defending the Christians. He saw that they were not robbers of temples nor blasphemers of Diana. There was freedom of religion, and converting to Christianity was no crime. He dismissed the assembly, preventing further violence.

The Lord used the church of Ephesus for His purpose so that the gospel might spread further into Asia Minor. The Ephesian believers endured all the troubles, tribulations, hardships, and persecutions for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord also commended them for their defence of the faith. They earnestly contended for the faith once delivered unto the saints. They were well-grounded doctrinally and ensured they

defended the truth. *“Thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars”* (Revelation 2:2).

To protect the church, the Ephesian believers exposed these false apostles, counterfeit teachers, and deceivers. This was right and commendable. They took to heart what Paul had told them in Acts 20. When Paul revisited Ephesus, he warned them: *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.”* (Acts 20:27-31).

Take note of how it must be done. How did the Apostle Paul teach God’s Word, defend the faith, and earnestly contend for the truth? He did so with tears. *“I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.”*

Remember what first love is all about. It is about this: how do you do the work of the Lord? You may be doing the work of the Lord, but are you doing it out of love for Him and love for His people? Although the Lord commended the church for all these things—for their labour, for their patience, for their defence of the faith, for contending for the faith—yet the Lord chided them.

In verse 4, He says, *“Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee.”* There is something wrong with you; you are not altogether right. There is something seriously wrong with you. *“I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love.”* You have left your first love.

What is this first love? The word “love” comes from the Greek word *agape*, right? You have heard this word before—*agape*. And what is *agape* love? We know what *agape* love is because Scripture defines it for us in 1 Corinthians 13.

In 1 Corinthians 13, it is translated as “charity.” *Agape* love is an excellent translation as “charity” because it is not just emotions. Emotions are important, and feelings matter, but love must come with action. It is not just love in word but also love in deed. You say you love the Lord, you love His people—then do something about it. The word “charity” captures that idea: love that involves action, love that gives.

“For God so loved the world”—that is from the word *agape* in its verb form—*“that He gave His only begotten Son.”* Love that gives.

So what is charity? *“Charity suffereth long”*—longsuffering, patient with people—and *“is kind.”* *“Charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.”*

Do we exhibit and demonstrate this kind of love?

What was the problem with the Ephesian church? Yes, they were a hardworking church, full of missionary activity. Good! But how do you go about doing your missions and evangelism? Is it just a formality—“this is what the church has always done, so we continue to do it”? Do you put your heart and soul into it? Is there a true love for the Lord and for His people? Or is it just a routine—“I just give money to support missions, and that’s it”? But why? Why do you do it? How do you do it? Is it truly out of love for the Lord and His people? Or is it just a formality?

Have you left your first love?

Also, over here, they may have been defending the faith, practising the doctrine of separation—which is important, vital, and very necessary. But how do you go about doing it? That is also very important. We Bible-Presbyterians are known for defending the faith, which is good, important, and necessary. But we must make sure we do it in the right way, with the right spirit, with the right attitude, and with the right heart—a heart full of love for God, His Word, and others. Not void of love.

There are those who may do a lot of work for the Lord—very busy, even preaching the Gospel—but they do it out of envy and strife. That is of no use. There are those who contend for the faith but do so without true love for the Lord or for His people. It is love for self. That is a kind of pharisaical practice of the faith—practising all these things, defending the faith, contending for the faith—but with a self-righteous spirit. Not because they love God, but because they love themselves and even promote themselves.

We are nothing. We can have all knowledge and understand all mysteries, we can have all faith, but if we have no charity, the Lord says we are a big zero. We can give a whole lot of money to missions and evangelism, support God’s work, but if we don’t do it out of charity, we are nothing. Yes, there is a lot of activity going on, but if the heart is not right—if we don’t do it out of love, if we are not constrained by the love of God—then our report card will say: “Yes, you have taken many subjects, but the grade is big fat F. Big zero. Fail.”

The Apostle Paul tells us that when we speak the truth and contend for the faith, we must “*speak the truth in love.*” So how do we go about preaching, teaching, and defending the truth? Are we constrained by the love of God? If we are constrained by His love—motivated by love—then the truth we speak will build up the church, build up others, and bring glory to God. It will protect and not destroy.

But if it is done in a self-righteous way, to promote self, it may destroy rather than edify. We must be careful. When we do God’s work, it must not be pharisaic, nor should it be terroristic, seeking to kill, destroy, or harm in the name of God or religion. When we do these things, we must truly love people, seeking their well-being, healing, and good, not their harm or destruction. That is why we do it.

So how do we do God’s work? We must do it with the right spirit, the right attitude, and the right heart—full of love. This love must involve emotions, desire, zeal, fervency, devotion, and conviction. It must be done according to God’s will and His way, according to His truth. Then there will be good results.

The problem with the Ephesian church was that they were doing many things, but they were doing them with an empty heart, void of love. They had left their first love. The first love also refers to the first works. In verse 5, the Lord says, “*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.*” The first love involves the first works. Love includes emotions, motives, attitude, and spirit. These must be right. And then, don’t forget the first works.

What are the first works? The spiritual works we did and enjoyed when we were first converted—how we took great joy and delight in the things of the Lord. Acts 2:42 tells us what the first works of the early church were: “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*”

Do we study God’s Word like we did when we first believed? Do we continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, or is it now a chore? Do we take joy in fellowship, or do we prefer the company of the world? Do we take worship seriously, or do we neglect church services? Do we pray like we used to?

The first Christians loved the Lord and loved one another. They were selfless. They gave to those in need. They had all things in common. They were devoted to worship, breaking bread, and prayer. They had gladness and singleness of heart. That was their first love.

Have we left our first love?

The Lord says, *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”*

If we do not return to our first love and first works, our Christian witness will be useless. The Lord will remove our candlestick.

I pray we will not become like this. I pray we will be a church that truly loves the Lord—especially in these last days—loves His Word, His truth, and one another. Then we will be used by the Lord in the most wonderful way, all for His glory. And we will be a happy, joyful church indeed.

VIII

FAITHFUL MARTYRDOM

Revelation 2:8-11

The question we want to ask is this: Are you willing? Are you prepared to die for your faith, to lay down your life for the Lord Jesus Christ? For if you are unwilling and not ready to do so, then you must ask yourself, “Am I truly a disciple, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Let us listen to the church on earth, to local churches. The church on earth consists of a mixed crowd: some are true believers, some are false believers, and some are outright unbelievers. We must ensure that we are all true believers—truly born again, genuine Christians.

One of the marks of a true believer is their perspective on life. Are you ready to give up your life and even lay it down for the Lord—to be a martyr if necessary? Jesus said, “If you want to follow me, if you want to be my disciple, you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.” And you know what the cross signifies, don’t you? The cross means suffering, shame, and death.

Are you willing to suffer for the Lord Jesus? Are you willing to endure unjust shame, false accusations, slander, and blasphemy for His sake? Are you willing to undergo ridicule and mockery for your faith? And are you prepared to pay the ultimate price? For if you are not willing, then you cannot truly say, “I am a disciple, a follower of the Lord.”

The Lord commands us, “*Be thou faithful.*” This is not an option or a choice; it is something that all Christians must be and must do. We must be willing. “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*” If you are not faithful, the opposite is true—you will not receive the crown of life. The crown of life symbolises eternal life, a place in heaven with the Lord. A true believer will wear this crown and demonstrate unwavering faithfulness—even unto death—showing 100% loyalty and commitment to the Lord.

Are we like this? Of course, not all of us will suffer martyrdom. Some may, but most of us will not have to shed blood for our faith. However, if the Lord requires it of us, are we willing, ready, and prepared to do so? I pray that we all are—that we are genuine disciples and loyal followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This was the case with the church in Smyrna. Here we have a letter to the church in Smyrna: “*And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.*” These words are spoken by the One who is both God and man—the Lord Jesus Christ—who lived for us, died for us, and rose from the dead. He is the supreme martyr, sacrificing Himself to save us from our sins, even though we are undeserving and unworthy. He did all of this for us. Now, if we claim to follow Him, to bear His name, do we have the same faith? We must have the same willingness to lay down our lives for His sake.

The church in Smyrna was such a church, and Smyrna still exists today. In ancient times, Smyrna was a city in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. Today, it is known as Izmir. Back then, Smyrna was the third most important seaport in Asia Minor. The first was Ephesus, the capital city of Asia Minor and its number one seaport. The second was Miletus, and the third was Smyrna. However, among all the cities of Asia Minor, Smyrna was renowned as the most beautiful. The Romans loved this city for its beauty, as it was situated at the foot of Mount Pagus. It was so admired that an emperor decided to build a temple there for himself.

At one point in history, the emperors of Rome demanded worship, establishing the imperial cult. Citizens were required to worship Caesar, and Smyrna, outside of Rome, became a chief city for emperor worship. While Ephesus was the centre of Diana (or Artemis) worship, Smyrna

became the foremost city for emperor worship in Asia Minor. A temple was dedicated to this purpose, and refusing to worship the emperor was considered a crime punishable by prosecution, persecution, and even execution.



Smyrna—Known as Izmir Today

Christians in Smyrna suffered tremendously because of this. As the primary city for emperor worship in Asia Minor, the church there bore the brunt of persecution. Indeed, they endured immense tribulation. Notably, the church in Smyrna received no condemnation from the Lord—only commendation. Among the seven churches addressed in Revelation, only two received no rebuke from Christ: Smyrna and Philadelphia. We will study the letter to Philadelphia later, but Smyrna stood out as a church of pure and strong faith.

Despite the suffering, hardships, and persecution they faced, the believers in Smyrna remained faithful. It is likely that these very sufferings purified and sanctified their faith. Often, trials, tribulations, and testings serve a divine purpose—sanctifying our hearts, strengthening our faith, and deepening our trust in the Lord. Thus, we see a church that endured immense tribulation yet remained steadfast in its devotion to Christ.

In verse 9, we read: *“I know thy works.”* The Lord says, *“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty.”* The works, tribulation, and poverty are in logical order and sequence. Because they had a good and godly testimony through their works, they lived a truly godly life in the city.

“I know thy works and your godliness.” Since they refused to compromise their faith, they stood out as lights in a very dark city. They were conspicuous, and people hated them because their light exposed the darkness. When people despise you for your faith and godly life, what follows? Tribulation. They were persecuted. Their good works and godly living led to persecution and suffering, and this persecution resulted in poverty.

Because they sought to live a godly Christian life, following God's laws and commandments rather than the ways of the world, they faced economic hardships. Some lost their jobs and were ostracised by society. Worse still, they were accused of breaking the law for refusing to worship the emperor. Many were imprisoned, and husbands and fathers perished as martyrs for their faith. As a result, women became widows, and children became orphans—destitute and extremely poor due to persecution.

Yet, the Lord assures them: "I know—I know all these things you are going through. I know thy works; I know the tribulation you are facing. I see that you are physically very poor. But in my eyes, you are rich—truly rich!" *"Thou art rich."* We are rich when we are rich in God's sight. The world may see us as poor, but we can be spiritually wealthy in God's eyes, and that is what truly matters.

The Lord tells them that they are very rich and blessed indeed. Spiritually, they were abundantly blessed with joy and peace despite the tribulation, persecution, and suffering they endured. On the other hand, there are Christians living in wealth and luxury—what kind of faith do they have? Are they fervent and willing to sacrifice for the Lord?

Many who are rich become complacent, lukewarm in their Christian walk. The Lord warns, *"I will spue thee out of my mouth."* This was the case with the church of Laodicea, as found in Revelation 3:17: *"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."* The Christians in Laodicea were materially wealthy and comfortable, but what kind of faith did they have? In contrast, the suffering and persecuted church in Smyrna was poor, yet the Lord declared them rich. He gave them no condemnation—only commendation. But the wealthy church in Laodicea received nothing but rebuke.

Sometimes, riches and wealth are not a blessing. Today, many mega-churches preach a prosperity gospel, teaching that one is only blessed if they are rich and successful—living in a big house, driving a luxury car. If you lack these things, they claim you are not blessed. What a lie! Nothing could be further from the truth.

What kind of faith do we have? Is our faith and life defined by our wealth—the kind of house we live in or the car we drive? Certainly not. Yet, in places like Singapore, where we enjoy favourable conditions, have we become complacent? The Lord has been gracious to us. I pray that our faith will be as fervent as that of the believers in Smyrna.

We should not wait for persecution, trials, and tribulation to sanctify us. If we truly live for the Lord now—even in times of wealth and prosperity—He can continue to use us. If we are responsible and faithful, understanding what it means to follow Christ and value our faith above all, the Lord will use us greatly. However, if we fail to live fervently for Him, He may send tribulation, persecution, and poverty to wake us up—to sanctify us. And that, indeed, would be a blessing.

It is far better to be physically and materially poor yet spiritually rich. If we do not live for the Lord now, He may send hardships to refine us. Therefore, let us live faithfully for the Lord in all circumstances. Being blessed materially, we have great opportunities to serve and glorify Him. Let us use our blessings wisely and remain fervent in our faith.

In verse 9, we read: *"I know thy works."* The Lord says, *"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty—but thou art rich."* There were those in the city who blasphemed, not only against God but also against believers, falsely accusing them and causing them to suffer unjustly. Christians were often made the scapegoats of society. When calamities befell a city or nation, the blame was placed on them, leading to persecution and suffering. This was evident in the

days of Emperor Nero, who burned down the city of Rome and then falsely accused Christians of the crime.

The Lord declares, *“I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”* In Smyrna, there was a Jewish community and a synagogue. The Jews were supposed to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and follow the Hebrew Scriptures, including the Ten Commandments. However, the Lord calls them false Jews because they compromised their faith. The love of money is the root of all evil. To avoid suffering, imprisonment, and financial loss, they participated in the imperial cult, bowing to the Roman emperor while still worshiping in the synagogue. They tried to have the best of both worlds—mixing their faith with idolatry.

Yet, the Lord has always made it clear: *“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”* The first commandment states, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me,”* and the second, *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... nor bow down thyself to them.”* These Jews, by compromising, were not true worshipers of God. Similarly, there are false Christians—Christians in name only—who are unwilling to suffer for the Lord, unwilling to forsake worldly comforts, and eager to blend their faith with worldly ideologies. In the end, they have nothing at all but a mixed, diluted religion.

This trend continues today. The ecumenical movement promotes the syncretising of different religions, attempting to create a one-world religion in the name of unity and harmony. Some say, “You may worship Jesus, but you must also acknowledge other gods.” The question is: Are we true disciples of Christ, or are we merely superficial followers willing to compromise?

The Bible warns that the time will come when the Antichrist will establish not only a one-world political order but also a one-world religion. He will demand worship, and those who refuse will be persecuted. The mark of the beast—his number 666—will be required for buying and selling, and people will be forced to bow before his image. What will you do then? Will you bow? Will you receive his mark?

For those who have truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we trust that we will not be present during that time. We believe we will be caught up in the rapture before the Antichrist’s reign. But for those who are Christian in name only, who have never truly placed their faith in Christ, they may find themselves left behind, facing the horrors of the Great Tribulation.

If that happens, what will you do? There is still hope. The Bible commands, *“Be thou faithful unto death,”* and promises the crown of life to those who stand firm in their faith. If you realise too late that you never truly believed and find yourself in the midst of the Great Tribulation, remember these words: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, even if it means martyrdom, for eternal life awaits those who are faithful unto death.

But why delay? Why wait until that time? Believe in the Lord Jesus today and be saved. If today you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Come to Christ now and be spared from the coming judgement. Today is the day of salvation.

So these Jews have turned their synagogue into a synagogue of Satan by impure faith and religion, worshiping Jehovah while at the same time worshiping the emperor. This is no different from what happened in the Old Testament when the first king of the northern kingdom of Ephraim, Jeroboam I, the son of Nebat, made a golden calf and said, “This is Jehovah.” Worshiping the golden calf was an abomination, and the northern kingdom was eventually destroyed. The Lord sent the Assyrians and destroyed Samaria and Ephraim, and that happened in 721 BC.

So, why will you be destroyed when you can be saved? Have pure faith and true religion, right? Don't get mixed up, don't compromise your faith. *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* And when persecution comes, thank God for persecution. Persecution can be good for us and can be good for the church. As Tertullian, the church father, said, *"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."* In fact, right now, the fastest-growing church in the world is not in the West—neither in America nor in any of the European countries. The fastest-growing church today is reportedly in the Middle East, in an Islamic country: the country of Iran. This was reported recently. Let me just share with you a report by the Christian Post, published on September 23, 2019. The report is titled "Fast-growing church has no buildings, no central leadership, and is mostly led by women." It says, "For the last few years, researchers have credited the underground church in Iran as the fastest-growing Christian church in the world. It has unique characteristics that defy comparison with churches in America and Europe. In the opinion of some who know it well, the church in the West could learn by studying it."

One of the church leaders there was interviewed and said, "Efforts by the Ayatollahs to destroy Christianity have backfired, but have served to define and refine the church. What persecution did was destroy the church that was not discipleship-based. Persecution destroyed the church that was focused on converts. These church planters found out that converts run away from persecution, but disciples would die for the Lord in persecution. So, we are not interested in converts—converts are false believers. When persecuted, they deny the Lord and run away. We are interested in disciples, and disciples are those who willingly lay down their lives for the Lord. Disciples will die for the Lord in persecution."

And that's right. I pray we are not "converts" here—we are disciples. That's biblically correct, because the word "disciple" in the original Greek is *mathetes*, from the root *mathetes*, meaning "a learner or follower." You are a disciple of the Lord. So you can do nothing against the truth but for the truth. And the Lord has said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* God is still doing His saving work in the most unlikely places. We think it's impossible for people to believe in the Lord or find faith or Christianity in these countries, but you don't know the power of God and His Word and the Spirit. The Lord is still saving, and we pray we may be like these Christians, with the kind of faith they have—faithful unto death.

Are we willing to be martyrs for the Lord, if need be? And verse 10 tells us how we must be: *"Be thou faithful, so fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

So, when tribulation comes and persecution comes, and you find yourself faithful, then you are assured: yes, I have the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have true faith, and make sure your faith is a genuine one—not a fake one, not a false one. You know, when the time comes, or if the time should come when you may have to pay with your life, or someone comes up to you and says, "Alright, money or life?" A robber comes and points a gun to your head: money or life? What will you say? Of course, I hope you are wise enough to say, "Alright, you want my money? Take my money, I want my life." But if a gun is put to your head and they say, "Christ or life?"—you want Christ, Jesus Christ, or do you want your life? Don't be foolish and say you want your life. Be wise. You must be faithful to the Lord and say, "No, I want my Christ. You want my life? Take it, but I want my Christ."

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Remember the promise of the Lord. I believe the Lord, if we have true faith in Him, will hold us fast in such a critical time to strengthen us. But right now, we must start right by programming in our hearts to

determine in ourselves: “Yes, when the time comes, Lord, I will follow you to the very end. I will never deny you in any way. I am prepared, Lord, to lay down my life for you. You have died for me and rose from the dead. How can I not follow you, be loyal to you, and be faithful to you even unto the end?”

That was the testimony of the Christians in Smyrna. There is a wonderful story of the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp. By the way, the name Smyrna means “bitter.” So the church in this city went through bitter sufferings for the Lord. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, went through such bitter suffering in his life and ministry.

Polycarp, who was the bishop of Smyrna, was a disciple of the apostle John, a very early church father. He was the pastor of Smyrna, and at that time, the emperor introduced the worship of him. Polycarp preached, “No, you can only worship the living and true God, who is Spirit, and only Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We cannot worship anyone else.” Yes, we honour and respect the emperor, but we cannot worship him.

For his preaching and teaching, persecution came. “I know your works,” the Lord said, “Your good works have led you to suffer tribulation.” So it was a crime not to worship the emperor, and a warrant was issued for Polycarp’s arrest. Polycarp said, “I am not afraid to die. Let them come and take me.” But the members of the church were worried for him and for themselves. They told the bishop, “You must not be taken away. You must not die, because if you die, we are left without a shepherd, without a pastor.”

Because of what they said, Polycarp relented. He allowed them to hide him in a farmhouse in the countryside. However, there was a “Judas” in the church who betrayed him and revealed his location. The Roman soldiers came, and when they arrived at the house, they saw Polycarp, a very old man.

Polycarp, seeing them, greeted them and said, “Welcome, come into the house. Please don’t use force or violence. I will go with you willingly, but before I go, come into my house, there is food and drink. You must be very tired from your long journey. Have some food, have some drink, and then give me time to pray. After that, I’ll go with you.”

He was escorted into the city and brought to the theatre, the arena where the Roman populace enjoyed cruel entertainment—gladiators fighting, bloodletting, and Christians being torn to bits by lions. Polycarp was led into the theatre and stood before the governor, Quadratus. Quadratus interrogated Polycarp, asking, “Are you Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna?” He replied, “Yes, I am.” Quadratus said, “I see you are already a very old man. Why go through all this pain and suffering? Just say, ‘Away with the atheists,’ and I will free you.”

Now, who were the atheists? In the minds of the Romans, Christians were considered atheists because they refused to worship the emperor. Polycarp replied, “Who are the atheists?” He pointed to all those in the crowd, “These are the atheists.”

Then Quadratus told him, “Why don’t you just stop being so stubborn? Denounce Jesus Christ, worship the emperor, and I will release you, you’ll be a free man.” Polycarp replied with these famous words, often quoted by historians: “For 86 years I have served the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has done me no wrong. How can I now denounce and deny my God and my Saviour?”

Quadratus became very angry. “I will throw you to the lions, I’ll throw you to the wild beasts!” Polycarp said, “Alright, bring them out.” Quadratus became even more furious. “Oh, you’re not afraid of lions? Then I’ll burn you at the stake. Maybe you’ll be afraid of fire.”

Polycarp replied, “You burn me with fire, that will only last for a short time. But you better know that there is a fire that God will use to burn the wicked, and that fire will last forever.”

After he said that, the crowd in the theatre shouted, “Burn him! Burn him!” Polycarp was led to the stake, where they would nail the victim’s hands to the wood before burning them. Polycarp told the soldiers, “You don’t need to nail me to the wood. I will remain. I will not run away. I will pray for God’s grace and strength to endure the flames.”



Polycarp Burned at the Stake

That’s how he died, faithful unto death. And now, he is wearing the crown of life.

Are you tested? Are you tempted? What kind of faith do you have? I pray it’s a faith like this—100% loyalty and commitment to the Lord. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will grant thee the crown of life.

IX DOCTRINAL PURITY

Revelation 2:12-17

The message to the church in Pergamos concerns the truth of the Word of God. It emphasises the purity of the Word, the purity of truth, and the purity of doctrine. It is vital that we know the truth with certainty, for if we know the truth, the truth will set us free and give us clear vision. In today's world, we desperately need 20/20 vision because the world is full of darkness, uncertainty, and confusion.

This confusion is exacerbated by social media. While there is an explosion of information, much of what is found on the internet consists of falsehoods and fake news. As a result, people struggle to discern truth from falsehood. This leads to confusion, distress, and even depression. However, as Christians, we do not need to be influenced by fake news and worldly falsehoods. We have "*a more sure word of prophecy*"—the Word of God.

Newspapers and news outlets may not always be reliable. That does not mean we should not read them, but we must prioritise reading, knowing, and applying God's Word in our lives. We need to know Scripture and its doctrines so thoroughly that they fill our hearts and minds. When we do, we will be able to make sense of the senseless world. This is only possible if we deeply imprint God's Word in our minds and impress it upon our hearts. Then we will have clarity, certainty, and confidence. We will not be confused but will see things clearly, understanding what lies ahead. God has revealed the future, and His Word teaches us what is truly important in life and how to live with joy and peace.

Christians should not be confused, unclear, or uncertain about life and the world around us. We can and must know the truth. Our God is the God of truth. If one asks, "What is truth?" or "Where is truth?" the answer is simple: God's Word is truth. We have it in our hands, given by divine inspiration—every word pure and perfect. From generation to generation, God has preserved His Word. The Bible stands and continues to stand. As Psalm 12:6-7 declares: "*The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.*"

We can have full confidence in God's Word, even if we lack confidence in the world and its institutions. We must be absolutely certain of Scripture because we are to live by it: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" (Matthew 4:4)

As a church, we must maintain purity in our beliefs, convictions, and doctrines. While God has preserved His truth through the ages, we also have a human responsibility to ensure that our beliefs remain true to His pure Word. By doing so, we will have great assurance, and the truth will be doubly confirmed in our hearts. Nothing will shake us, and we will have the peace of God and the joy of salvation.

This is the key message the Lord wants us to understand from His letter to the church in Pergamos. In Revelation 2:12, we read: "*And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.*"

The name "Pergamos" means parchment, which is significant as it relates to books and words. In Pergamos, there was a famous library—second only to the great library of Alexandria in Egypt. This city was known for books, but the Lord Jesus emphasises the most important book of all—His Word, the Holy Bible. The parchment in Pergamos reminds us of the Scriptures, just as Paul, while in prison, requested "*the books, but especially the parchments*" (2 Timothy 4:13), referring to the Scriptures.

The letter to the church in Pergamos is about God's Word. The sharp sword with two edges mentioned in Revelation 2:12 refers to the Word of God, as seen in Hebrews 4:12: "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.*"

Paul also calls the Word of God "*the sword of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 6:17). The sharp, two-edged sword signifies both judgement and purification.

Negatively, God's Word judges and condemns. Just as Lady Justice holds a sword to execute justice, the Lord will use His Word to judge sinners and those who reject the Gospel. Revelation 2:16 warns: "*Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*"

On the final day, when Jesus sits on His great white throne, all whose names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire. The Lord will use His Word to execute judgement.

Positively, the Word of God also cuts to heal and sanctify, much like a surgeon's knife that removes a cancerous tumour. In the church, false doctrines and heresies can spread like cancer, as Paul warned about Hymenaeus and Philetus, whose words "*eat as doth a canker*" (2 Timothy 2:17). The Word of God must cut away such falsehoods.

We want the Lord to use His Word like a surgeon's knife in our lives—to remove false beliefs, wrong thinking, and sin. Just as early detection and removal of cancer increase the chances of survival, we must act quickly to cut out sin and error before they spread. The Word of God is our instrument for sanctification and preservation in the truth.

In the same way, you want to ensure that your mind is filled with pure doctrines—no falsehood, false thinking, false beliefs, or false doctrine. This is because false doctrine leads to bad practices, corrupt practices, and sinful practices. You will see this later on in your heart.

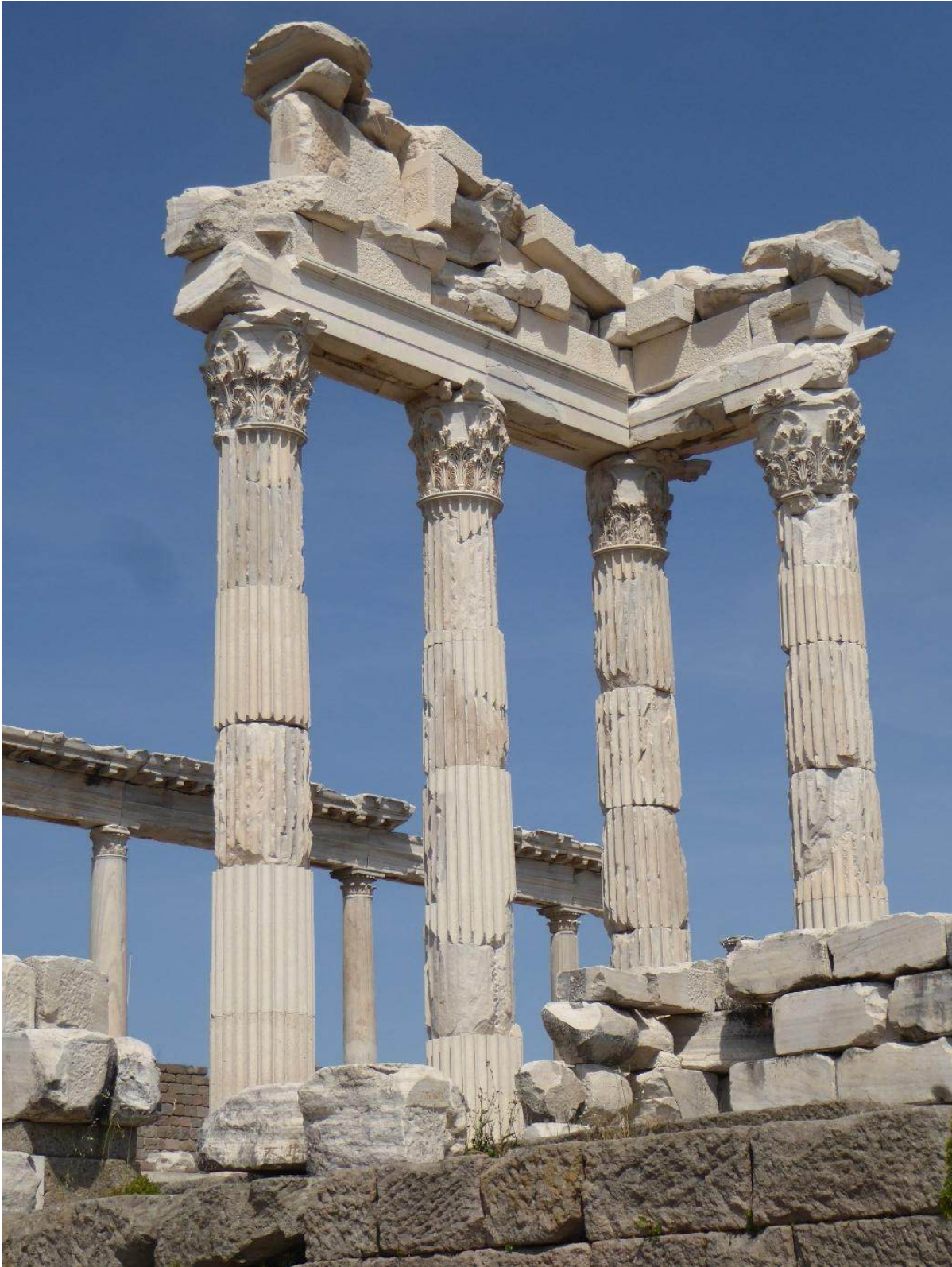
You must also ensure that all immoral impurities are excised—cut off—so that you become more and more conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus. In these last days, we need this so much if we want to be ready for the Lord's return. That is why the Lord speaks these words to the church in Pergamos—and to us as well. Take note of this sharp sword with two edges: it can cut negatively to judge and to slay, or it can cut positively to help and to heal. We want to be helped and healed, and that involves doctrinal purity—purity in our beliefs, our convictions, our faith. Our doctrines are crucial.

In verse 13, we read: "*I know thy works.*" Yes, there are certain things that are good about you. I acknowledge and commend you for these works. "*I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.*" The phrase "Satan's seat" can also be rendered as "Satan's throne." Satan reigns as king in your city; he sits on his throne there. This refers to two temples found in Pergamos—one dedicated to Emperor Trajan for emperor worship, and the other dedicated to Zeus, the king of the gods. These temples are described as "Satan's seat." The city was entirely given to idolatry—the worship of false gods, even Zeus, the so-called king of the gods, and the worship of a human being, Emperor Trajan.

You are living in this city, dwelling there. There is nothing wrong with living in such a city. The Bible tells us that we are living in Satan's world—Satan is the god of this world. In fact, all of us were born in sin, as children of the devil. But we thank God for His mercy, that we heard the Gospel and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Being born again, we are now part of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. No longer are we citizens of this world, but citizens of heaven. No longer children of the devil, but children of God.

Yet, we still dwell in Satan's world, in Satan's city, where his throne is. He is the god of this world. There is no sin in dwelling in this world, for God has placed us here with a purpose—

that we might be the light in this dark world, the salt of this decaying world. We are here to exert a godly influence, to share the Gospel, and to tell people the truth—the old yet ever-new, ever-good news of salvation in Christ. That is our mission.



Temple of Trajan at Pergamos

However, while there is no sin in dwelling in this world, there is every sin in becoming like this world. We are in the world but not of the world. The Lord says: “*I know thy works, and*

where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.” It is not easy for believers. If you believe the truth and live according to it, you will face persecution. You may even be executed, as happened in the church of Pergamos.

One of their members, Antipas, was martyred for his faith. *“Thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas, my faithful martyr, was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”* The church in Pergamos went through intense persecution. Antipas, one of their members, was a faithful witness. The Greek word for “martyr” here is *martus*, which means “witness.” He bore a good and godly testimony, and for that, he paid the ultimate price—his life. He held fast to the name of Christ, did not deny the faith, and laid down his life for the Lord Jesus. He was faithful unto death, just as Revelation 2:10 exhorts: *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* This was also the case with Polycarp, and here we read of Antipas.

Even today, Christians continue to be persecuted. We are privileged to worship the Lord freely in this city. Most of us have not faced persecution to the extent of having to give up our lives. But in many countries around the world, Christians are being put to death for their faith. It is reported that every year, 10,000 Christians die because they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is our calling: *“Deny self, take up your cross, and follow the Lord Jesus.”*

Some of us will be required to go to that extent. If the Lord calls us to be among the ten thousand who die for their faith each year, may we always choose Christ over life. If you choose Christ, you will live. If you deny Christ to save your life, you are already dead. But if you lose your life for Christ's sake, your soul is saved.

Because you believe in the Lord Jesus, He is your Saviour. If your soul is saved, you can be sure that your body, too, will be saved in the resurrection to come.

So be sure of this: be like Antipas, the faithful witness and martyr for the Lord.

However, the Lord has something against the church in Pergamos. In verse 14, we read: *“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”*

The doctrine of Balaam—a dangerous, deadly, and false doctrine—was found in the church. Not only was the doctrine of Balaam present, but also the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. These two poisonous doctrines had infiltrated the church, corrupting it. Doctrinal purity must be maintained. How is it that such false teachings were allowed to remain? These are dangerous influences that should have been removed. The church should have used the surgeon's knife to cut them off immediately, lest they bring destruction.

The Lord clearly states that He hates these doctrines. What, then, is the doctrine of Balaam? It is an evil counsel, an ungodly piece of advice that Balaam gave to Balak in order to cause Israel to sin, leading to their downfall. The doctrine of Balaam placed a stumbling block before the children of Israel, tempting them to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. This doctrine is recorded in Numbers 25.

Initially, Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel so that misfortune would come upon them. However, God forbade Balaam from cursing His people. Whenever Balaam attempted to curse Israel, only blessings came forth. So how could Israel be destroyed? Balaam, being a false prophet and a cunning schemer, devised another plan: he advised Balak to tempt and seduce Israel into sin. If Israel fell into sin, their own God would punish them. Balaam knew that

Israel's strength lay in their obedience to God. If they disobeyed, judgement would fall upon them.

Balaam's plan worked. Israel allowed themselves to be tempted and sinned against God. The Lord had clearly warned them to stay away from idolatry and immorality, but they failed to heed His command. In Numbers 25:1–2, we read: “*And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*”

Here we see an unequal yoke. God had warned Israel not to marry the Canaanites or allow their sons and daughters to intermarry with them. Why? Because these foreign influences would lead them away from God, causing them to worship false gods. Idolatry is not just a physical act; it is spiritual adultery. Israel was supposed to be betrothed to God alone. By worshiping other gods, they were committing spiritual prostitution—an act that God detested.

Verse 3 continues: “*And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.*” Satan's tactic was simple: get Israel to sin so that God Himself would punish them. This was the sinister doctrine of Balaam.

Even today, the doctrine of Balaam continues. Satan still uses the same strategy to destroy God's people and corrupt the church. That is why we must be vigilant, deeply rooted in God's Word, and committed to upholding the truth. Otherwise, we will suffer the same fate as Israel—losing God's presence, power, and blessing, and falling under His judgement. Why would we allow ourselves to fall into Satan's trap? It is sheer foolishness!

Yet, even today, the doctrine of Balaam has infiltrated the church. Satan is the god of this world, and his influence is everywhere. The church is meant to be in the world, shining as a light in the darkness. There is no sin in living in a world where Satan's throne exists, but there is great sin in becoming like the world. Sadly, many churches today have embraced worldliness. Instead of remaining set apart, they have conformed to the world's ways, thinking, speech, and lifestyle. They have compromised not only in doctrine but also in their manner of life.

Some members have left faithful churches because they find them “boring.” They seek excitement, entertainment, and glamour. On the internet and YouTube, they see churches that are glitzy, glamorous, and full of fun. These churches attract thousands, even tens of thousands, and people think, “How can so many be so wrong?” But what kind of gospel do these churches preach? It is the doctrine of Balaam—compromise with the world. They justify it by saying, “We want to be like the world to win the world for Christ.”

This is the poison that has infiltrated the church. Worldly music, worldly philosophies, worldly fashion, and worldly ways are being brought into the church under the guise of Christianity. But this is not true Christianity; it is corruption. We must beware of the doctrine of Balaam and remain faithful to the truth of God's Word.

And then people come in and say, “This is so good! I can have the best of both worlds. I want to be worldly because the world is very exciting. I also want the church but the church has to be equally exciting. It has to be like the world.”

There are churches today who seek to excite the flesh to draw in the people—churches that are full of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

There are churches like City Harvest that proclaim it very loudly and clearly: *We want to cross over*. Cross over to what? Cross over to the world! So we must speak like the world, sing like the world, play like the world, and be like the world to win people to Christ. Another church like this is New Creation. These churches are packed with people—they attract the people of

the world. When the church becomes like the world, it will attract worldly people. But how many of those who go to such churches are truly born again?

If you believe in the doctrine of Balaam, you are lost. It is poisonous. It caused a stumbling block before the children of Israel, leading them to eat things sacrificed to idols and commit fornication.

The same applies to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Now, not much is known about the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, but in context, it seems similar to the doctrine of Balaam, which causes people to sin through compromise—eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication.

It is possible that the Nicolaitans were connected to a man named Nicholas. The word *Nicolaitans* comes from the name *Nicholas*, and there is a Nicholas mentioned in the Bible in Acts 6. He was one of the first deacons in the church.

Turn to Acts 6, and we read in verse 5: “*And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch.*” Nicholas began well as a deacon in the church but later departed from the faith and went against the decision of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

Now, in Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council, consisting of the apostles and elders, decided that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised if they believed in the Lord Jesus. However, they were commanded to abstain from fornication, idolatry, and eating food offered to idols. Acts 15:20 states: “*But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.*”

However, Nicholas went against this ruling. He taught that it was acceptable to eat food offered to idols, reasoning that an idol is nothing and that since believers already trusted in God, they could eat all they wanted. But if you embrace idolatry, you also embrace the doctrine of Balaam. Wrong doctrine leads to wrong practice—it results in fornication and sexual immorality.

Thus, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans is linked to Nicholas, who turned away from the truth and misled people. He encouraged them to eat food offered to idols and commit fornication, just like Balaam did in the Old Testament. This doctrine became a stumbling block before the children of Israel and even within the church.

How can such a deadly, poisonous doctrine exist in your church? You should already have exercised church discipline! You must use the Word of God as a surgeon’s knife to cut away this cancerous tumour of false doctrine. If you truly love God, you cannot allow this evil doctrine to persist.

What should you do? *Repent!* Revelation 2:16 says: “*Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*” You better repent quickly! If a cancerous tumour is detected early, it should be cut off immediately. If you fail to do so, it will grow and spread, and soon, it will be too late.

If you do not repent, what will happen? Jesus says, “*I will fight against you.*” If God says He will fight against you, you should be very worried. Do you think you can fight against God and win? No! If God fights you, you will surely be destroyed.

Why choose to lose? If you want to be on the winning side, be on God’s side. Stand on the side of truth. Repent, obey Him, and He will help and heal you.

But if you harden your heart and refuse to repent, then the Lord will fight against you. The sword of His Word, which should have been used to purify and heal you, will now be used to judge and slay you.

Do you have ears to hear? Revelation 2:17 says: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* If you are truly born again, the Spirit of God dwells in you. When the Word of God is preached, the Holy Spirit uses it as a sword to convict your heart.

If you are a child of God, you will listen. You will say, “Yes, Lord, I have sinned. I do not want this sin in my life. I repent. Please use Your Word to cut it away from me. I will obey You.” That is a good sign. The Word of God will help and heal you.

But if you reject the truth, you will say: “This church is too strict. It is boring. The pastor never cracks jokes. He preaches too much.” So, you leave. You look for an exciting church, one that entertains, one that is glamorous and fun. And you find these churches online, on YouTube—big churches packed with thousands, even tens of thousands of people. You think, “How can so many people be wrong?”

But what kind of gospel do these churches preach? It is the doctrine of Balaam. It is a compromise with the world. They say, “We want to be like the world to win the world for Christ.”

But that is poison! They bring in worldly music, worldly philosophy, worldly fashion, and worldly ways—all under the name of Christianity. And people say, “This is wonderful! I can be both worldly and Christian at the same time!”

But this is deception. If you follow the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, you will perish.

The Lord warns, *“Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”*

We must maintain doctrinal purity. If there is doctrinal impurity, it will lead to moral impurity. Idolatry will lead to fornication. We must not allow this to happen in our lives.

X

MORAL PURITY

Revelation 2:18-29

Last time, we studied the church of Pergamos. The message to this church was on doctrinal purity. If the church is to be ready for the Lord's return, we must be doctrinally pure. However, doctrinal purity alone is not enough; we must also be morally pure. This is the message to the church in Thyatira. There is a logical progression here—doctrinal purity must lead to moral and ethical purity. As James says, *“faith without works is dead.”*

In these very dark days of great immorality, the church must shine forth as lights—not just with the light of God's truth but also with the light of God's holiness. This is vital and important. Otherwise, what are we doing? What kind of testimony do we have? Why do we call ourselves Christians? Why do we say we are the church of the Lord Jesus Christ if there is no moral purity?

This is the message to the church in Thyatira. In Revelation 2:18, it says: *“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write...”*



Scripture Reading at Thyatira in FEBC's Bible Lands Pilgrimage Trip

What kind of city was Thyatira? Thyatira was an agricultural city, famous for its vineyards and the cultivation of grapes and cotton. Even today, in modern Turkey—where ancient Thyatira was located—vineyards and cotton production remain prominent. Turkish cotton is well known for its high quality.

Thyatira was also known for its production of purple dye. In Acts 16, we read about Lydia, a seller of purple, who was from Thyatira. In those days, Thyatira was a city full of agriculture and industries, with many different trades and businesses.

With these businesses and trades came guilds or associations. These trade guilds were linked to different gods. The people of Thyatira were businessmen, but they were also highly religious or superstitious. Each trade had its own god to whom the people prayed for blessings, prosperity, and good fortune. While the city was busy with commerce, it was also deeply idolatrous.

Idolatry in Thyatira was not just about worshiping false gods; it also bred moral corruption. The greed and love for money and prosperity led to moral wickedness. The city was full of moral impurity, and the church was situated in the midst of it. The church was called to be different—not to be like the world or to follow the corrupt practices of the neighbouring businessmen who conducted their affairs dishonestly.

In verse 18, the Lord reminds the church of who He is: *“These things saith the Son of God...”*. We have believed in Him, but we must also know who He is and what He does. His eyes are *“like unto a flame of fire,”* signifying His omniscience—He is all-knowing and all-seeing.

For Christians engaged in business, this is a serious reminder. We must conduct our affairs with integrity—no corrupt dealings, no under-the-table transactions, no cheating, stealing, or bribery. We must not use false balances to overcharge or shortchange customers. These dishonest practices may be common in the world, but God forbids His people from engaging in them. The Lord knows all things and sees all things. Do not think that dishonest dealings done in secret go unnoticed. God knows, and He will hold us accountable.

Not only does the Lord see all, but He also moves among His people. His feet are *“like fine brass,”* signifying His omnipresence. He is walking about, inspecting, and checking that we are conducting ourselves righteously. If we fail to do so, He will judge us. His eyes are like a flaming fire to judge, and His feet like fine brass to stamp out corruption.

If we know that the Son of God sees all, knows all, and walks among us, then we must guard ourselves against sin. We do not want to sin against the Lord. Understanding who our God is and what He does will prevent us from sinning like the world. The world conducts business in a corrupt manner, and we may be tempted to do the same. However, we must resist that temptation. How can we keep ourselves from falling? By remembering who our God and Saviour is, fearing Him, and allowing that fear to restrain us from sin.

The church here is both warned and commended. In verse 19, the Lord says: *“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.”*

The word “works” occurs twice in this verse, emphasising that the church in Thyatira was a very hardworking and industrious church. They diligently laboured for the Lord, not only in their daily businesses but also in the work of the church. This is commendable, and the Lord acknowledges their efforts: *“I know thy works.”*

He specifically mentions their works of charity, noting that they were deeply involved in helping others, engaging in charitable service, and ministering to the poor and needy—not only within the church but also in the broader community.

Even today, many churches and denominations engage in such charitable works. The Anglican and Methodist churches, for example, have historically been involved in building schools and hospitals. I myself attended a mission school—St Andrew’s School—established by Anglican missionaries. As a mission school, it ensured that the gospel was preached and shared with students.

From my first year in St Andrew’s, beginning in Primary One, the school held an annual Religious Emphasis Week—a dedicated time for gospel preaching. All students would gather

in the multi-purpose hall, where an evangelist would be invited to preach the gospel. I first heard the gospel message in Primary One, and the Lord convicted my heart of sin. I prayed for salvation at that young age.

These charitable works, such as building schools, not only provide education in various subjects but also ensure that students hear the gospel. I thank God that I had the opportunity to hear the gospel in St Andrew's back in the 1970s. However, I am unsure whether this Religious Emphasis Week continues today.

Beyond schools, some churches also established homes for the elderly, such as St. John's Home for the Elderly which was started by some Protestant Christians. We have our preachers and members who regularly minister to the elderly residents there. They share the gospel, sing hymns and choruses, and conduct Bible studies. The home's management welcomes us warmly.

As long as we are free to proclaim biblical truth, we continue to minister there for the sake of the gospel, Christ's kingdom, and the salvation of those who hear. For over a decade, we have been visiting weekly, and by God's grace, a good number of residents have come to faith. I have personally baptised several of them. We also transport them to church on the Lord's Day, with members taking turns to bring them.

While the proclamation of the gospel remains our central calling, we engage in works of charity as the Lord opens doors. However, we must always remember that ministering to the body is not enough; we must also minister to the soul. The gospel must be preached, and God's Word must be taught.

Additionally, some of our members are involved in prison ministry. They have received official authorisation to enter Changi Prison to conduct Bible studies with the inmates. The prison wardens appreciate the presence of Bible-Presbyterians because we take God's Word seriously. Our focus is not on entertainment or superficial encouragement but on studying and teaching the Scriptures. Through this ministry, some inmates' lives have been transformed by the gospel and the power of God's Word.

Thus, we engage in works of charity for the sake of Christ and His gospel, hoping that the lost will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Bible-Presbyterian denomination, God has moved one church to establish a home for the elderly—Ling Kwang Home. If the Lord has burdened a church with such a calling and provided the means, it should act upon it. Not every church is called to do the same, but where God places such a burden, the church should respond.

The church in Thyatira was such a church. It had a deep commitment to charity and service, and the Lord commended it for this. However, not all was well within the church...

In verse 20, we find the Lord rebuking the church in Thyatira very severely. We read: *"Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee because thou sufferest—that is, thou allowest, permit, and tolerate—that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."*

This is something that God hates—idolatry and fornication.

Here, Jezebel is mentioned. Jezebel was undoubtedly an idolater, notorious for her wickedness. She is known as the most wicked woman in the Old Testament, having married a king of Israel. That king, Ahab, was himself a very wicked man. We read about him and Jezebel in 1 Kings 16: *"In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it*

came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.”

Jezebel, without a doubt, was the instigator and promoter of Baal worship. She called herself a prophetess and used her influence to *“teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”* Idolatry in the ancient world often went hand in hand with sexual immorality.

For example, the Greek goddess Aphrodite had a temple served by priestesses, but these so-called priestesses were temple prostitutes. Part of the worship ritual involved the devotees sleeping with these priestesses, believing that such acts would please Aphrodite and bring her blessings. Fornication was incorporated into religious rites.

Such abominable practices had infiltrated the church, and yet the believers in Thyatira permitted them. Instead of exposing and excommunicating those involved, they tolerated their presence. Therefore, the Lord was against them.

We must be careful not to end up in a similar state.

We are living in the last days, and these days are filled with seduction and temptation. 1 Timothy 4:1-3 warns us: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.”*

These things are happening today, and we must be alert and vigilant. We must call out the sins of churches that are filled with idolatry—idolatry not only in the worship of false gods but also in the pursuit of power and money. When love for power and money dominates a church, it often leads to sexual perversion and immorality. We see this happening in churches today.

This falling away from the faith is not just a denial of fundamental doctrines but also a moral collapse. The moral standards of the faith have been discarded, and as a result, the testimony of the gospel is undermined.

The doctrine of Jezebel is no different from the doctrine of Balaam, which we studied earlier. Revelation 2:14 states: *“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”*

Likewise, there was also the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:15), which involved similar corruptions. Now, we see the doctrine of Jezebel—all promoting the same wickedness: idolatry and fornication.

Even today, we see these influences infiltrating churches. This is not a mere accusation; it is well-documented. Moral scandals plague the church, and this is public knowledge.

Consider the Roman Catholic Church, the largest church in the world.

The BBC News (October 5, 2021) reported on Catholic Church child sexual abuse scandals, stating: *“From Australian country towns to schools in Ireland and cities across the United States, the Catholic Church has faced an avalanche of child sexual abuse accusations in the last few decades.”*

This is not a recent development but has been happening for decades. The church tried to cover it up, but truth will always be revealed.

The report continues: “High-profile cases and harrowing testimonies given to public inquiries have kept the issue in the headlines. A damning inquiry in France found that some 216,000 children had been sexually abused by members of the clergy since 1950.”

Not one or two cases, but over two hundred thousand! These priests, who were supposed to be trusted men of God, turned out to be sexual predators. This has brought shame upon Christianity because these crimes were committed under the name of the church. The doctrine of Jezebel—idolatry and fornication—was allowed to fester unchecked.

But is this only a problem in the Catholic Church? No.

It has also infiltrated charismatic churches, including mega-churches in our own country.

Consider the City Harvest Church scandal. In *The Straits Times* (August 15, 2014), an article titled “City Harvest Trial: Five Things About Controversial ‘China Wine’ Song” reported: “‘China Wine’ has resurfaced—not the alcoholic beverage, but the English single by Ms. Ho Yeow Sun.”

The report continues: “The video features images of her gyrating furiously to the music in a low-cut, midriff-bearing top and nothing shorts. This video made rounds on social media in 2012 after news of fund misuse charges against City Harvest Church founder Kong Hee and five other church leaders broke.”

Ho Yeow Sun, who calls herself a pastor and even a prophetess, engaged in open seduction. Is this how the gospel is preached? What kind of doctrine is this? It is the doctrine of Jezebel, seducing servants of God into idolatry and fornication.

These scandals undermine the testimony of the gospel and bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

As true believers, we separate ourselves from such churches. These are not churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not identify with them, nor do we tolerate their ways. Instead, we expose them and warn others.

Such things are happening today, and we are witnessing a great falling away from the faith—not just in the Roman Catholic Church and charismatic churches, but even within fundamentalist churches.

May the Lord keep us faithful and vigilant so that we do not permit Jezebel in our midst.

The fundamentalist church may be the worst of all because, as fundamentalists, we are supposed to uphold the faith and ensure that we are morally upright, reflecting and demonstrating the holiness of God. However, in some fundamentalist churches, this is not the case—sad to say.

According to *Christianity Today*, a well-known and widely read American Christian magazine, a report published on December 12, 2018, revealed: “Hundreds Accuse Independent Baptist Pastors of Abuse.” “Hundreds of women have accused leaders of Independent Fundamental Baptist churches of sexual misconduct, according to a major investigative report published by the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. The report identified 168 leaders—including some of the most prominent pastors—who were accused of abuse in incidents spanning from the 1970s to the present day.” This matter was taken to court for public inquiry, and more than 130 of them were found guilty of rape, kidnapping, sexual assault, and other crimes—most of the victims being children and teenagers.

Imagine such things happening in fundamentalist churches! These are the worst of all—wolves in sheep’s clothing.

As a church, we must not be like Thyatira. We may do many good works and acts of charity, but what good are they if immorality is tolerated in the church? If we allow the doctrine of Jezebel to persist, if we permit and tolerate idolatry and fornication, we have failed.

Oh, how we must take heed today! How can we face the Lord Jesus when He comes? Can we say, “Lord, I believe in all the fundamentals. I even uphold the King James Bible,” yet in our lives, we are guilty of idolatry and fornication?

We cannot.

We must ensure that we are not only doctrinally pure but also morally pure. The Lord is gracious. In verse 21, He says: *“I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not.”*

Indeed, the Lord is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

For decades, these sins should have been addressed. They should have been exposed and purged from the church. Instead, they were allowed to continue. But truth cannot remain hidden forever. Now, everything is in the open, and what a shame, what a scandal, what a stumbling block!

So, the Lord will judge. *“Behold, I will cast her into a bed...”* (Revelation 2:22).

This is not a bed of pleasure but a bed of punishment. Those who have indulged in sinful pleasure will find themselves in a bed of judgement. *“...And them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death.”*

Such sin deserves the death penalty.

“And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts...” (Revelation 2:23). God sees what man cannot. Outwardly, people may appear righteous, but inwardly, they are full of filth and immorality. Do not think that God does not know. He is the Son of God. His eyes are as a flame of fire. His feet tread in righteous judgement. He inspects, and He will take action. *“I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”* Evil works will be judged.

But to the remnant, the faithful ones who have not embraced the doctrine of Jezebel and who have not known the depths of Satan, the Lord gives a different message: *“But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.”* (Revelation 2:25). Hold fast to doctrinal purity. Hold fast to godly living. Earnestly contend for the faith. Persevere in righteousness.

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations...” (Revelation 2:26). Every true believer will overcome. The faithful pastors and elders—the good shepherds—will overcome. And they will rule with Christ when He returns to establish His kingdom on earth. If we are to reign with Christ, we must first prove ourselves to be doctrinally sound and morally upright.

“And I will give him the morning star.” (Revelation 2:28). The Morning Star is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself. We will possess Him if we remain pure—both doctrinally and morally—for He is the Truth, and He is holy.

“He that hath an ear; let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Let us hear. Let us respond. Let us make sure that we are both doctrinally pure and morally upright. Then, when the Lord Jesus returns, we will not need to be ashamed. Instead, we will hear Him say: *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”* (Matthew 25:21).

XI

WAKE UP, WATCH OUT!

Revelation 3:1-6

The key word in this passage is “watch.” It appears twice, first in verse 2: “*Be watchful,*” and again in verse 3: “*If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*” So, we are told to “watch” and “be watchful.”

The original Greek word for “watch” is *gregoreo*, which is where we get the name “Gregory.” Is there a Gregory in our midst? Well, that’s the meaning of your name—“to watch” or “to be watchful.” We all must be like that. All of us must be a “Gregory”—watchful—because we are living in the last days. We are living in perilous times, and in such times, we cannot afford to be sleepy. We cannot afford to sleep. We must always be alert and awake because if we are sleepy, if we sleep, we die. It is deadly and dangerous to be sleepy or sleeping in such a time.

If we are living in dangerous days and the Lord is coming back very soon, we better be ready. I’m sure you know this, especially those of us who are men. We went through national service, and in the army, we were put on guard duty. When you’re on guard duty, you cannot afford to sleep. You better not sleep. You’re supposed to be awake and alert all the time. If we fall asleep or are not awake, and the enemy comes, not only will we die, but the whole camp—even the whole country—will be in danger of falling to the enemy.

We cannot sleep. We must be alert and awake. This is the message here in this passage, and the Lord is warning us.

So, what was the problem of the church in Sardis? A little understanding of the historical background of the city of Sardis is helpful. Sardis was an important city; it was the capital of the Lydian Empire. The region of Lydia is in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). It consists of five important cities: Troy, Ephesus, Miletus, Smyrna, and Sardis. Sardis was the most important city and the capital of the Lydian Empire, which was a very strong and powerful empire because of its fortress.

The fortress was strategically located on a high hill with steep sides that plunged 1,500 feet to the ground. To access the city, there was a very narrow pathway, an uphill climb. Sardis was nearly impossible to conquer, which is why it became the capital of the Lydian Empire. The city was not only strong but also wealthy. It was rich because of the gold found there, and its wealth was augmented by commerce and agriculture.

Now, power and wealth can be a deadly combination. When you have power and wealth, you can become very proud and self-confident. “I’m powerful. I have a lot of money. What can I not do? I can do whatever I want. I don’t need others. I only need myself.” When you are so powerful and wealthy, you become proud, and pride is very dangerous. Not only that, but you can also become complacent, which can lead to your downfall. This was what happened to Sardis.

Pride often leads to ambition and greed. You may be rich, but you always want more. This was the case with King Croesus of the Lydian Empire. He waged war against King Cyrus, the Persian king mentioned in the Bible (Isaiah 44 and 45), who conquered Babylon. King Cyrus, whom God called “My shepherd,” was raised up to release the Jews to return to the promised land. Croesus attacked Cyrus, but Croesus was defeated.

King Cyrus, not one to sit idly by, besieged the fortress in Sardis. The fortress was thought to be impregnable, but Croesus, filled with pride, became complacent. His soldiers didn’t stand

guard, thinking no one could ever breach the city. But Cyrus was undeterred. His soldiers climbed the steep cliffs one by one, entered the city without resistance, and conquered Sardis.

Pride leads to complacency. If you fall asleep, you die. Sardis, in its pride and complacency, became spiritually dead. Is that our spiritual condition today? Have we, who have become strong and rich, become spiritually sleepy? Are we in a spiritual coma? That is not good.

The Lord sends out a warning here. He says, "*These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God.*" Seven is the number of perfection in the Bible, and the seven spirits refer to the Holy Spirit, whose perfection is beyond measure. The Holy Spirit indwells believers, and if we have the Holy Spirit, we are alive and alert. The question is: Do we have the Spirit within us? Are we awake, or are we spiritually dead and in a coma?

The Lord says, "*I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*" You claim to be Christian, you wear the badge of a Christian, but inwardly, you are dead. You wear a Christian badge, a cross, a name, but you are not truly alive. Outwardly, you appear well, but inside, you are spiritually dead. You are an imposter—like someone wearing a police uniform but not being a police officer.

Are we like that? Do we wear the badge of a Christian but live a lie? We must examine ourselves. Wearing the badge of Christianity is not enough. We must live the life. We must be awake and alive.

What is the cure? The remedy is to be watchful. Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die. The Lord addresses those who are spiritually sleepy. There are those who are false believers—imposters who think they believe but are actually not saved. Then, there are true believers who are spiritually sleepy and backsliding. The Lord says, "Wake up! Test yourself to make sure you are truly a Christian."

The Lord commands us to remember what we have heard and believed in the first place and hold fast to it. We must wake up and be watchful. Watch the things around us, the signs of the times. Wars, rumours of wars, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, and other disasters—all these things point to the Lord's return. We must not live blindly or complacently.

The world is sick with sin, and Jesus must come back to judge. The Lord's return is nearer than we think, and we cannot afford to be spiritually asleep. We must be awake, alert, and ready. If not, we will lose. We will be left out. We will die.

We want to be ready when the Lord returns, so let us be watchful. We must not be deceived by our wealth, for it can be taken away at any time. What's the use of all this vaccination if a war happens? These countries have nuclear weapons. So, you've been injected and are protected from COVID, but who can protect you from a nuclear war? There's no vaccine for a nuclear missile or radiation – you die.

So, what are we living for? What is the use of all the wealth? What is really important is our spiritual health, that we are right with God. Let us wake up and be watchful. Remember, the love of money is the root of all evil. Let us not be enslaved to money or wealth, but instead be true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of money is the root of all evil, as we know from 1 Timothy 6:10.

Don't let the things of the world obstruct you. Do not become so obsessed with the things of the world that you become spiritually sick or sleepy. I am quite concerned and worried for our young people, because they are tempted in ways like never before. It saddens me to see some of our young people no longer in church, no longer walking with the Lord. Some even deny Him.

This usually happens during a very crucial time in their lives, like when they enter national service. They may make friends with their platoon mates, some of whom are unbelievers. After all the hard training, they may say, "Let's go and enjoy ourselves," and they begin to drink, party, and dance. They join in and enjoy the things of the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes. They begin to think, "Why should I be a Christian? I can enjoy all these things. I don't want to be a Christian anymore." They love the world and the things of the world, and so they leave the church, and some even leave the Lord. They say, "I don't believe anymore." At one point, they wore the badge of being a Christian, but the Lord says they were not truly His. When the test or temptation comes, they throw it all away.

They never truly regarded the Lord Jesus as their Saviour in the first place. It is sad.

Then there are those who enter university, not spiritually awake or alert. They never took God's Word seriously or studied it. When they go to university, they may be mesmerised by all these high-flying professors with their PhDs who may be atheists. These professors are often very persuasive, charismatic speakers who seduce students with their philosophy of life. Students admire them and say, "Yes, I like this. I want this." And some, after going to university, stop walking with the Lord. They were spiritually sleepy before, but now, entering university, they go into a spiritual coma.

If they survive university and start their working life, they may be hired by big companies. Many of our young people are intelligent and talented, and they do well. Again, they are tempted and seduced. They become successful, and their bosses praise them. They enjoy that attention – "Oh, my boss praised me. He likes me so much." They begin to work for their earthly masters, not thinking of the Lord. They work for their money, and as their salary goes up, their bosses continue to praise them. They begin to feel strong and proud as they get richer, becoming complacent.

Over time, they no longer have time for Quiet Time because they have to work overtime. They no longer make time for fellowship because their colleagues are more fun to be with. They go for happy hour with them, and church becomes an afterthought. "I'm so tired after working so hard. I would rather sleep than go to church." And so, they backslide. Some even fall into a spiritual coma. Will they ever wake up? Only the Lord knows.

What kind of Christians are we? Are we merely wearing the badge on the outside, or are we inwardly believing? If we are spiritually sleepy, we may succumb to fleshly temptations, but the Lord, through His Holy Spirit, will prick us and prompt us to wake up. It's like when you're driving and become sleepy – that's dangerous. You can't sleep while driving. Suddenly, you start to veer off course, but thankfully, you wake up in time to avoid an accident. I've experienced this before. The Holy Spirit works in us like that – when we start to veer off course spiritually, He prompts us to wake up before we fall into a coma.

We must not allow ourselves to descend into a coma. We are not dead, we are alive! Are we like that? Be watchful. Strengthen the things that remain. Remember how you received and heard the Word, hold fast, and repent. Do not continue to indulge in wrong thinking. Don't let your friends, the world, or social media teach you what is wrong. Many today are obsessed with Facebook instead of the Scriptures. This can lead to pride – the pride of man's approval. We seek the approval of men, but we must desire the approval of God. One thumbs-up from God is enough. Having hundreds of thumbs-up on Facebook is useless.

We need to wake up, watch out, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Philippians 2:12 tells us, "We have to work it out." We cannot work for our salvation; it has already been accomplished for us by the Lord Jesus. But after we are saved, we must work out the salvation that God has given to us that is within us.

Verse 3 tells us, *“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”*

This is also a warning given in 1 Thessalonians 5. Paul expounds on this in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”*

Let us watch and be sober. Are we? If we are, that’s a good sign. It means we are the remnant. In the church of Sardis, the Lord says there are a few true believers, not many, but a few. Is this the case today? The majority who claim to be Christians are not true believers. Only a few are. If that’s the case, then we must make sure we belong to the few, the remnant.

Verse 4 says, *“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”*

Here, the Lord is saying, “I am the Bridegroom, and you are my bride.” One day, there will be a great wedding day, and the Groom will walk with His bride. There will be a procession, and the bride will be dressed in white. Christian weddings today are a dramatic portrayal of that great wedding day when Jesus will marry His church.

The bride will be dressed in white, which represents the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s not our righteousness; we have none. It’s the righteousness of our Husband, the Lord Jesus Himself. The whiteness refers to the righteousness that comes from His perfect obedience to the law, through which He earned the righteousness we need to be accepted by God. God says, *“Be holy, for I am holy.”*

We cannot be holy on our own. God the Son must be holy for us. He kept the law perfectly for us, and the righteousness of Christ was also achieved through His sacrifice. As the sinless Lamb of God, He took away the sin of the world. He died on the cross, made atonement for us, and shed His precious blood so that we can be cleansed from all our sins and be made white and clean.

The righteousness here refers to His life for us and His death for us. This wedding gown is not man-made; it is made by God, by the God/Man, every stitch of it. He presents it to us, and we should receive it gladly and gratefully and wear it.

The bride cannot be sleeping when the Bridegroom comes to take her to the wedding. I don’t think any bride will be sleeping. I’m sure she’ll be awake, waiting for the Bridegroom to come, ready to go to the church for the wedding. We must be like that if we are truly the bride of Christ. If we are sleeping, we are not His bride.

Make sure of this. In verse 5, the Lord says, *“He that overcometh,”* and every true believer is an overcomer. He will conquer the world, sin, and Satan. *“the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”*

Yes, the Lord has already said, *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.”*

Do we hear? Do we have ears? Are we awake?

I hope all of us who are here today have come prepared. I hope you woke up early this morning, prepared yourselves, and are now awake and alert as you worship the Lord. Are you giving Him your full attention? Are you awake when you sing to Him, pray to Him, or listen to His Word? Are you awake, or sleepy?

There are those who do not come to church. They rather worship from home. What kind of worshippers are we when we can come to church and don't? The Lord says, *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."* We should gather to encourage one another, provoke each other to love and good works.

It's not so easy to sleep here in church because you know I am watching, and your fellow believers around are also watching. If you doze off, your neighbour might notice and wake you up. We are one another's keepers. This is a means of grace to press on in the Lord; we need to help one another in this way. That's why fellowship and corporate worship are important.

But now, with the comforts of home, we may become complacent in physical worship and personal fellowship, and that is dangerous. We may fall into spiritual lethargy, saying, "It's so inconvenient to come to church. I'll just turn on the television, sit on my couch. No one knows if I sleep or doze off." But God knows. So, what kind of Christians are we? Are we awake, alert, watchful, and sober?

We cannot afford to sleep. The Lord's coming is nearer than we think. We must hear, truly hear. So, don't sleep. Don't fall into a spiritual coma. Wake up. Watch out. There are many dangers out there. Work out your salvation and make sure, make sure you truly belong to the Lord.

XII

GOSPEL DOOR OPENED

Revelation 3:7-13

The church is a worship assembly, and that's why we are here today. We are gathered together as God's people, assembling ourselves in this place to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. I am encouraged to see more of you this Lord's Day. It is good to be found in the house of the Lord and to worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

Not only is the church a worship assembly, but it is also a fellowship of saints. We are all pilgrims together, making our way toward heaven, and we need one another. We need to care for each other, to help one another along the way as we travel together. Fellowship is very important.

But here we find that the church is one more thing: it is also a missions society. That is the duty of the church. We do not consign our duty of missions and evangelism to parachurch organisations. I'm not against parachurch organisations and missionary agencies, but fundamentally, the church—every local church—must be a missions society and must do the work of missions and evangelism. This is what we endeavour to do, and we want to do our small part in God's worldwide missions.

Thank God, we have a good number of open doors. We are supporting a number of missions stations and churches, as well as missionaries. You have heard about these in the pastoral prayer—places the Lord has opened for us to go and serve. As the Lord continues to open doors, we will continue to do this work until He returns, the Lord helping us. I am also praying for the Lord to raise up more men and women—young and old—to give their lives to serve the Lord full-time. The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are still few. We need many more faithful ones to be trained to serve the Lord.

So do pray for that. And if you do the work of missions and evangelism, the Lord says you have beautiful feet. *"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."* This is what we want to do. You know, the Christmas message is really good news—the gospel of peace, for the Prince of Peace has come. *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* What glad tidings of great joy that comes with Christmas! We have a duty, a responsibility, to share the Christmas message with those near and far: our loved ones, relatives, friends, colleagues, classmates, even strangers. Let us do this work during this time.

We give out gospel tracts, and we have specially printed this Christmas gospel tract, *"What if There's No Christmas?"* You can take one from the reception table and give it to your colleagues, classmates, friends, or even strangers. Let them have a chance to read it and know the truth, and pray that the Lord will convict and convert them.

Oh, how we are living in such a deadly age and time. People want to know what life is. The best thing to know is really the gospel of life. Let us tell them.

Then there's our Christmas children's gospel meeting and Christmas Eve carol service. I pray that those who still do not know Christ will come to believe and be saved. That's what we must do: have beautiful feet.

That was what the church in Philadelphia had. The church in Philadelphia is one of the two churches, among the seven churches, that Jesus commended without any correction or condemnation—only commendation, no condemnation. The other one was the church in Smyrna.

Now, we look at the church in Philadelphia, and we want to be like this church—a church full of truth and full of love. That’s the church in Philadelphia. The name “Philadelphia” means precisely that. Philadelphia comes from two Greek words: *philia*, which means love, and *adelphos*, which means brother. So, literally, it means “brotherly love” or “brotherly kindness.”



Ancient Pillars of Philadelphia

This is something every church that bears the name of Christ must have: charity, love for one another. It is so important because it is so lacking today.

I believe this is one of the signs of the end times. The Lord says that in the last days, the love of many will wax cold. We’re not just talking about those outside the church, but even within the church. The love of many will wax cold. A church may be full of truth, and that is good; it is vital. Without truth, there is no life, no gospel, no Word of God. We are undone; we are lost. But thank God, we have His Word. We thank God we have His truth, and we must believe the truth fully and totally and stand fast on that truth, with no compromise. Truth is very vital and important.

But it is also important for us to have charity, to have love for God and for one another. We don’t want to be like the church in Ephesus. Remember the church in Ephesus? Yes, they were full of truth, and they also earnestly contended for the faith, and the practices of the Nicolaitans—those heretics—they exposed and condemned. They defended the faith, and the Lord commended them for that. But then the Lord said, “*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*” The first love that was seen in the first church in Jerusalem, where they loved the doctrine of God, but also had a lot of love for one another, is now lost.

I thank God that in the Bible-Presbyterian church, I believe we have the truth. It is by the grace of God that we can see and understand His truth, and we earnestly contend for the faith. We

must continue to do that. But we must also work very hard to be a church full of God's love: love for Him, love for one another, and love for the lost. Brotherly love and kindness are crucial.

A church that is full of truth but without love is a miserable church. We don't want to be that kind of church. We want a church that is happy, full of life and love.

And so it's good for us to come together as a congregation in this way—physically present before the Lord and one another—so that we can show a little bit of brotherly love and kindness. As it says in the Holy Scriptures, Paul tells the Christians to “*greet one another with an holy kiss*”—a sign of affection. Of course, we don't do that in our modern culture, as it was a Middle Eastern, Jewish custom. But a holy handshake, even today, is not ill-advised, despite the pandemic. A polite bow is also good—to show that little bit of brotherly affection and concern.

Although we have to keep our distance, we can still greet one another with a loving word, asking, “How are you?” We can offer to pray for one another, say a kind word. It goes a long way. And smile—even though we're all wearing masks, and they can't see it. But you can smile with your eyes! We need to learn to smile with our eyes.

Be a Philadelphia church. We want to be a Philadelphian church—a church full of truth and also brotherly love and kindness. The church in Philadelphia was such a church. Full of truth, for here we read in verse 8 that they had kept the Word of the Lord: “*Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name.*” They held fast to God's Word without compromise, and they were also a church full of brotherly love. Philadelphia—this is the kind of church we should want to be.

What a tragic thing it would be if we were called “Philadelphia” or “Christian,” but didn't reflect the love of the Lord Jesus.

You know, there is a city in the United States, in Pennsylvania, called Philadelphia. It is quite well known. I wonder how many of you have been to Philadelphia? I've been there when I was studying in the States. I was in Hatfield, Pennsylvania, at Biblical Seminary, which was about 45 minutes to an hour from the city of Philadelphia.

My classmates, when I was there, warned me: “When you drive through the city of Philadelphia, especially late at night, when the traffic light is red, don't stop.” They said, “Don't stop—beat the traffic light; it's safer for you.” They explained that if you stop, there are very evil elements in the city—wicked men who come to rob and kill. They advised that it's better to just keep driving.

Of course, having heard this, I didn't venture out at night. I had plenty of studies to do anyway. But that's how dangerous the city was. I didn't take it too seriously at first. I thought it couldn't be that bad. But then when I returned to Singapore, I read in the *Straits Times* that in Philadelphia, one young lady drove through the city at night, stopped at a traffic light, and was dragged out of her car, beaten, raped, robbed, and had her car stolen. They left her half-dead on the road, and she managed to crawl to the nearest house for help. In that house, she was raped again—a second time. Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, was a city of hatred and murder. I pray our church will not become like this.

Truly, our church knows the good news of salvation—the gospel of peace and the glad tidings of great joy. We are a joyful people because we have experienced the love of Christ, and we know how to demonstrate that love in our lives. This is part of evangelism. When you show the love of Christ, the Lord says, “I will draw disciples to Myself.” It's not just the preaching of the gospel, but the demonstration of the gospel through our loving conduct and behaviour that will draw people to the Lord Jesus. We don't want to lose our testimony.

That's why, to the church in Ephesus, even though they were full of truth, the Lord rebuked them for losing their first love. He said, "If you do not repent, I will remove your candlestick." The candlestick represents their testimony. Without love, their testimony was lost. They might have had the truth, but without love, their testimony was gone. We don't want that. We want to be a church like the church in Philadelphia, full of truth and love.

The Lord says in Revelation 3:7, "*he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David.*" What is the key of David? The key of David is a symbol of authority and access to salvation. This term is found in the Old Testament in Isaiah 22:22, where it says, "*And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder.*" This key represents Christ's authority over salvation. He opens and no one can shut, and He shuts and no one can open.

In other words, the key to salvation is with Christ alone. He is the door, and salvation is found only in Him. We cannot save ourselves. We are outside the house of salvation, but Christ holds the key. When we believe in Him, He opens the door to salvation, and we enter into His house, becoming part of His family.

Jesus said in John 10:7-9, "*I am the door of the sheep... by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.*" He is the door to salvation, and He alone holds the key. We cannot enter any other way. Salvation is of the Lord, from start to finish. No one can shut the door He has opened, and no one can hinder the gospel.

Throughout history, Satan and his agents have tried to destroy the gospel and the church. They've burned Bibles, persecuted Christians, and attempted to suppress the truth, but they've failed. The church endures, and the gospel remains because the Lord said, "*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Even through persecution, the church grows stronger.

Jesus is the key, the door, and the house of salvation. Once we believe in Him, we are given the privilege to share the gospel with others. Revelation 3:8 says, "*Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.*" For those who are faithful to God's Word, He opens the door for them to preach the gospel. No one can close it.

This gospel door was first opened through Peter. When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord gave him the keys of the kingdom. Peter was the one to open the gospel door. After the resurrection, at Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter preached the gospel to the Jews. Later, in Acts 8, he went to Samaria and opened the door of the gospel to the Samaritans. In Acts 10, Peter opened the door of the gospel to the Gentiles when he went to the house of Cornelius.

Now, the door is open to all, and we are privileged to enter in and to preach the gospel, not only locally but to the uttermost parts of the earth. The door is wide open, and it is our responsibility to carry the gospel wherever we go.

What a privilege we have to do this! Don't say, "Oh, I cannot because I'm very small, I don't have much money, I can't do it." No. The Lord told the church in Philadelphia, "*thou hast a little strength,*" meaning you may be a small church, you don't have many members, you may not be super rich, but you can still do my work. This work is MY work, not yours. Don't think that you need a lot of money or manpower to be successful. No, this privilege is given to all churches, especially small ones, so that you may know that the work of salvation is of the Lord. If the Lord gives you success and people are brought into the kingdom, we know how to give glory to God. He gives the increase, and He gives us the privilege and joy of seeing souls come into the kingdom.

The only thing you need to know is that it's by MY Spirit, by MY power, not yours—not by your strength or prowess. It's by MY Spirit, by MY gospel. You just need to be faithful to obey

and to do, and I will help you. The only condition is that you don't have to be rich or many; you just need to be faithful and true to my Word and to my name. Because you have kept my Word and have not denied my name, I can use you, even though you may be small and poor.

So, we may not be very big, we may not be very rich, but I think we are relatively well-off in True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church. We must be mindful, for the Lord's return is so near, so imminent, it could be at any time. Let us do the work.

I'm glad to see in the clinic of one of our church members, a medical doctor, that in his lobby area, he has gospel tracts and even my gospel bookmark, "God's Perfect Gift." He places them there for people to take while waiting, to read or take home. That's what we must do: sow the gospel seed wherever we are.

You may have a little strength, but you have kept my Word and not denied my name. I can use you—that's the only qualification you need.

May the Lord help us to do this. When we do this, the Lord says He will make our enemies bow before us. In verse 9, He says, "*Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*"

Yes, when you want to preach, teach, and defend God's Word and share the gospel, there's good news, but Satan is not happy. You may have enemies and opposition.

If you study the Book of Acts, you will see this: when God works, Satan also works, and there's great opposition to the preaching of the good news of Christ. The apostles of Jesus Christ and the first-century Christians suffered much for this. There will be opposition, not only from the outside but even from within the church. Some churches that claim to be Christian may actually be synagogues of Satan. These are false churches, heretical churches, and they will oppose the truth. There will even be false believers within the church, members or even leaders who oppose the truth and try to stop the preaching of the gospel and the teaching of the truth.

But the Lord says, "Don't worry"; "*upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" The work of God cannot be defeated. Do the work, and you will have good success. It won't be easy—there will be opposition, difficulties, pain, and suffering—but you will succeed because Jesus promised it. Press on, and eventually, the Lord says He will make them come and bow before you to know that He has loved you.

Despite all the opposition, persecution, dangers, and difficulties, they will see how much the Lord loves them by protecting, preserving, and providing for them. This is something I have personally experienced by God's grace. When we preach the gospel and defend God's Word, He will make even our enemies, those who oppose us, come and help us. This is also what Proverbs 16:7 says: "*When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*" And the Lord is able to do that.

The Lord also says in verse 10, "*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience...*". What does this mean? The phrase "the word of my patience" describes the Word of God—His enduring Word. The word "patience" here is from the Greek word *hupomone*, which can also be rendered as endurance. So, "the word of my patience" refers to God's enduring Word. God's Word was given by divine inspiration from the very beginning, and it remains fully inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient today because it is enduring and preserved by God.

This is the doctrine of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures, and it's the duty of every church to uphold, defend, and preach the preserved Word. We can be certain of where it is by the logic of faith, guided by biblical principles and the Holy Spirit. We must declare,

“Thus saith the Lord, it is written.” The Word of God is enduring, and the Philadelphia church upheld and preached it faithfully. Today, when you preach, teach, and defend the preserved Word of God, you will face opposition. People will attack you, sadly even those within the church. But the Philadelphia church remained faithful to the Word of God, and they were not ashamed of it.

The Lord promises to preserve His Word, and He will preserve us as well. We need to guard, keep, and preach this very Word He has given. *“I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation,”* the Lord says. The devil will try to seduce you, and people may cast doubt in your mind. But if your mind and heart are in the right place, the Spirit will guide you in the truth, sanctify you, and keep you. The Lord will protect you from the hour of temptation.

And in verse 11, the Lord says, *“Behold, I come quickly.”* This promise is real—the Lord’s return is imminent. Hold fast to what you have and let no one take your crown. Faithfulness to the end is key. Those who overcome, every true believer, will triumph and be victorious. The Lord will make them pillars in His temple, and even when all else fails in this world, they will remain standing. The Lord will keep, protect, preserve, and provide for them. You will remain standing for all eternity, and you will be with Him in the New Jerusalem.

This is the promise of the Lord. *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”*

If you can say “yes” and “amen” to these things instead of saying, “Oh, yeah, really?”—when the truth is preached, and the truth even convicts you, making you feel bad because you’re not right with the Lord—and you are able to say, “Yes, Lord, I’m sorry. I repent, I change, and I want to believe what is right and do what is good”, then you know you belong to the Lord, and the Lord belongs to you. This is the inward witness and testimony of the Spirit.

When the Word of God is preached and taught in truth, in all its fullness, the Spirit—who is the Spirit of truth—uses that truth to convict and convert you, then, you will be able to say “yes” and “amen.” If you find yourself able to say this, that is your assurance that you belong to the Lord, and He belongs to you. You don’t have to be afraid; He will keep you to the very end.

I pray that we have that kind of faith—the faith of the Philadelphian church, full of truth and full of love.

XIII SPIT OUT BY GOD

Revelation 3:14-22

The key verse here is verse 16: *“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”*

The word “spue” here is a very strong term for spitting. It is not just a mild rejection but a forceful expulsion. The Greek word used implies vomiting—total ejection from the body. This indicates a very strong reaction from the Lord against lukewarmness.

Some may think being lukewarm is good. In fact, lukewarm water has health benefits. According to health websites, drinking lukewarm water can prevent lung infections and boost immunity. However, in this passage, the Lord declares that being lukewarm is so bad that it is like poison—so repulsive that He must vomit it out. Why?

Understanding the historical background helps clarify the meaning. The city of Laodicea was located between Hierapolis and Colossae. Colossae is mentioned in the Bible in Colossians 4, and Paul wrote an epistle to the Colossians. The geographical context is important for understanding what Jesus is saying.

Laodicea was a wealthy banking centre, a commercial hub similar to modern Singapore. The city was prosperous, filled with trade and commerce, with money flowing in and out.

Laodicea was also famous for its black wool, produced from a special breed of sheep. This wool was soft, luxurious, and expensive.

Additionally, Laodicea was known as a medical centre, particularly for eye treatments. A renowned eye doctor, Demodocus, developed an effective eye ointment, which made the city famous for treating eye diseases. If one needed eye treatment and had the money, Laodicea was the place to go.

In verse 14, the Lord addresses the church in Laodicea: *“These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness.”* This refers to Jesus Himself. He declares, “I am the Amen.” The word “Amen” means “so shall it be” or “truly.” It is sometimes translated as “verily” or “truly, truly.” Jesus emphasises that He is the truth. He is the faithful and true witness. Because He is faithful and true, He does not lie; He speaks only the truth.

Jesus proclaimed, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6). Not only is He the truth, but His words are always “yes and amen”—absolute truth. In His high priestly prayer, He prayed, *“Sanctify them by thy truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). The Holy Scriptures are truth.

Jesus reminds the Laodiceans that He is the truth, and the Word that comes from His mouth is truth. There is no lie in Him. He is perfect, and His word is perfect. They are to remember this and know that He is God.

Furthermore, He declares Himself *“the beginning of the creation of God.”* This does not mean He was created but rather that He is the source, the origin of all creation. John 1:1–3 affirms this: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.”* Jesus is the Creator, the Almighty God.

This truth emphasises that everything God says and promises will be fulfilled. He is truthful in all He says and does, and His word is certain.

Jesus Christ is perfect in person, being fully God—100% God—and 100% man in one person, the God/Man.

Thus, He can be our Saviour. His Word, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is fully inspired. The Old Testament is 100% inspired, and the New Testament is likewise 100% God-breathed. Both Testaments, forming one Bible, contain every single word that He has breathed out. These words have been preserved by Him and kept pure throughout the ages, so that today, we still have the 100% preserved Scriptures.

He is perfect—100%—in His person, His Word, and His truth.

And He has loved us completely, giving Himself to us totally. His work of salvation is 100% complete. His Word, His truth, and His promises are all 100% sure.

If the Lord, in both His work and His words, was wholly committed to us—100%—then how can we, who claim to follow Him, offer anything less than 100% in our belief and obedience?

We cannot be less than 100%. A faith that is only half-hearted, partial, or lukewarm is not true faith at all. The Lord warns, “I will spit you out of my mouth,” because such a faith is false. A lukewarm, indecisive faith—neither here nor there—is unacceptable to Him. It is worthless. He will reject it, for it is not genuine faith.

A lukewarm believer is not a true believer. That is why the Lord says, “I will cast you out. You do not belong to me.” No true Christian is lukewarm.

So, what kind of faith do we have? What kind of Christian are we? The Lord Jesus said, “*Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” You cannot have one foot in the world and one foot in my kingdom. You cannot follow Christ halfway.

Jesus calls us to deny ourselves completely—to become nothing—and then to take up our cross fully, 100%. Only then are we worthy to follow Him. Anything less is unacceptable. A half-hearted believer is no believer at all. The Lord will reject such a person, saying, “I will spit you out of my mouth.”

And yes, Jesus has every right to insist on total commitment. If He had not been 100% committed to us, we would have no Saviour. But He went all the way. He was undeterred by opposition, false accusations, persecution, beatings, and scourging. He faced the cross with unwavering commitment.

Oh, how He loved us—100%—right to the very end. He was obedient unto death just to save us from our sins.

How then can we say, “Lord, I believe in You,” yet love Him with a half-hearted love? Is our love truly burning hot—100%? Or is it neither here nor there? Do we love Him only when it is convenient, but when it costs us something, we love ourselves, our possessions, or the world more?

What kind of faith do we have?

Jesus warns: “*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*” (Revelation 3:15–16)

What is this lukewarmness?

Clearly, it is something detestable to Christ. If you are cold, that is acceptable. If you are hot, that is good. But being lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—is the only thing He condemns.

Jesus is warning against being a fence-sitter, a man-pleaser, someone who is neither here nor there. Such a person cannot follow Christ.

You must be 100%—fully committed. Cold or hot. Not halfway. Not undecided.

Anything less than full commitment makes you useless and false.

To understand this correctly, the geographical context is important. As I mentioned earlier, Laodicea was a city sandwiched between two locations. On one side, you have Hierapolis. If you visit Hierapolis today, which is in modern-day Turkey, you will find a resort town called Pamukkale.

Pamukkale is famous for its hot springs. These hot springs produce mineral-rich water, which is considered beneficial for health. Many people soak or bathe in these waters to improve their well-being. The hot water and mineral baths in Hierapolis have long been regarded as therapeutic.

On the other side of Laodicea is Colossae, situated at the foot of Mount Honaz (also known as Mount Cadmus). This snow-capped mountain provides cold, clean, and refreshing life-giving water. The cold water from this mountain is pure, sweet, and invigorating.

That is why the Lord Jesus said, “I would rather you be cold,” like the refreshing waters of Mount Cadmus, or “hot,” like the healing hot springs of Pamukkale. Both are beneficial in their own ways. However, Laodicea was neither. It had lukewarm water—neither refreshing nor healing—rendering it useless.



Hierapolis, Laodicea, Colosse

Similarly, the Lord rebuked lukewarm believers. Being spiritually lukewarm means being neither fully committed to Christ nor entirely opposed to Him. Lukewarmness is dangerous

because it signifies indifference and a lack of true conviction. That is why Jesus warned, “Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I will spit you out of my mouth.”

The Lord is speaking against neutrality. A lukewarm person is a fence-sitter, a man-pleaser, someone who refuses to take a stand for Christ and His Word. Such a person is easily swayed, without firm convictions. They hear one thing, and they agree. They hear a contradictory view, and they also agree. They believe what is convenient, rather than standing firmly on biblical truth.

However, true faith requires conviction. Without being convicted by the truth, there is no real conversion. Without true conversion, there can be no commitment. A genuine believer is 100% convicted by the truth, 100% converted by the truth, and therefore 100% committed to the truth. True faith results in obedience, regardless of opposition or difficulty.

In contrast, a lukewarm person drifts wherever the wind blows. Their primary concern is self-preservation and popularity. They seek to please people rather than God. The Apostle Paul warned against this in Galatians 1:10: *“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”*

Unfortunately, some preachers cater to their audience rather than faithfully proclaiming God’s truth. They promote a “free-thinking” approach, telling people they can believe whatever they want. They emphasise personal freedom over biblical authority, saying, “God is full of grace—do whatever you like.” Such teaching may be appealing, but it is spiritually disastrous.

God forbid that any pulpit be used to promote such a message. The purpose of preaching is not to make people “free thinkers” in matters of faith, but to bind them to God’s truth. A preacher’s duty is to point people to the Lord Jesus, who is *“the Amen, the faithful and true witness.”* A true believer must say “Yes and Amen” to God’s Word, not treat it as multiple-choice opinions where all answers are equally valid.

A preacher must never be a man-pleaser. Some churches dictate what their pastors can say, reminding them, “We pay your salary, so you must preach what we want to hear.” While a pastor is accountable to his congregation, he is first accountable to God. He must preach according to God’s Word, regardless of human pressure.

If a church demands that a pastor say only what pleases the people, I would not want to serve in that church. Whether paid or unpaid, my calling is from the Lord, and I must proclaim His truth. My goal is not to seek human approval, but to seek the Lord’s approval.

And how do I know what pleases God? From His Word.

If I were lukewarm in my preaching—saying one thing to one group and the opposite to another—just to protect my position or gain favour with people, I would not be fit for pastoral ministry. Instead, I would be more suited to politics, where pleasing the majority is the priority. But I am not a politician. I am called to be a pastor and a teacher of God’s Word.

Therefore, whether the message is hard or easy, whether it pleases or offends, I must preach what God has said. Jesus Himself delivered a hard message: “Because you are lukewarm—I will spit you out of my mouth.” Should I soften that language? No. The truth must be preached as it is.

We must be either cold or hot; in fact, we should be both cold and hot, as both are good. Never, never be lukewarm—neither here nor there, not taking a stand for the Lord. If you are lukewarm, you are just a spectator. You never speak for the Lord; you do not defend His truth.

In those days when we were earnestly contending for and defending the Word of God, we held the Word in our hands and declared it to be 100% true. Some, however, would say, “Why not

80%? Isn't that enough?" Others claimed 90% or 95%, and some even said 99%. But when we asserted 100%, they objected, saying, "That is offensive." They went so far as to call it heresy to affirm that God's Word is 100% inspired and preserved.

If I seek to please men, I should not be a servant of the Lord. When I was pressured to sign an undertaking stating that I would not preach, teach, or defend the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures in exchange for the use of the college premises, I could not comply. If I had signed that statement, I believe the Lord would have spit me out of His mouth.

Where in my Word? Did I ever say that My Word is less than 100%?

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever."

My duty is simply to declare what God has said, whether people like it or not. We cannot be lukewarm. We must be 100% convicted by the truth and converted by the truth. If we have held wrong beliefs in the past, we must correct ourselves by His truth, repent, believe rightly, and be converted. Then, we must be 100% committed.

This applies to you as well. You say you believe in the Lord Jesus, but are you truly convicted? Are you truly converted? And when put to the test, are you truly committed?

If you are not, then you are less than 100%. You are lukewarm, neither here nor there. The Lord says, "I will vomit you out," because a lukewarm faith is a false faith—even poisonous.



Watch Shop in Ephesus: Are You a "Genuine Fake" Christian?

So be good by being both hot and cold. Not lukewarm. We must be hot for Christ and His Word, full of zeal and love for Him. Love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The Lord

says, “*If you love Me, obey Me. Keep My commandments*” (John 14:15); “*earnestly contend for the faith*” (Jude 3).

The phrase “earnestly contend” in the original Greek is *agonizomai*, from which we derive the word “agony” or “agonise.” This requires 100% commitment. If you are lukewarm, neither here nor there, you have no backbone. You are just tossed to and fro. There is no agony, no struggle, in saying, “Faith is a free-for-all; believe whatever you like.”

But when you say, “No, this is the way—the strait and narrow way—the only way to go,” you will face opposition. You may receive much criticism, but what is your level of commitment? Is it 100%? Do you agonise for the faith? It is hard, but this is what the Lord requires.

And cold is also good. I must be cold toward falsehood and false teachers. This is what the Lord instructs in 2 Timothy 2:16, “*But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.*” Be cold toward falsehood and false teachers. Titus 3:10 tells us, “*A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject*”. Spit him out.

If you do not reject falsehood, if you entertain it, you are not cold toward these things that seek to destroy your faith, the Word, and the name of the Lord. If you do not spit them out, the Lord will spit you out.

So be hot and be cold in the right way, as the Lord expects us to be: fully convicted, converted, and committed.

Why did the Lord say, “I will spit you out”? Because in verse 17, He says, “*Because thou sayest, I am rich.*” You are proud. You say, “*I am rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing.*”

Laodicea was a wealthy banking centre, a hub of commerce, with money flowing in and out. They thought their wealth meant they were right with God. But the Lord says, “*thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*”

Do not think that living in a rich city makes you right with God. The Lord says you are miserable, poor, and wretched. You think you are well-clothed with the finest wool, but the Lord says you are naked. You think you can see because you have the best eye clinic, but the Lord says you are blind.

What will truly make you rich, clothed, and able to see? The Lord says, “*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire.*”

This gold represents our faith—faith that will last, not wood, hay, or stubble. Gold, when tested by fire, remains and becomes even purer. Our faith must be 100% true, convicted, converted, and committed.

The Lord also says, “*buy of me ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed,*” for the fine black wool of Laodicea is useless. The white robe represents the righteousness of Christ. Only He can cleanse us, wash away our sins, and clothe us in holiness. Be washed by His blood and made white and clean, then He will receive you.

“*Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*” The eye ointment we all need is the Holy Spirit, who truly opens our eyes to see the truth. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us, making us pure and clean, more and more like Christ.

Make sure the Holy Spirit indwells you and works within you. Then you will be able to see, for spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Only the Holy Spirit can give this sight.

If you have all this, you will not be lukewarm. You will be fully convicted, utterly converted, and absolutely committed to the Lord. Nothing will move or shake you.

And if you are not there yet, there is still hope. The Lord issues a gospel call in verse 20: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.”*

Open the door. Believe truly and sincerely in Him. He will come in, and instead of vomiting you out, He will sup with you.

To him that overcomes—and every true believer will overcome—He promises a place on His throne. If you are convicted, converted, and committed, you will rule with Him.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

XIV
THRONE AND TEMPLE
Revelation 4:1-11

Have you ever wondered what heaven is like?

I'm sure we are all interested in knowing what heaven is like, aren't we? After all, that is our final destination. We are on our way to heaven—those of us who are born again and belong to the Lord Jesus. Yes, the kingdom of heaven is our home, and we naturally desire to know what it is like. The Bible gives us a glimpse of heaven, and in this chapter, we are granted a peek into it.

In verse 1, we read: *“After this, I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven.”* A door was opened in heaven! John was transported to heaven and given a glimpse of it. Then in verse 2, it says, *“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.”*

Here, the Apostle John was transported into heaven and granted a vision of it. We thank God that through this passage, we can have a small idea of what heaven is like and what we will be doing there.

Of course, there are many things yet to be revealed to us. The Lord, in His time, will unveil all that He intends for us to know when we finally arrive. But the knowledge provided in this book is sufficient to keep us excited and longing for that wonderful place where we will spend eternity.

So, what do we see in heaven? And what will we be doing there?

Two key elements answer these questions: the throne and the temple. In heaven, we see a throne, and we also see a temple. The temple is closely connected to the throne.

We read about the throne in verse 2: *“Immediately, I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.”* The word “throne” appears many times in the book of Revelation—37 times in total. In this chapter, if you count the occurrences, you will find that it appears 13 times. This repetition highlights the emphasis placed on the throne of God.

What does the throne tell us about God? Here, we see Him sitting on His throne, signifying His sovereignty. A king is sovereign, and God is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

The word “sovereignty” means supreme power. God possesses absolute, supreme power—He is all-powerful. This is a crucial truth for us to understand: God is on His throne, governing all things, and controlling all events.

From this point onward in Revelation, we see terrible events unfolding. The prophecies described in this book do not occur by chance; they happen according to God's purpose. He is in charge, and everything unfolds according to His divine will.

This truth applies to us today. We often wonder, “Why did this happen? Why did the pandemic come? Will there be more disasters in the future?” Such questions can unsettle and disturb us. But we need not be anxious. We have a sovereign God who is in control. Nothing happens by chance—nothing at all.

Although the pandemic has afflicted us for the past few years and new variants continue to emerge, God remains sovereign. He has allowed these things to happen according to His permissive will. But He also knows each of His children intimately.

God knows everything about us—every detail, even the number of hairs on our heads. Do you know how many hairs you have at this very moment? We lose some daily, yet God knows the exact count at every moment. If He is aware of such small details, how much more does He care about the major concerns in our lives?

Why then should we worry? Why should we be anxious or troubled? If we have a true understanding of our God—our Saviour, our Heavenly Father—we will trust in His care. He has promised, “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*”

Many have experienced God’s providence, even in difficult times. Despite uncertainties, job losses, and financial struggles, God has provided. Testimonies abound of answered prayers and divine provision.

Thus, we should not be unsettled by the trials of this world. We must remember that God is on His throne, sovereign over all things. He cares for us, protects us, provides for us, and preserves us. With such a loving and powerful God in control, we can rest assured and place our trust in Him.

And so, we read in Psalm 91, how God is our deliverer. In Psalm 91:1-3, it is written: “*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence.*”

All the diseases, plagues, and pandemics—He can protect us from all these things. So why worry? Some of us are very anxious. I must confess that I was also a little bit anxious about the COVID-19 vaccination.

You know, COVID-19 is potentially deadly, and then we were told to get vaccinated. Vaccination is supposed to be helpful, but it can also have risks. There are risks involved. However, we must exercise our human responsibility, prayerfully consider all things, and get ourselves protected.

Protection includes wearing masks, washing our hands, and maintaining social distance, but also receiving the vaccination. I have gotten my vaccination—I have had three doses. When I went for my first jab, I asked the nurse, “Is it safe or not?” She didn’t answer, and she was about to inject me already. Then I said, “All right, let’s go ahead. If I perish, I perish.” So we don’t have to worry.

I received my first jab, then my second, and also the third. Whatever it is—COVID-19, vaccination, or anything else—our lives are in the hands of God. If our time is up, the Lord will call us home, whether we like it or not. It could be COVID-19, the vaccine, or some other disease or sickness. If the Lord wants to call us home, He will call us home regardless. And is that not good? That is very good! Paul says, “To depart is far better, and if I live, I live for Christ.”

“*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” What do we gain? We gain heaven! We are delivered from this sinful and cursed world, full of sickness and disease, hardships, and sufferings. In heaven, it is a time of rest and rejoicing. Better to be there! Truly, no more sickness, no more disease, no more COVID, no more vaccination worries—no worries whatsoever. Isn’t that better? “*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” To die means more of the Lord Jesus—now you are so near to Him, in His very presence.

So, if we have this knowledge of who God is, our eternal destiny, and what heaven is like, then what is there to worry about? Why be anxious or troubled? We should be the most joyful and peaceful people. That, in turn, becomes a good testimony to the world, which is full of fear,

confusion, and uncertainty. But we are sure and certain because we have the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures that assure us of our eternal destiny and what is to come. We are ready. God is on the throne, and He is in control.

When we read of God sitting on His throne, what is He doing? He is governing. Nothing in this world happens by chance. But there is one more thing emphasised here—He is not only governing; He is judging. The whole theme of Revelation is about His judgement. He will pour out His wrath, and it is coming.

He sits on His throne to judge, and we know this from the symbols and imagery in the text. In verse 3, we read of the rainbow, which reminds us of the first global judgement—by water. In verse 5, we read of lightnings and thunderings, which point to judgement. The voices represent God’s pronouncement of His sentence. The lamps of fire burning are symbols of judgement. God is sitting on His throne as the Judge.

That should cause the world to be fearful. Even now, the pestilence—the pandemic—is God saying, “I am judging.” This is just a warning. We have seen nothing yet! Worse judgement is coming. This COVID-19 pandemic is just a mosquito bite compared to what will happen during the Great Tribulation. This is an advanced warning—better repent now and get right with God if you do not want to face His coming wrath.

For us who are already saved, we do not have to be afraid. We can be very assured and at peace because the Lord has already saved us from the wrath to come. *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). We who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ belong to His kingdom. Our sins are forgiven, and we are children of God, delivered from the coming wrath. So we do not have to worry.

God reminds us not to worry through the rainbow. Yes, the rainbow is a symbol of judgement—no more by water. This time, it will be by fire. With all the talk about global warming, rising sea levels, and melting ice, people fear that Singapore and other places will go underwater. But that will never happen. The Lord has said, “I will not destroy the world by water again.” Next time, it will be by fire.

So when you hear about global warming, don’t think of water. The world fears water, but the real concern should be fire—God’s judgement by fire. The next time judgement comes, it will not be another flood but the consuming fire of God’s wrath.

The rainbow serves as both a warning and an assurance. For those who belong to Him, it is a reminder that our God is a covenant-keeping God. He keeps His promises. Since He has said He will not destroy the world by a flood again, He has kept His word for all these centuries. What He says is true.

What God says in the Book of Revelation is true, just as what He has said in other parts of Scripture regarding salvation is also true.

Therefore, we must continue to trust in Him, our covenant-keeping and promise-keeping God. We do not need to be afraid; instead, we can be filled with joy and peace even in this troubled and sin-cursed world.

If we have such a covenant-keeping and promise-keeping God, what should our response be? Our response should be worship. Knowing that God is on the throne, sovereign and powerful, and that we are His children and citizens of His kingdom—saved from the wrath to come, watched over carefully, and provided for—should compel us to worship Him. It should cause us to fall on our knees, bow our hearts, and adore Him.

Understanding the throne of God should lead us into the temple of God to worship Him. The throne and the temple are intrinsically connected. In Revelation, we see the inhabitants of heaven worshipping the Lord in His holy temple. A similar scene is found in Isaiah 6, where the prophet Isaiah was given a glimpse of heaven.

Isaiah 6:1 says, “*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.*” The throne and the temple are interconnected.

Above the throne stood the seraphim, each having six wings: with two, they covered their faces; with two, they covered their feet; and with two, they flew. They cried out to one another, saying, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory*” (Isaiah 6:3).

This throne and temple scene is also found in the Book of Revelation. The four living creatures, who are angels, worship the Lord. According to Isaiah 6:2, these angels are seraphim, and they cry out day and night, saying, “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.*” Their threefold declaration of holiness signifies the holiness of the Triune God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Holy Trinity are worthy of worship.

Worship in heaven is the primary activity. Some may wonder what we will do in heaven. Some might even think heaven is boring. But it is not boring at all—it will be an exciting and joyful experience because we will worship God forever.

Worship should already be an enjoyable activity for all who belong to the Lord. Do you find worship enjoyable or boring? If you find worship boring and burdensome, something is spiritually wrong. Worship should be delightful. The highlight of the week should be the Lord’s Day, and we should look forward to coming into God’s house early and joyfully.

Yes, we may come with heavy burdens from the week—troubles, afflictions, and difficulties—but we should come with the expectation of meeting our Heavenly Father, our King, and our Saviour, who knows all things and can help us. When we come to Him with a worshipful and prayerful heart, the Holy Spirit gives us joy and peace. We leave worship feeling lighter, knowing that God has taken over our burdens and will help us in our time of need. Through this, we grow in our knowledge and experience of the Lord—not just in head knowledge but in heart knowledge as well. Worshipping the Lord becomes increasingly enjoyable and meaningful, making us stronger and happier in Him.

Is this your experience? If so, you are spiritually healthy.

In heaven, we will worship the Lord forever, and it will be an unspeakable delight. We will not want to miss a single moment of worshipping the Lord. While the Bible gives us only glimpses of what we will do in eternity, we can trust that God, in His infinite wisdom and power, has prepared unimaginable wonders for us.

Knowing this, how can we not worship Him? We should be moved to worship Him all the more. This is what the angels do and what the redeemed in heaven are doing even now.

Who worships the Lord in heaven? We find that angels worship Him, as described in Revelation 4:6-8. The four living creatures, also known as the seraphim, worship the Lord continuously. As seen in Isaiah 6:2, seraphim are a specific type of angel. There are also cherubim in heaven, but the seraphim mentioned in Revelation are a special category—they are worship leaders in heaven, leading the heavenly hosts in proclaiming, “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.*”

And not only do the angels worship the Lord in heaven, but also human beings—those who have been sanctified by the Lord, justified by faith, sanctified by His Word and the Spirit, and finally glorified.

All of us who belong to the Lord will worship Him, and we know that there are these people who worship because of the elders mentioned here—24 of them. In verse 10, we read: *“The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord.”*

So, who are these 24 elders? Some commentators say they are angels. The four living creatures are angels, and some claim that the elders are another category of angels.

I don’t think so. I’ll explain why I believe the elders here refer to human beings—believers, saints—who are now in heaven. There are 24 of them—12 plus 12—and they represent all believers from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from Genesis through Revelation.

They are the 12 patriarchs of Israel, representing all Old Testament saints, and the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ, representing New Testament saints. In other words, they represent us, and they are now in heaven, worshipping the Lord.

One day, we will be with them—all believers, the church triumphant in heaven—bowing down and worshipping the Lord, casting our crowns before Him. So these elders are not angels; they are human beings.

We also know that these are human beings because of how they are described. They are called “elders”—the Greek word *presbuteroi*. As Bible Presbyterians, we understand that the church is governed by a plurality of elders, who are human beings. The word *presbuteroi* is never used for angels, only for men—specifically church leaders.

Moreover, these elders are described as being clothed in white raiment. In verse 4, we read: *“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats, and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment.”*

This white raiment represents the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are clothed with the righteous robe of Christ and washed by His precious blood, making us white and clean. This description applies to saved and sanctified believers.

Angels are not described this way because they have not sinned and do not need to be clothed in Christ’s righteousness. Only sinners like us need to be washed in His blood.

So again, the elders here are not angels but human beings—saints, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and clothed in His righteousness.

Additionally, these 24 elders wear crowns, which signify rulership. We, the saints, will be kings and priests of God and will reign on earth when the Lord Jesus returns. We will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Earlier in Revelation 2, the Lord says if we are faithful till the end, He will give us a crown of life. It is believers, not angels, who will wear crowns, because we will rule with Christ. Angels, on the other hand, are ministering spirits—servants.

We, as saints, will even judge angels, as Paul says. Thus, the elders are clearly human beings—saints already in heaven, whom we will join soon enough.

The 12 patriarchs and 12 apostles represent all the saints of the Old and New Testaments, and together, we will worship the Lord forever.

This is a wonderful truth—a glimpse of heaven, a preview of what awaits us. Why, then, should we build our treasures on earth? Why should we long for earthly riches? Will money bring us happiness? No, money cannot give us true security. In fact, in these uncertain times, wealth often brings more worries. You may have a lot of money in the bank, but can you be sure the bank is secure? Banks can collapse. Banks can malfunction.

Everything is going digital—you can't even hold cash in your hands anymore. Can money simply disappear? Can we trust in computers? Is digital banking foolproof? Sometimes I wonder. We hear of scams, identity theft, and data breaches. Even our secured information can be leaked, leading to financial loss.

Recently, for the first time, my own credit card details fell into the wrong hands. When I checked my bank statement, I found four unauthorised withdrawals on the same day. I never made those purchases, yet suddenly, the money was gone.

So why trust in the things of this earth? Perfect security and true guarantee are found only in the Lord—only in heaven. I do not know about you, but I truly look forward to heaven.

Yet, if the Lord grants us life and breath, let us live for Him. He knows how to protect, preserve, and provide for us.

“Peace on earth, goodwill toward men” is the Christmas message. But true peace and goodwill can only be experienced by those who are born again, by those who are heaven-bound. So let us ensure that we are heaven-bound, that we truly know the Lord.

May we understand the lessons from this passage about the throne and the temple, and may these truths shape our thinking and our lives as we await His soon return.

XV

WHO IS ABLE?

Revelation 5:1-14

Who is able? There is a saying: “It is not ability but availability that is important.” Have you heard that before? Availability, not ability. It sounds good, but is it correct? You may be available, but if you are not able, then you are quite useless, right?

A couple of months ago, I received a phone call from a young lady who needed counsel. She shared with me her problem, which concerned female matters—very personal and very private. I said, “I’m very sorry, but I cannot help you.” I may be available—after all, you can call the pastor anytime—but if I am not able, then I am useless. I cannot help. If my wife were with me, she would be able to help, but as a man, I could not. It had to do with female biological problems.

So, you may be available, but are you able? Without ability, we are of little use.

Here in this passage, something important must be done. There is a book that is sealed and must be opened. Not just anyone can open this book; it must be someone who is worthy, who is able.

In verse 1, we read: “*And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.*”

It was sealed by God Himself. The word “book” here is interesting. In the original Greek, it is the word *biblion*, from which we get the word “Bible.” In this context, this book refers to the Holy Bible—the Scriptures, particularly the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is sealed, covered, closed—but it must be opened, it must be revealed. That is precisely what “Revelation” means; the Greek word *apokalupto* means an unveiling, an uncovering. Revelation unveils or uncovers hidden truths.

Who, then, can open, reveal, or unveil the contents of this book, especially from chapter six onward, which concerns future events not yet revealed? Who can uncover and unveil these things?

What is revealed in this book is of great importance to us. In Revelation, there are warnings that benefit us. When you are warned about danger, you know how to keep yourself safe and avoid harm. You are not blind; you know where the danger lies.

There are also prophecies—events that have not yet happened but will happen in the future. We want to know the future so that we have direction in life, so that we know how to live, and so that we can be certain of our final destiny and destination. We are not like someone lost without a map or compass; we have one, but it must be opened for us to understand it.

John, realising this, was deeply saddened. He wept because no one was found worthy to open the book. If Revelation remained sealed, it would be as though our Bible contained only 65 books. We would have Genesis through Jude, but no Revelation. Something crucial would be missing. We would know the beginning of the world but not its end. We would be left hanging.

So, we need to know. We want to know. But who is able to open this book? Who is worthy?

Verse 2 says: “*And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?*” Verse 3 continues: “*And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*”

No one in all the world, in all the universe, not in heaven, not on earth, not even in hell—no one was able to open this book.

John wept much. He was so sad because no man was found worthy to open and read the book, nor even to look upon it.

Why was no one able? Because, to open this holy book, one must have holy hands. One must have a clean, pure heart. As Scripture says: *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.”*

To open this holy book, one must have a perfectly holy heart and absolutely pure hands, even to touch or look upon it. No one qualifies. We know this: *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; there is none righteous, no, not one.”*

By way of application, let me say this: If we want to open the Holy Scriptures—to read, understand, and appreciate its contents—we must have a clean mind and a pure heart. Otherwise, though we may read it, its meaning will remain hidden to us. Worse still, we may misread, misunderstand, or misapply it, bringing destruction upon ourselves because our minds are unclean and our hearts are impure.

This is a holy book. It must be handled with clean hands and pure hearts. It is a spiritual book, and spiritual things are spiritually discerned, understood, and appreciated. We must be born again; otherwise, we cannot comprehend it.

John realised this and wept. We too should weep—for our sins.

But praise the Lord! There is one who is worthy! There is one who is able!

Verse 5 says: *“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”*

This is our comfort! The book of Revelation will not remain sealed forever. It will be unveiled, uncovered—but only by the Lord Jesus Christ. Only He qualifies. Only He is worthy. Only He is able.

Why is He worthy? How is He able? He is worthy because He is the Messiah, the Anointed One—our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Verse 5 describes Him as *“the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”* This takes us back to Old Testament prophecy and speaks of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Genesis 49:9-10 says: *“Judah is a lion’s whelp... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.”*

From the very first book of the Bible, Genesis, there is a prophecy about the coming Messiah, who will come from the tribe of Judah—the royal tribe. The sceptre (a symbol of kingship) shall not depart from Judah. This points to Christ, our King.

Isaiah 11:1-2 adds: *“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”* This speaks of the messianic Branch—the Root of David. Who is He? None other than the Son of God. The word “Branch” is capitalised in the Authorised Version because it refers to Christ Himself.

Verse 2 describes Him as having perfect wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. He is the Son of God, the Prophet who has revealed God’s Word. He is able. He fulfils all prophecies concerning Himself, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

There are 300 prophecies concerning Christ's first coming. Today, we continue to celebrate this wonderful day called Christmas, which took place two thousand years ago. However, it was predicted thousands of years before it happened.

God never forgets; what He said He would do, He has done. He has fulfilled every prophecy regarding His first coming. If He has accomplished this, take comfort and do not weep, for what will be unsealed, uncovered, and unveiled in the book of Revelation concerning His second coming and the future will surely come to pass. He is worthy and able to fulfil all that He has promised.

Not only are there prophecies of judgement, but for us who believe, there are also many promises in the book of Revelation—promises to God's people. For instance, when Jesus returns, we will reign with Him for a thousand years. As it is written in Revelation 5:10, "*And has made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.*" Will this promise be fulfilled? It is 100% guaranteed—101% certain. Surely, it will happen.

The Lord Jesus, the true Prophet, is worthy, and He is able to fulfil all that He has said. He not only fulfils prophecies but also keeps the promises He has given to us. That is why we can be comforted. Do not weep—Jesus is worthy. He will keep His word, for He is faithful, and we have this blessed assurance.

We are actually in a more privileged position today because the prophecies concerning His first coming have already been fulfilled. We have strong evidence of His truthfulness. Living in this time, can we not also rest assured that what He has promised regarding the end times will likewise be fulfilled? Most definitely! He is worthy, and He is able.

Jesus is not only the Prophet who fulfils prophecy, but He is also our great High Priest. Revelation 5:6 states, "*And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*"

Here, we read of the Lamb standing in the midst of the elders. This is not a picture of defeat but of victory. Though He had been slain, He remains triumphant. The King James Version accurately translates this as "Lamb" with a capital "L." This is not just any lamb but the Messianic Lamb—the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He was slain for you and for me. He was nailed to the cross, bled for us, and died so that our sins could be forgiven. He rose from the dead. The Lamb who was slain is able—He is worthy because He was the sacrificial Lamb for us. But is He also able? Absolutely! He is perfectly able.

This Lamb is described as having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. The number seven signifies divine perfection. The Lamb is none other than the Son of God Himself. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

The seven horns symbolise perfect power—He has all power. The seven eyes signify perfect knowledge—He knows and sees all things. The seven Spirits of God indicate His omnipresence—He is present everywhere.

Is He able? Not only is He worthy, but He is more than able! He alone qualifies as our High Priest. He is not only the sacrificial Lamb but also our Shepherd. John 10 declares, "*I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for my sheep.*" Normally, the shepherd is distinct from the sheep. But Christ is unique—He is both Shepherd and Sacrificial Lamb. No one else is worthy—only He is worthy, and He is able.

What a great High Priest, Saviour, and Redeemer we have! That is why we can be comforted. This is why John was told, “Weep not.” There is salvation! The Lamb was slain for our sins, and He is our Good Shepherd. He gives us eternal life. There is no need to weep—take comfort, for He is our Priest, and He is able to save us.

Revelation speaks of terrible judgements to come. The events described are frightening, revealing the full wrath of God upon sin. We know we are guilty and deserving of judgement, but take heart—there is salvation. He is worthy, and He is able to save us from the coming judgement, from the lake of fire.

That is why He alone can break the seals and open the book. He not only reveals the problem but also provides the solution. Many point out problems, but they offer no comfort or solution. However, Christ reveals the problem and is Himself the solution. This is true comfort!

Today, we live in troubling times—pandemics, persecution, and all kinds of suffering. God is speaking. The frailty and failure of man are evident. Man thinks he is intelligent and powerful, claiming that science and technology will solve all problems. But then another crisis emerges, and humanity is back to square one. God is speaking—reminding mankind that he is weak and powerless apart from Him.

We continue to live only because of God’s mercy. Proud men must be humbled to realise that only Christ is worthy and able to save. Only He is able. Our lives are truly in God’s hands. We think we have control, but in reality, life is fragile—here today, gone tomorrow. Let us trust in Christ, for He alone is worthy and able.

O how we need the Lord! He is able to preserve our life for His holy purpose, for His will. So we trust in Him and do not worry about the jabs or COVID-19. Of course, we must exercise due responsibility as human beings, but ultimately, it must be the Lord, and only He is able to keep us, protect us, and preserve us to the very end. That’s why we can be comforted. The world is weeping, but we are comforted because we have God. We have this High Priest.

Yes, in this life, we face a lot of affliction, pain, and suffering. So, where do we turn for help? I’ve learned that going to fellow men for help can sometimes offer no comfort or assistance. You might even get scolded. But our Lord knows. He knows everything, and He can help, save, and strengthen us. For He is our great High Priest.

One of my favourite passages in the Bible is Hebrews 4. I can’t help but read this to you again. We read in verses 14-16: *“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”*

The sinless Son of God, who became the Son of Man to go through this human life, experience, and He was tempted, tried, and tested in all points, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. You see, He is able. And He gives great comfort, joy, and peace in the midst of sorrow and pain. Have you experienced this? You must.

He is able. And don’t ever say, “God doesn’t understand me.” Man may not understand you because they are not all-knowing, they don’t have all power, and they are not present everywhere. They don’t know everything. But God knows you inside and out and understands you better than you know yourself. When you cry to Him, He is able to help you, granting you the grace you need—grace to help in your time of need. That’s most comforting. So don’t ever say, “The Lord Jesus doesn’t understand.” He is not far away. He understands very well.

So don't ever shy away from Him. If you are sorrowing, or you need wisdom, direction, or counsel, pray. Go straight to Him. Pour out your mind and your heart to Him. He knows you. He understands. And He will help you in your time of need. He is able as our Prophet, as our Priest. And then the third thing here, He is our King. He is worthy and able because He is our King.

In verses 11-14, it says: *"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."* Here, heaven and earth worship Him who is on the throne—angels and humans worship Him. Why? Because He is worthy, and He is able, because He who is King became a servant. The Lord Jesus was sitting on His throne as the Son of God, clothed with divine glory, entitled to all His rights and privileges. Yet He gave up His rights as King to be a servant.

He came down to serve. He took off His divine robe of brilliance and glorious light to put on humble flesh. He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many, to become man, and not just a man, but a servant—yes, even a slave—to wash even our feet. Is He not worthy? He is so worthy because He sets the divine and perfect example. King, all of us must serve Him. Yet He came down to be a servant, to serve us. So when the Lord commands us to follow Him—to deny ourselves, take up our cross of suffering and shame, and follow Him—He has every right to say that because He went through that for you and for me. He denied Himself, and He came down, bore the cross, suffered, and died for our sins. Just to save us. And then He says, "You do the same." He has every right to say it. He is able to say that because He is our perfect example.

He was King of the Jews, born as the King of the Jews, but He is now King of the world, and all must worship Him. So we see the angels here and also the saints worshipping. He is worthy of worship as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is worthy because He is perfect in every way. In verse 12, we read: *"The angels saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessing."* Seven things are here describing who He is: Power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessing. Again, the number seven is not by chance. It is there on purpose to tell us He is perfect in every way. Because He is God, He has perfect power, perfect riches, perfect wisdom, perfect strength, perfect honour, perfect glory, and perfect blessing. Only He is worthy. This is a sevenfold doxology.

And if that is not enough, there's another doxology in the next verse, in verse 13: *"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."* Here we have a fourfold doxology: blessing, honour, glory, and power. The number four, again, not by chance. The number four in the Bible is the number of the universe—the world, the global, the universal number—the four corners of the earth. This is telling us He's worthy because He is universal. He is the God of the world, the God of the universe. He is the God of all.

And so He is sovereign as King, who has all power, and He is able to command and control all things. If He is such a God and King, how can we not bow down to worship Him? Here we find the angels and the saints bowing down to worship Him, who is worthy. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Nothing is too hard for Him. He, who is our King, will save us to the utmost, and we will sit with Him. He will cause us to sit on the throne, and we will reign with Him for a thousand years when He comes to establish His kingdom.

So I pray that during this Christmas week, we will be like the three wise men. “We three kings of Orient are...” And what did they come to do? Worship Him, who is born King of the Jews. And not only King of the Jews, but our King, King of all believers, King of the whole universe. We come to worship Him because He is able. He is worthy, and He is able to save.

Let us remember and never forget this: He is able. And only He is able.

XVI

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

Revelation 6:1-17

In light of Scripture and the signs of the times, what is happening today is not the beginning of happiness—it is the beginning of sorrows. We are witnessing more and more of the four horsemen: the white, the red, the black, and the pale. These different colours indicate various events unfolding in the world today.

The question arises: What do these horsemen represent?

We thank God that Scripture is self-interpreting. Thus, we must let Scripture interpret Scripture. The description of the four horsemen in Revelation 6 is not new; we read about similar horsemen in the Old Testament, which provides us with insight into their meaning in Revelation.

In Zechariah 1:8–10, we read: *“I saw by night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro through the earth.”*

Take note—these horses and horsemen are sent by the Lord to walk throughout the earth. They have a specific purpose concerning the world. In verse 11, we read further: *“And they answered the angel of the Lord and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still and is at rest.”* These are heavenly messengers sent forth into the world, moving throughout the earth on divine assignment.

Similarly, in Zechariah 6:1–5, we read: *“And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; in the second chariot, black horses; in the third chariot, white horses; and in the fourth chariot, grizzled and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.”* Here, the four spirits refer to angelic beings—heavenly messengers sent into the world to walk to and fro. They stand before the Lord, ready to carry out His purposes.

When we read about the four horsemen in Revelation 6, we must ask the same question: “What are these?” The answer is already given—these are angelic spirits, divine agents sent by God to inspect the earth, report back, and execute His judgements.

When God executes His judgement, what form do these judgements take? Jesus Himself foretold these events in Matthew 24. In verses 6–7, we read: *“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.”*

The four horsemen represent these very events—wars, famines, pestilences, and natural disasters. Whether through human conflict or natural calamities, these judgements will come to pass. Wars and rumours of wars, nations rising against each other, famines, deadly diseases, earthquakes, tornadoes, typhoons—all these will occur. However, the end is not yet. These are merely the beginning of sorrows.

Revelation 6 portrays a continuous cycle of peace and war, tranquillity and disaster. Just as a carousel spins, these cycles of judgement will continue. Periods of peace will be followed by war; times of stability will give way to famines and pestilences. Throughout history, from the time of Christ's first coming until now, we have been in the last days. The seal judgements, like a never-ending merry-go-round, continue to unfold. The four horsemen symbolise these recurring cycles: peace, war, famine, pestilence, and death.

Today, we are experiencing these cycles once more. Yet, the end is not yet. The suffering and turmoil we witness are but the beginning. The intensity and frequency of these events will increase as time progresses. The carousel of judgement will spin faster and faster. Despite past optimism, the fact remains: "The best is yet to come" is a false hope. Rather, the worst is yet to come. The four horsemen serve as a warning—the Great Tribulation is approaching, and the most severe judgements of God are still to come.

Are you ready? Are you prepared for His coming? Now, let us examine the four horsemen one by one.

First, we have the white horse. Revelation 6:2 states: *And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*"

The rider of the white horse holds a bow—but there is no mention of arrows. This suggests a form of conquest without bloodshed. The white horse represents deterrence, the maintenance of peace through political or military strength. While war is avoided, the situation remains fragile. The absence of arrows indicates a show of power rather than actual conflict.

Today, we see this dynamic at play. Since World War II, global superpowers have sought to maintain stability through military and political influence. Alliances, economic sanctions, and diplomatic manoeuvres serve as deterrents to war. Recent events, such as the diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics, illustrate this principle—a symbolic protest, a bow without arrows. The global summit of democratic nations was another demonstration of power, sending a warning to aggressive nations: "We have the ability to act, but we prefer peace." The white horse is riding even now, upholding a fragile peace. However, the carousel of history continues to turn—who knows when war will break out and the red horse will ride?

Next comes the red horse. Revelation 6:4 describes it: *"And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword."*

Unlike the white horse, which wields a bow without arrows, the red horse carries a drawn sword, ready for bloodshed. This signifies outright war. When peace is taken from the earth, nations will rise against one another, and blood will be spilled. The white horse preserves order for a time, but inevitably, the red horse follows, ushering in war and destruction.

These cycles will persist until the culmination of God's judgement. The world may experience brief respites of peace, but conflict and catastrophe will always return. The four horsemen are a warning: the worst is yet to come. The Great Tribulation will bring unparalleled suffering. Are you ready for what is to come? Are you prepared for His return?

Throughout history, we see the red horse riding out. We have already witnessed two world wars—World War I, which took place from 1914 to 1918, and World War II, from 1939 to 1945. The red horse has gone out, and war has ravaged the earth. Will the red horse ride out again?

Can a third world war happen? Most definitely! There will be a third world war. But when will the red horse ride again? We do not know. When peace is taken from the earth, war and bloodshed will follow. Anything can trigger it.

Are we ready?

It is not just war that threatens humanity, famine looms as well. This is represented by the black horse, as seen in Revelation 6:5-6: “*And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, ‘Come and see.’ And behold, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*”

The black horse symbolises famine—famine in the land and famine in the world due to both natural and man-made disasters. Earthquakes, pestilences, hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, and pandemics all contribute to famine. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has caused economic hardship worldwide.

Today, we see the effects of the black horse’s ride. Supply chains are disrupted. Scarcity of resources and commodities leads to inflation. Although salaries remain the same, purchasing power decreases, and people become poorer. Scarcity results in rationing—people must tighten their belts. The balance in the rider’s hand signifies the need to carefully measure and conserve resources, for they are no longer plentiful.

Revelation 6:6 says: “*And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*”

A penny represents one day’s wage—just enough to feed one person for a day. But what about one’s family? To feed more than oneself, people must settle for barley instead of wheat. In biblical times, wheat was for human consumption, while barley was primarily used as animal feed. When famine strikes, people who once ate rice must settle for porridge.

Rationing becomes necessary, and essential goods such as oil and wine must be protected. These are no longer to be used freely but reserved for only the most essential needs.

Is there economic famine in the world today? Yes. It exists at varying levels. The black horse is riding even now. Yet, in Singapore, we are blessed. God has been gracious and merciful to us. While many around the world suffer economic hardship, we do not feel its full impact.

Why? Because of God’s mercy. He placed a “Joseph” in our land—a wise leader who, during times of plenty, ensured that resources were saved and not squandered. Our nation has reserves to draw upon in times of crisis. Yet, even reserves can run dry.

In such times, those who have must exercise good stewardship. If God has blessed us, we should not hoard our blessings but extend help to those in need—especially our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering. As the Lord Jesus said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” If we fail to exercise our duty to help others, God may take away our abundance. He may strike us with famine, and our wealth may slip away as if placed in pockets full of holes.

The black horse may be riding, but God knows how to watch over His people. He provides for His children. However, we must also fulfil our responsibilities—not only by preaching the gospel but by showing the love of Christ through good works. In doing so, others may be drawn to God’s goodness and grace before judgement comes.

Famine is a warning. Do we trust in money and riches? Do we trust in banks? A famine may come, and we may become poor overnight. Can banks protect our wealth? They try their best, but security is never foolproof. In the past, banks relied on massive steel vaults to secure cash and gold. But today, we live in a digital economy. Money is no longer tangible—it exists in

pixels. Are digital banking systems truly safe? They are vulnerable to cyberattacks and data breaches.

Famine may come, and wealth may disappear. Is this possible? Yes. Hackers and cybercriminals continually exploit weaknesses, despite banks' best efforts. So where should we place our trust? In money, or in God?

If God has blessed us with plenty, how are we using it? Are we investing in what truly matters? The only way to overcome the famine brought by the black horse is to invest in the Lord and His kingdom. The safest bank is the bank of heaven. Whatever we do for the Lord will last for eternity. If our treasures are in heaven, our hearts will be there also—and we will know what to do.

So, you have the white horse, the red horse, and the black horse.

Then, the fourth horse is the pale horse or horseman. *“And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him.”*

This is very clear: the pale horse represents death. Death that comes from war, bloodshed, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes. All these will bring death.

And yes, there is a whole lot of death in the world. The pale horse is riding. In certain periods of history, there have been more deaths than before—an increase in death due to extraordinary circumstances, such as worldwide catastrophes.

Take, for example, this pandemic. More than five million have died from COVID-19. The latest figures indicate 5.5 million deaths, and the numbers are still climbing.

Each year, how many people die from the flu? Many think flu is harmless, but it can be quite deadly. Reports estimate that half a million people die from influenza annually.

So, after two years, COVID-19 has caused 5.5 million deaths, while the flu would have caused around 2 million. That's not too far apart—it's just half.

Then there's cancer—that dreadful, deadly disease we all hate. Every year, 10 million people die of cancer.

Not to mention war. When war appears, the pale horse rides out, bringing death. In World War I, how many died? 40 million. In World War II? 70 million. World War III?

Here, the Bible says: *“And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, with hunger, with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”* (Revelation 6:8). One-quarter of the earth's population will die when the pale horse rides out in its final form.

All these deaths will increase in number. And finally, at the end, when the pale horse rides out, one-quarter of the earth will perish. World War I: 40 million. World War II: 70 million. World War III—who knows?

These things happen in cycles. They come, they go, and they come again, increasing in frequency and intensity. Stronger earthquakes, more powerful tornadoes and typhoons.

Recently, in the Philippines, Typhoon Odette brought great destruction in Cebu and Bohol. We have our churches and brethren there. Thank God, there was no loss of life, though there was damage to property.

The Rev Dr Jose Lagapa's ancestral home in Bohol, which now serves as a church—Trinidad Bible-Presbyterian Church—was severely affected. Half of the building was damaged. Half the roof was blown off. But God knows how to protect and provide. The room where the preacher lived remained intact. The roof above his head, which provided him shelter, was untouched,

while the other side of the house was destroyed. Once again, we see that God knows how to protect and provide for His servants. We may have to go through trials, but our God is in control. He preserves us for His holy purpose. This should comfort us. He is in charge. But we must think of Him, do His work, and not live for ourselves. We must live for Him, and He will take care of us.

The four horsemen and the four seals reveal that great tribulation is coming. However, these four horsemen are not yet the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation is still to come. The end is not yet—it is only the beginning of sorrows. These four seals, these four horsemen, appear *before* the Great Tribulation. They represent the recurring cycles of war, peace, famine, and death in this world.

Today, we see these events escalating. This tells us that the end is near—not here yet, but near. It is knocking on the door. The Great Tribulation is coming—the sorrow of sorrows is approaching. So, what do we live for? What do we hope for? We must reorder our lives, our thinking, and our philosophy of life. We must live for God and His kingdom so that when the Lord comes, we will not be caught unprepared.

Prepare! Don't say, "I don't know how to prepare." The Lord has already given us the warning. We see the signs. Now, we must prepare. So that when the Lord comes, He will say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And not: "You wicked and slothful servant." Every true believer will be good and faithful. False believers, however, are wicked and slothful. We must not be part of that group.

We are children of light, not darkness. The Book of Revelation unveils, reveals, and uncovers what is to come. The Holy Spirit, through the Word, gives us illumination and insight to understand the times. Then, we will know what to do.

How are you living? How am I living for the Lord? Let's make our lives count. Life is like a vapour. Time flies.

How old are you now? How much longer will you live? How much longer will I live? "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" (Psalm 90:10) Seventy years. If we are strong, maybe eighty. With modern medicine, perhaps ninety. But ten years—do you think that's a long time? It passes in an instant.

And don't assume we will all live to 70, 80, or 90. My beloved wife—Jemima—the Lord took her home when she was only in her 50s. So, how long do you think you will live? How long do I think I have? What are we doing with our lives—with the time we have left? I tell the Lord: "Lord, as long as You give me breath and life, I will serve You." That's all we can do. Because He loved us and gave Himself for us, we must give ourselves to Him—regardless of what happens.

This is not the beginning of happiness—it is the beginning of sorrows. But even in the midst of sorrow, take comfort. Be encouraged. God can comfort us. God can help us. And His grace is sufficient.

XVII
THE DIVINE SEAL
Revelation 7:1-17

In this passage, we read of the divine seal. In verse 2, we read: *“I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.”* Then in verse 3: *“Hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”*

So, what is this seal? This seal is a stamp or an official mark. It refers to a stamp, often used in official documents. For example, if you are baptised, you will receive a certificate of baptism. This certificate will bear the seal of the church, a red embossed seal imprinted on the paper, signifying that it is an official document—not merely something printed from a personal printer, but an authentic certification of baptism.

Here, in Revelation 7, we see a divine seal placed on the foreheads of certain individuals—specifically, the 144,000. These individuals are described as servants of God. In verse 3, we read: *“Hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”*

Who are these servants? The term “servant” is significant. In Greek, multiple words exist for “servant,” but here, the word used is *doulos*, which refers to not just a servant but the lowest-ranking servant—a bonds slave. Sometimes, *doulos* is translated as “slave,” specifically a bonds slave, one who is fully committed to serving his master.

What does it mean to be a bonds slave? This concept is not new; it originates in the Old Testament. In Exodus 21, we find the description of a bonds slave. In Israel, a man could become a slave to another if he owed a debt he could not pay. He could work for six years to pay off his debt and be released in the seventh year. However, if he loved his master and wished to remain in servitude, he could voluntarily choose to become a bonds slave for life. Exodus 21:5-6 states: *“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.”*

The Hebrew word for “serve” in this context has a Greek equivalent—*doulos*, in its verb form *douleo*. Thus, a *doulos* is a bonds slave for life, serving willingly and lovingly.

In Revelation 7, the “servants of our God”—the 144,000—are believers who love the Lord and willingly give themselves to His service. They are bonds slaves, fully devoted to God. Their servitude comes with a special mission and commission, just as the apostles of Jesus Christ were specially commissioned to preach and teach the inerrant Word of God.

During the Great Tribulation, the church is no longer on earth. In the early chapters of Revelation (1-4), the church is frequently mentioned, but after chapter 4, it is absent. This suggests that by this time, the church has been raptured, caught up to meet the Lord. The believers of this church age are with the Lord in heaven, no longer on earth during the Great Tribulation.

So, who remains on earth? The nation of Israel. The Great Tribulation is also called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7). Jacob, who was later named Israel, represents the nation. During this period, God will deal with Israel in a special way—to purge, chastise, and sanctify the nation in preparation for the Millennium. At that time, Israel’s eyes will be opened to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Messiah, the one they had previously rejected and crucified. They will believe, worship, and serve Him.

Since the church is no longer present, who will preach the gospel during the Great Tribulation? The gospel must still be preached, and people can still be saved if they repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This responsibility now falls to Israel. Israel was originally chosen by God to be His witnesses among the heathen nations. In Isaiah 43:11-12, we read: *“I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me, there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed when there was no strange god among you: therefore, ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.”*

This commission, originally given to Israel, will be reinstated during the Great Tribulation. The 144,000 will serve as evangelists, fulfilling Israel’s role as God’s witnesses.

They will be sealed with a divine seal on their foreheads. What does this sealing mean? What purpose does it serve?

The divine seal in Revelation 7 serves three primary functions: (1) Authentication – The seal proves that the 144,000 are genuine servants and representatives of God. (2) Ownership – The seal signifies that these individuals belong to God. (3) Protection – The seal serves as divine protection during the Great Tribulation.

The sealing serves as an authentication mark, verifying that these individuals are true servants of God. This concept is also seen in 1 Corinthians 9:2, where Paul defends his apostleship: *“If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.”*

Paul’s apostleship was authenticated by the fruits of his ministry—the Corinthian church itself. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 12:12, Paul states: *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”*

The apostles of Jesus Christ were given sign gifts to perform miracles as authenticating proofs of their divine commission. However, today, such sign gifts have ceased with the passing of the apostles.

So, how can one discern a true servant of God today? While miraculous signs are no longer present, a true servant is identified by his adherence to the Word of God, his faithful preaching of sound doctrine, and his godly character.

In conclusion, the 144,000 are specially chosen and sealed servants of God, tasked with proclaiming the gospel during the Great Tribulation. Their sealing serves to authenticate their calling, mark them as God’s own, and protect them in their mission. This divine seal signifies their unique role in God’s plan for the end times.

The very reason for the sealing of the 144,000 is to authenticate and prove that they are genuine and true servants of the Lord—His true messengers.

Why is this necessary? Because in the last days, during the end times and the Great Tribulation, there will be an abundance of false Christs and false prophets. Jesus warned about this three times in Matthew 24. So, how can one distinguish between a true and a false servant of the Lord?

The Lord places a seal upon them. I believe this seal on their foreheads is a visible one, allowing people to recognise them as the true servants and messengers of the Lord. People in those days must heed their words—what they preach and what they warn against—so that they may take heed, believe in the Lord Jesus, and be saved from the coming judgement.

But today, how do we discern the truth from falsehood? How do we recognise a person or servant sealed by the Lord as an authentic, genuine, and true servant of God?

Today, we recognise them by their doctrine and practice. The sealing is evident in both their teachings and their way of life. Does the person believe, preach, and teach the whole counsel of God faithfully and truthfully? Or does he deny the faith and cause doubt regarding the Lord and His Word? If he does the latter, then he is a false preacher, pastor, or messenger.

However, if he preaches the full counsel of God faithfully and truthfully, and you have the Holy Spirit within you, then you can discern that he is a true servant of the Lord. As Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me.*”

Additionally, a true servant of the Lord is known by his practice. He does not preach for payment; he is not a hireling or mercenary. He preaches because he is constrained by the love of God, not by personal choice, but by divine appointment. This was the case with the Apostle Paul.

Paul did not choose to become an apostle; rather, he was divinely appointed. Before his conversion, he was a persecutor of the church, but the Lord transformed him into an apostle on the road to Damascus. Confronted in the most powerful way, he was convicted of his sin, confessed the Lord Jesus, and became His servant by divine appointment. Paul understood this well—he bore the seal of God in both his doctrine and his life.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul explains how he demonstrated his apostleship. Even though he had the right to receive financial support as a preacher of the gospel, he chose to preach freely, not demanding payment. He was not an employee of the church but a servant of the Lord. Constrained by the love of Christ, he was convicted of his calling and knew it was by divine appointment. Paul preached willingly and selflessly, recognising that he had a duty to fulfil.

A true servant of God does not preach only if he is paid. He is not in the business of pleasing men to secure his livelihood. Instead, he serves the Lord unconditionally, knowing that he is accountable to God alone. The Lord is the One who calls, appoints, ordains, and seals His servants for their task.

No one appoints themselves to full-time ministry. One must have a divine calling and seal from the Lord. This is similar to how a diplomat or ambassador cannot simply present himself to another country and claim the title. An ambassador must have official government credentials bearing the seal of authority. Only then is he recognised and received. Similarly, a servant of God must have the divine seal to authenticate his calling as a true representative of the Lord.

The 144,000 servants of God are set apart for a special mission—to be evangelists and witnesses of God. They are sealed for this purpose so that people may recognise them as true and genuine messengers of God and heed their preaching.

The concept of sealing as a sign of ownership is found in 2 Timothy 2:19: “*Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His.*”

Being sealed by God signifies that a person belongs to Him and is His possession. This idea is comparable to branding cattle or sheep to show ownership. Similarly, books in a personal library may have a stamp indicating they belong to a specific individual.

The divine seal also implies that the person is set apart for a holy purpose. Just as valuable jewellery is stored separately from common items, those who are sealed by God are set apart for His service. They are not to be mixed with the common or unclean but must remain holy and separate unto the Lord.

This principle is found in Exodus 19:5: “*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.*”

Similarly, in Leviticus 20:26: *“And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.”*

God’s people are His treasured possession, set apart for His glory. If we are owned by God, that is a great blessing, for we are His special and beloved possession.

So, what does the divine seal—or sealing—do? The third function it serves is protection. The sealing is meant to keep God’s people safe and secure from all harm and evil.

The divine seal has this crucial role: to protect, to preserve, and to keep believers secure from all danger. In Ephesians 1:13, we read: *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”*

This means that when you believe in Christ, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit dwells within you permanently, taking up eternal residence. He will never leave you.

This sealing is a divine act of protection. As Scripture says: *“Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

Satan is in the world. He may try to harm you, deceive you, or destroy you—but he cannot succeed. The Holy Spirit within you is far greater, and He ensures your safety and security until the very end. You will never lose your salvation. Once saved, always saved.

This is why, in the very next verse, Ephesians 1:14 declares: *“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”*

The word “earnest” here refers to a downpayment—a pledge or guarantee of what is to come. Just as we make a down payment when purchasing something valuable to signify our commitment, God Himself has given us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our future inheritance.

What greater guarantor can there be than God Himself? He cannot fail. Once He has saved you, He will keep you until the very end. No one is more powerful than God, and no force can remove you from His plan and purpose.

This divine seal is not only about salvation but also about service. In the Great Tribulation, 144,000 witnesses will be sealed by God. They will preach the truth, proclaim the gospel, and warn of the coming judgement. Some will listen and be saved, but many will oppose them, seeking to destroy them. Yet, they will not be harmed until their mission is accomplished.

Similarly, in Revelation 11, we read about two special witnesses, likely Moses and Elijah. Though the Antichrist will try to kill them, he will fail—until their appointed time of ministry is complete. Then, and only then, will God allow them to be put to death, after which they will be resurrected.

Likewise, the 144,000 witnesses, sealed by God, will be protected until their divine mission is fulfilled.

As mentioned, the divine seal signifies: (1) Authentication – It confirms that you are truly God’s child. (2) Ownership – It marks you as belonging exclusively to the Lord. (3) Protection – It guarantees that God will preserve you until the end.

This is the question you must ask yourself: Do you have the divine seal?

If you are a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—if you are born again, then you have the divine seal. This seal authenticates that you are a genuine child of God, set apart for His purpose.

How do you know you have this seal? (1) Through right belief: Do you believe in all the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith without question or doubt? (2) Through a transformed life: If you are truly sealed by the Holy Spirit, your life will change. You will bear the fruit of the Spirit, and your actions will reflect God's Word.

A true believer has both right doctrine and right living—faith and works. This proves your authenticity as a child of God. As James 2:26 says, *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

If you belong to the Lord, you are His special treasure, His prized possession. He will protect and preserve you in your faith until the very end. You will never lose your faith, your hope, or your love for the Lord. He will keep you. As Philippians 1:6 says, *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”.*

I pray that all of us have the divine seal. If you have this seal, you are truly blessed. You are among the happiest people in the world because your salvation is secure.

But if you have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, do so quickly. Confess Him, trust Him, and be saved.

When you believe in Christ, you will experience the divine sealing—the invisible, powerful working of God the Spirit in your life. This will give you full assurance: *“Yes, I belong to Him, and He will keep me until the very end.” “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”* (Romans 8:14).

XVIII
SILENCE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 8:1-13

Right here in verse 1, we read: *“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”*

Why was there such silence in heaven? What is this silence all about?

The answer lies in the context. Here, we find ourselves in the very presence of God. The context goes back to the previous chapter, in verse 15, where we read: *“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”*

So, we are in the very presence of God, who is seated on His throne as the Judge. The people are also found in His temple.

The throne of God speaks of His glorious majesty, while the temple speaks of His holiness—He is thrice holy. When confronted with the powerful majesty and glory of God, and when struck by His holiness, one cannot help but fall down in reverence. Words fail; one is dumbstruck by His awesomeness.

Not only is He awesome, but He is also “awful”—awfully great, awfully powerful, absolutely holy. And who are we in comparison? We are nothing—smaller even than an ant. Can we say anything to God? No, we must fall down and worship Him.

We must accord Him great respect and reverence. Consider a modern courtroom: if you enter the Supreme Court, you must remain silent out of respect for the dignity and solemnity of the place. No loud talking or idle chatter is allowed. You sit quietly, waiting for the judge to enter, and when he does, you must stand and bow.

If this is the case in a human courtroom, how much more should it be in the presence of the Judge of judges? When God, the Supreme Judge, sits on His throne to execute judgement, and when we behold His power and holiness, we will be struck with awe. We will be afraid to utter a word, fearing to speak amiss. Great reverence for God is essential.

That is why, before we begin our worship service, the hymn based on Habakkuk 2:20 is played: *“The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.”*

Every time we enter the Lord’s house on the Lord’s Day, we must remember this. Our church auditorium, when worship begins, ceases to be a mere auditorium—it becomes a holy sanctuary. When we come to worship, we enter His holy presence. We should be filled with reverence, preparing our hearts and minds to worship the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Judge of judges, the one and only living and true God.

Therefore, when you enter, sit quietly. Maintain silence. Spend time reading Scripture and praying, preparing your heart for worship. Do not engage in idle conversation or chit-chat with your neighbour. Look to the Lord in holy silence, for you are in His presence.

And do not come late. Those who arrive late to meet a king, a president, or a prime minister may find the doors shut. How much more when meeting the King of kings and Lord of lords? We should come early, waiting for Him—not making Him wait for us.

Furthermore, let it not be that when you enter His holy sanctuary, you sit in silence outwardly but are inwardly distracted—scrolling through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or even playing a last-minute computer game. Such behaviour is sacrilegious.

In heaven, the angels and saints know how to keep absolute silence in reverence for God. Should we not practice such holy reverence now, rather than waiting until we reach heaven? We must realise how awesome and awful our God is.

This silence in heaven signals that something grave and severe is about to happen—God is about to judge. His justice will be executed. Judgement is coming.

This is evident in the Book of Revelation. God declares He will pour down His wrath, His righteous indignation and anger upon this earth—upon sinful, wicked, and rebellious men.

At this moment, God is about to hear the prayers of His saints—especially those who were martyred for their faith. These saints were killed by wicked men who delighted in their destruction, who hated the good news of salvation in Christ.

Justice must be served. God is the God of justice, and He has declared: *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.”*

He will answer the prayers of His saints. Revelation 8:3 states: *“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”*

This ties back to Revelation 6:9-10, where we read: *“And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”*

These saints cried out for justice. They had suffered greatly—beaten, scourged, trampled upon, all because they believed in Jesus and shared the gospel. Many were tortured and beheaded by cruel, sadistic men who took pleasure in their suffering.

Is there no justice?

Yes, there is justice! The Judge of judges will act. However, God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Even the wicked are given time to repent.

What then is our duty?

When we are persecuted for our faith, should we retaliate? No! The Lord commands: Turn the other cheek. Go the second mile. Do not repay evil with evil.

Vengeance belongs to God. We must not take matters into our own hands. We do not wish for our enemies’ destruction—we should wish for their salvation!

We already have eternal life, but they do not. We must pity them. Do not curse your enemies; bless them. If they are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them drink. If they persecute you, pray for them. Show them the love of Christ. Perhaps, through our witness, they may come to repentance and believe in Jesus.

What about justice? Will the wicked escape judgement? No! God will judge—but in His appointed time.

At this point in Revelation, the time has come. God will judge. *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* (Hebrews 10:31).

The Seven Seals of Revelation

First Seal	Second Seal	Third Seal	Fourth Seal	Fifth Seal	Sixth Seal	Seventh Seal	
White Horse: Deception	Red Horse: War	Black Horse: Famine	Pale Horse: Pestilence	Martyrdom and Great Tribulation	Heavenly Signs	Silence in Heaven Rev. 8:1-6	Seven Trumpet Plagues
Revelation 6:1-2	Revelation 6:3-4	Revelation 6:5-6	Revelation 6:7-8	Revelation 6:9-11	Revelation 6:12-17		Revelation 8:2

Seven Trumpets: The Day of the Lord

First Trumpet	Second Trumpet	Third Trumpet	Fourth Trumpet	Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet	Seventh Trumpet
Green grass and one-third of the trees are burned up.	One-third of sea becomes blood; one-third of ships and sea life are destroyed by fire.	One-third of waters turn bitter.	One-third of sun, moon and stars do not shine.	"Locusts" wield the Beast's military power.	200 million-man army gathers.	The Kingdom is proclaimed. Second Coming
Revelation 8:7	Revelation 8:8-9	Revelation 8:10-11	Revelation 8:12	Revelation 9:1-12	Revelation 9:13-21	Revelation 11:15-19

Seven Last Plagues

First Plague	Second Plague	Third Plague	Fourth Plague	Fifth Plague	Sixth Plague	Seventh Plague
Sores afflict those who accepted the mark of the Beast.	Sea turns to blood; all sea creatures die.	Rivers turn to blood.	Mankind, scorched by the sun, blasphemes God.	The Beast's seat of government is afflicted.	The Euphrates is dried up; world armies gather to Armageddon.	The earth is utterly shaken.
Revelation 16:2	Revelation 16:3	Revelation 16:4-7	Revelation 16:8-9	Revelation 16:10-11	Revelation 16:12-16	Revelation 16:17-21

The trumpet judgements declare war. The seven angels receive seven trumpets, and when they sound them, judgement follows. The first trumpet brings hail and fire mingled with blood, burning up one-third of the trees and all green grass. The second trumpet turns one-third of the sea into blood, killing a third of marine life and destroying a third of the ships. The third trumpet poisons one-third of the rivers and fountains of water, causing many to die. The fourth trumpet darkens the sun, moon, and stars by a third.

This is greater destruction than before. In Revelation 6:8, one-fourth of the earth was destroyed. Now, one-third is struck. God's wrath is being poured out. Judgement has begun.

In chapter six, we see destruction, but now in chapter eight, one-third of the earth will perish due to war, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, and death. There is an increase in severity, intensity, and the extent of judgement.

When the seal judgements were occurring, it was hoped that people on earth, seeing these events unfold, would look up and recognise the living and true God—the Creator and Judge—that they might repent, believe in the Lord Jesus, and find salvation. However, instead of doing that, they hardened their hearts. Their hearts became harder and harder, colder and colder, angrier and angrier, hating God more and more.

Events like the COVID-19 pandemic, pestilences, and wars are all warnings. But mankind will not heed God's warnings. Things are not looking good at all, and it all points to our sin—our rebellion against God. We must get right with God and make peace with Him. If we refuse, one day God will declare war.

The seven trumpets will sound. God has freely offered His free gift of salvation to mankind. Since man will not receive it and be reconciled to Him, He is righteously angry and will judge.

“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.” (Hebrews 10:30).

The trumpets will sound seven times, and God will declare war against those who reject Him. Once is enough—seven times means there is no escape.

Hebrews 10:26-27 warns: *“For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”*

If someone sins in ignorance, they are still liable and punishable. A person cannot say, “I didn’t know there was such a rule or law,” and expect to be excused. Ignorance is no defence. However, after knowing the truth—after receiving the knowledge of what is good and right—if a person still deliberately and wilfully chooses to do wrong, stubbornly defying God and His law, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.

Such a person is effectively judging himself and God will execute judgement upon him. Hebrews 10:27 warns of a *“fearful expectation of judgement and fiery indignation.”* Verse 28 reminds us that under Moses’ law, those who disobeyed died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Verse 29 declares that a far greater punishment awaits those who trample underfoot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, and insult the Spirit of grace. And verse 30 says, *“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord”*.

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:31). If you fear a human judge, how much more should you fear the eternal Judge of all? Yet, this Judge does not desire your destruction—He wants to save you! He offers you forgiveness, eternal life, and redemption. He has already paid the price. Salvation is free. You need only to confess your sins, believe in the Lord Jesus, and He will clothe you in His righteousness, wash away your sins, and make you His child forever.

But if you reject Him, judgement will come. The trumpets will sound. One-third of the earth will be destroyed.

How?

The First Trumpet – Revelation 8:7, *“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”*

This could refer to volcanic eruptions. Volcanic explosions can cause fiery hailstones and lava rocks to rain down, burning vegetation. Today, we see increasing volcanic activity—God is speaking, and more eruptions will come.

The Second Trumpet – Revelation 8:8-9, *“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”*

This “burning mountain” could refer to a massive meteorite plunging into the ocean. Space rocks entering Earth’s atmosphere burn up and can cause massive destruction upon impact.

The Third Trumpet – Revelation 8:10-11, *“The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a lamp, and it fell on a third of the rivers and fountains of waters. The name of the star is called Wormwood, and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters because they were made bitter.”*

This could refer to a comet or asteroid. Unlike meteorites, comets and asteroids are much larger, some measuring several kilometres in diameter. If one such celestial body strikes the earth, it could poison water sources, leading to mass casualties.

Is this possible?

NASA scientist David Morrison once answered the question of what would happen if a comet collided with Earth. He explained that a comet less than 100 metres across would explode in the atmosphere and likely cause no harm. However, a comet 10 kilometres wide or larger would carry an impact energy exceeding 100 million megatons, causing global environmental devastation and mass extinction.

In just a few days, an asteroid one kilometre wide will bypass Earth at close range. If an asteroid of five kilometres or more were to hit us, the destruction would be unimaginable. Why haven't such asteroids struck Earth yet? By God's grace and providence, He has been holding them back, giving people time to repent. It is not by chance that they narrowly miss Earth—it is God's mercy.

But one day, the warnings will end. The trumpets will sound. Judgement will fall. One-third of the earth will be decimated. This is not impossible—it is inevitable. God has already warned us.

Are you ready?

The Fourth Trumpet – Revelation 8:12, *“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.”*

The sun, moon, and stars will be affected. They will malfunction and no longer perform as they once did. Day and night will become chaotic, leading to significant disruptions in daily life.

All these events can be classified as natural calamities. Destructive fiery rocks from space and catastrophic events on earth will wreak havoc. However, could the destruction also be man-made? Could human actions lead to such fiery devastation?

The answer is yes. Consider the stockpile of nuclear missiles and reactors around the world today. These have the potential to cause untold damage. With the press of a button, nuclear missiles could be launched, leading to mass destruction. One-third of the earth could be devastated. Nuclear energy brings destruction, death by fire, and intense burning. Nuclear reactors, if damaged, can melt down, releasing radioactive water that contaminates rivers, fountains, and seas.

We have already seen nuclear disasters with catastrophic consequences. The Chernobyl disaster in 1986 is considered the worst nuclear accident in history, both in terms of cost and casualties. The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant was situated near the Pripyat River, which fed into the Dnieper Reservoir System—one of Europe's largest surface water systems. This system supplied water to 2.4 million residents of Kyiv. When the accident occurred, it led to severe environmental damage, even poisoning water sources. Revelation mentions contaminated rivers, fountains, and seas—poisoned water that causes death.

Could these nuclear accidents be a foreshadowing of what is to come?

The Fukushima disaster in 2011 also resulted in massive contamination. By April 2014, studies confirmed the presence of radioactive tuna off the Pacific coast of the US. The nuclear meltdown in Japan had contaminated the Pacific Ocean to such an extent that its effects were felt thousands of miles away. The sea was affected, marine life was poisoned. Those who

consumed radioactive fish faced serious health risks. Revelation speaks of a third of the sea being affected—this is no mere fairy tale; it is a reality that can happen.

Why has a full-scale nuclear catastrophe not yet occurred? It is not because people are inherently good. It is because God, in His providence, is restraining such destruction. However, when the appointed time comes, God will lift His restraint, allowing sinful men to destroy themselves. With a single press of a button, one-third of the earth could be annihilated. Can this happen? God says it will.

The passage continues in verse 13: *“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”*

Four trumpets have sounded, but three more remain, bringing even worse calamities. The final three woes will be more terrifying than anything before.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Do not remain His enemy—become His friend. God desires to save sinners from the judgement they deserve. He is just, but He is also merciful. The call is clear: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:31). Why resist His offer of salvation?

The fiery judgements we have discussed are merely a foretaste of the final destruction that will consume the entire universe. As 2 Peter 3:10-13 declares: *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”*

Since everything will ultimately be destroyed, what kind of people should we be? As believers, we must walk in holiness and godliness. We must strive to become more like Christ so that when He returns, we will not be ashamed. We should live for Christ and His eternal kingdom rather than for this transient world.

The next event on God’s prophetic timetable is the Rapture. The trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then, we who are still alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Are you ready for that moment? Do you have your “air ticket”—your salvation in Christ—so that when the rapture plane takes off, you will be on board?

May the Lord help us to be ready for this glorious event. Let us live in holiness, anticipating the return of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

XIX

A FALLEN STAR

Revelation 9:1-12

We read of this star in verse 1: *“The fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth.”*

So, what is this star? Previously, we noted how, during the time of the Great Tribulation, stars will fall from heaven. These could be meteorites, comets, or asteroids raining upon the earth. However, in this passage, we are not referring to those kinds of stars. Not the twinkling stars seen at night. The stars mentioned here are not visible celestial bodies but rather invisible entities.

How do we know this? Again, context is key.

The word *star* can refer to an angel, a spirit being—an invisible star. We already know this from Revelation 1. In Revelation 1:20, we read: *“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.”*

Thus, in this context, *stars* refer to angels. In Revelation 1:20, these angels are good—elect angels.

However, in Revelation 9:1, the star is a fallen one. Not a good angel, but an evil one—a fallen angel.

The context further clarifies this in verse 11. Revelation 9:11 identifies this fallen angel: *“And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.”*

Both *Abaddon* (Hebrew) and *Apollyon* (Greek) mean “Destroyer.” He is in the business of destruction—of lives, of souls. He is none other than the devil himself—Satan, our adversary.

Jesus confirms this in John 8:44: *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”*

Satan is a liar and a murderer. He deceives with words and kills through both deception and wicked actions. He is a destroyer—a liar from the beginning, a murderer from the beginning, and the father of lies. No wonder he is called *Abaddon* and *Apollyon*, the Destroyer.

At one point in time, however, this angel was not evil. He was once good—very good. Ezekiel 28 describes his original state: He was the “anointed cherub”—an angel of the cherubim order, serving in the very presence of God. He was adorned with all kinds of precious stones, radiant, brilliant, and beautiful. He was anointed, meaning he held a position of authority—a chief angel, an archangel.

But he fell.

Isaiah 14 records his fall: *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”* (Isaiah 14:12)

God created three archangels—Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer.

The name *Lucifer* originally had a good meaning. It means *Light Bearer*—from the Latin *lux* (light) and *ferre* (to bear, to carry). Lucifer was meant to bear light, not darkness. But he became dark—evil—because of his rebellion.

Lucifer, once a good name, is now associated with wickedness. Do not name your child Lucifer! Though it originally meant something good, it is now forever linked to the greatest enemy of God.

Lucifer became Satan, the chief of demons.

What led to his fall? Pride! Isaiah 14:13-14 records his arrogance: *“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.”* Look at his five ‘I’s spoken in pride against God.

Pride led to Lucifer’s downfall. Instead of being content to serve his Creator, he wanted to be the Creator. Instead of submitting to God, he wanted to be above God. The first sin ever committed was not by Eve or Adam. It was not committed on earth. It was committed in heaven by an angel—by Lucifer. And that sin was the sin of pride.

Interestingly, even the English word *pride* contains a lesson. Right in the middle of *pride* is the letter *I*. P-R-I-D-E—at the centre is ‘I’. Pride is self-centred. It exalts *I, me, myself*. It makes a person think they are something when they are nothing, that they are greater than God.

Likewise, L-I-E also has ‘I’ in the centre. Pride leads to lies. Satan believed the lie that he, a mere creature, could be God.

The word sin also has ‘I’ in the middle—S-I-N. The first sin, the sin of pride, was an exaltation of ‘I’. And the consequence of sin is death—D-I-E, again with I at the centre.

Satan fell. But he did not want to fall alone. As a murderer from the beginning, he sought to drag others down with him. He deceived mankind into sin and destruction. But not only that—he led other angels astray as well.

Revelation 12:4 reveals that Satan’s rebellion caused one-third of the angels to fall: *“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.”*

These fallen angels became demons. They joined Satan in his work of deception and destruction.

Some demons roam the earth freely. But others are imprisoned in the bottomless pit.

Revelation 9:2 describes this abyss: *“And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.”*

The imagery is one of torment—hellish darkness, fire, and judgement. Certain demons are bound there, kept under punishment for now.

But during the Great Tribulation, they will be released. When the fifth trumpet sounds, Satan will be given the key to the bottomless pit. God, in His sovereign will, will permit these imprisoned demons to be unleashed upon the earth.

Their time of tormenting the world will come. But their ultimate end is certain. One day, they will all be cast into the lake of fire—forever defeated.

Let us be vigilant, knowing that our adversary, the devil, is ever seeking to deceive and destroy. But let us also take heart, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ has already triumphed over him. *“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”* (Romans 16:20).

Take note of the word “locusts” in verse 3: *“And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth, and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.”*

These locusts are not literal insects that destroy vegetation or crops. Rather, they are spiritual locusts—demons, evil spirits—because they emerge from the bottomless pit. Literal locusts, the insects that ravage crops, do not originate from a bottomless pit, but these do. They have been imprisoned for a time and will now be released in a great swarm to bring destruction.

These locusts are not ordinary but extraordinary, unusual, and demonic in nature. We know this because, in verse 11, we are told that they have a leader: *“And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit.”* Ordinary locusts do not have a king, as stated in Proverbs 30:27: *“The locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands.”* However, these locusts do have a king, which confirms that they are not insects but demons. Their leader is the angel of the bottomless pit, who is none other than the devil himself.

Furthermore, we know they are spiritual locusts because they do not harm vegetation, trees, or crops. Instead, they are sent to torment human beings. Verse 4 states: *“And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.”*

Their purpose is not to kill but to torment people for five months: *“And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.”*

During this time, men will seek death but will not find it: *“And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”*

So, these are not mere insects devouring crops; they are demons inflicting agony upon humans. However, they are limited in their power. They cannot touch those who have the divine seal of God on their foreheads—His people, such as the 144,000 sealed ones. This demonstrates the sovereignty and power of God. Though these demons hate God and rebel against Him, they cannot act beyond the boundaries He has set. God is still in control, even over the devil and his demons.

While these events are terrifying, they also offer great comfort to believers. God protects His people and preserves them. He remains on His throne, sovereign over all, ensuring that His enemies cannot do as they please.

The unbelievers, despite all previous judgements, warnings, and the preaching of God’s Word, continue to rebel. They refuse to repent and grow even more hostile toward God. Because of this, God releases these fallen angels to torment them. He uses demonic rebels to punish human rebels. This further highlights His supreme control over all things.

The demons, imprisoned for a time, are eager to kill and destroy but have been restrained. Once released, their pent-up fury will drive them to inflict great torment. However, even in this judgement, God remains in control, setting limits on what they can do.

Therefore, it is crucial to seek refuge in Christ. Why endure such torment when Jesus has already suffered for us? He bore the pain and suffering on the cross, shedding His blood to save us. He offers salvation freely to those who will repent and believe. As Romans 10:9 states: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

Repent sincerely, believe in Christ, and be delivered from the coming judgement.

For those who already believe, we have assurance of God’s protection. Though the devil and his demons are active today, they cannot harm us beyond what God permits. They target believers, seeking to destroy our faith, but they cannot take possession of us.

Demon possession is real, as seen in the Gospels. However, can demons possess a Christian? The answer is a clear and definite no. The Lord will not allow it. As shown in Revelation, these demons are forbidden from harming those with God's seal. Today, every believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and He dwells within us permanently. Since the Holy Spirit is light, darkness cannot penetrate or overpower Him. Evil spirits cannot possess a believer.

Thus, we need not fear the devil or his demons. We are utterly safe and secure in Christ. God is in control, and His people are protected by His sovereign power. Let us remain steadfast in faith, trusting in His divine protection until the end.

The Bible tells us that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Turn to 1 John 4:4: "*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" This verse assures us that we belong to God. We are His possession, His special and precious children. Since God dwells in us through the Holy Spirit, we have already overcome the enemy.

The Holy Spirit, who resides in us, is far greater than Satan, who is in the world. Though Satan is called the "god of this world," he has no power over us unless God permits it. Moreover, Satan cannot possess us, though he may afflict us from the outside. God may allow such afflictions, just as He permitted Satan to test Job. However, Satan needed God's permission to afflict Job, and even then, he could not go beyond the limits God had set. Job endured severe trials—painful sores from the top of his head to the soles of his feet—yet he remained faithful. He did not curse God but instead declared: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*" (Job 1:21). Even if God were to take his life, Job said, "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*" (Job 13:15).

Similarly, the Apostle Paul suffered from a "thorn in the flesh," a physical affliction permitted by God. This was to keep him humble and to sanctify him for greater usefulness in ministry. Sometimes, God allows trials to test our faith, discipline us, or refine our character. But Satan can never destroy a believer because we are eternally secure in Christ.

This truth reveals the absolute sovereignty of God. Even though the devil seeks to oppose God and harm His people, he cannot act beyond God's will and control. How great and powerful is our God! Should we not worship Him with reverence and gratitude?

Sadly, some take worship lightly. They are able to come to church but choose not to. Others may have valid reasons for being absent, but for those who can attend and refuse to do so, what excuse can they offer before God? There are empty seats in the sanctuary that could be filled with worshippers who honour the Lord.

Consider this: God did not save us by remote control. Jesus Christ came physically into this world to dwell among us, to walk with us, to talk with us, and ultimately to die for our sins. He endured suffering and death to redeem us. The Holy Spirit, too, comes to dwell within us—our sinful, unworthy bodies—because He cares for us.

Yet, when the Lord invites us to His house to worship Him, some cannot be bothered to come. The Bible tells us not to forsake "*the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another.*" (Hebrews 10:25).

Let us examine our hearts. Do we truly delight in worshipping God? Do we long to be in His presence? May the Lord help us to love Him, to honour Him, and to joyfully gather in His house to worship Him.

XX

THE EUPHRATES AND WORLD WAR III

Revelation 9:13-21

Over here, we read of the River Euphrates, and the River Euphrates will be the starting point of the final world war—World War III.

In verse 14, we read: *“Say to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great River Euphrates.”* And the four angels were loosed, having been prepared for an hour, a day, a month, and a year. At the precise and appointed time, it will happen—to slay a third of mankind.



The Euphrates, described here as the great river, still exists today. It is a very important and prominent river. In fact, it is the longest river in Western Asia. Not only is it the longest river, but it is also one of the most ancient, tracing its origins back to the time of the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 2:14, we find the Euphrates in the Garden of Eden at the time of creation. In Genesis 2:10, we read: *“And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it was parted and became four heads.”* The name of the first river is Pishon. In verse 13, the name of the second river is Gihon. In verse 14, the name of the third river is Hiddekel, and at the end of verse 14, the fourth river is Euphrates. Thus, it is a very ancient river, existing since the time of the Garden of Eden, and it remains today an important river.

In ancient times, the Euphrates was a river of life. It flowed through many countries and lands. This river was part of a region known as the Fertile Crescent. The Fertile Crescent was fertile because of the Euphrates. In the days of the ancient Near East, this river, which nourished the Fertile Crescent, became the breadbasket of the known world at that time.

However, the River Euphrates was not only a river of life; it was also a river of death. Many wars were fought over it. The River Euphrates occupied a very strategic position. In those days, if one wanted to control the world, one had to control the River Euphrates. Many wars were fought over it. Those who managed to control the river controlled the world, such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, and Romans.

Even today, the River Euphrates remains of great significance. That is why there is much interest in this river. The superpowers of the world today pay close attention to it, and wars continue to be fought in that region. Why? Because of oil and because it still occupies a strategic location in the Middle East.

That is why we had the Persian Gulf War. Western powers have no qualms using vast amounts of money and manpower, even at the expense of their soldiers' lives, to fight a war in this region. They seek to protect their interests and maintain the balance of power in the Middle East.

Not only was there the Persian Gulf War, but also Operation Desert Storm and the war in Iraq. The River Euphrates remains an important and prophetic river, as mentioned not only in Genesis but also at the end of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation.

The River Euphrates will be of great significance in the time of the Great Tribulation—a time of war. The nations connected to this great river include Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Kuwait. All these countries are anti-Israel. That is why there is no peace in the Middle East today, particularly in the region of the Euphrates.

However, one day, a man will arise, bringing a time of peace—but it will be a false peace. This man is none other than the Antichrist. Daniel 9:27 reveals that the Antichrist will one day arise and broker a peace treaty between Israel and many nations. This treaty will mark the beginning of the Great Tribulation, a period of seven years.

The first three and a half years will be a time of false peace, while the latter three and a half years will be a time of war. The River Euphrates will play a significant role during this time of war. It will mark the beginning of World War III.

The First World War lasted four years, the Second World War lasted six years, but the final world war will last three and a half years.

From Daniel 9, we understand that the Antichrist will break the peace treaty in the middle of the seven-year period—at the three-and-a-half-year mark. Initially, he will be very friendly toward Israel, seeking to protect and defend it. However, after he has gained absolute control over the world, he will reveal his true nature.

At that point, he will desecrate the holy place in Israel, break the peace treaty, stop all sacrifices and worship of Jehovah, and set himself up as God, demanding worship not only from the Jews but from the entire world. All must receive his mark—666—if they wish to buy and sell (Revelation 13).

He will then wage war against Israel for three and a half years. The Great Tribulation, as revealed in Scripture, is also known as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7). Jacob refers to Israel—it will be a time of suffering for Israel. In their distress, they will cry out to Jehovah, their Messiah, just as they did when they were enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt.

In the last days, Israel will be under bondage to this new Pharaoh—the Antichrist—who is not only anti-Israel but also anti-God. In their suffering, Israel will cry out to their Messiah. God will hear their prayers, and their Messiah, the Lord Jesus—whom they crucified 2,000 years ago—will return. They will confess Him and believe in Him.

Christ will come and deliver them, restoring them as He fights against the Antichrist and his armies at the final battle of Armageddon. Of course, Christ will be victorious, and He will rule and reign over Israel and the entire world for 1,000 years.

At that time, Jerusalem will truly be a city of peace—*Yerushalayim*, the City of Peace—when the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, reigns from His throne for a millennium.

Prophecy must be fulfilled. Daniel 2 reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, depicting successive world empires: Babylon (gold), Medo-Persia (silver), Greece (bronze), Rome (iron), and the final kingdom—a mix of iron and clay. The first four empires have already come and gone. The final world empire, represented by the feet of iron and clay, has yet to arise.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, God has allowed a period of time for people to repent. The Gospel has gone forth to all the world. The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). However, the time is drawing to a close.

Despite many warnings, judgements, and tribulations, people will still refuse to repent. Revelation 9:20-21 states: *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*"

Yet, there is a living and true God. He sees, He hears, He speaks, He knows, and He acts. Will you believe in Him?

And we know that the living and true God is surely the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, the God of this Bible, this book, because of all the prophecies and promises God made in the past. We have already seen how many of them have been fulfilled, and we can be very sure that they will be fulfilled in the future.

We already see that all the four world empires of the past have come and gone as predicted by the Lord, but there's one final empire—the final empire of the Antichrist. It will be a revived Roman Empire because it's part iron and part clay. Out of this revived Roman Empire will arise the Antichrist.

This final world empire will come from the West because it is a revived Roman Empire. The Antichrist will not come from the East; he will come from the West. So, don't look for him in China or India. It will be from a Western power, and that Western power will produce this final world dictator, who will be anti-God, anti-Israel, and anti-Gospel. He will wage war against the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know this war will be a global war. In verse 14, we are told that the sixth angel sounded the trumpet, and four angels will be released, the ones bound at the great river Euphrates. Four angels—number four, as we know in scripture, is the number of the world, the four corners of the earth. So, it's a global movement, a world war. The four angels, bound at the great river Euphrates, will be loosed. They were prepared for war at a precise time—an hour, a day, a month, and a year—and they will wage war to slay a third part of mankind.

The number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million. They have destructive power. By these three, a third part of men were killed—by the fire, by the smoke, and by the brimstone that issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails were like serpents, and they had heads with which they inflicted harm, as they had poisonous fangs. They can inflict a lot of pain and death.

So, who are these horsemen? What are they in the horses? I believe they are demons—demons, because the description here is quite similar to what we read earlier in chapter 9, concerning the locusts. Look at verse 7, these locusts came from the bottomless pit, demons, very fearsome, terrible-looking locusts. Like the horses prepared for battle, their heads were crowned like gold, their faces like the faces of men, with hair like the hair of women, and their teeth like lions' teeth. They had breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of many chariots running to battle. They had tails like scorpions, with stings in their tails, and their power was to hurt men.

The description is quite similar between the locusts and these horsemen and horses. Locusts, as we have seen in the context, are demons from the bottomless pit. I believe these horsemen and horses are also demons—another set of demons, 200 million of them. They will possess human beings—unbelievers on earth, those who hate God, those who seek to rebel against God, and those who follow the Antichrist. The Antichrist himself will be possessed by the devil, and the armies following the Antichrist will also be possessed by demons—200 million of them. They will wage war against God and seek to destroy Israel. They want to fight against God.

This is going to be a global affair, a world war. The river Euphrates is not just mentioned here; it is also mentioned in chapter 16. If you turn to Revelation 16, in verses 12 to 14, we read, *“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.”* Here is a false trinity—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. *“These are the spirits of devils working miracles, which go forth to the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.”* They are demons possessing human beings to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ, who will come as King of kings and Lord of lords.

We also read in verse 16, *“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”* This war will begin at the three and a half-year point when the Antichrist breaks his peace covenant with Israel and seeks to persecute and attack Israel. This war will last for three and a half years, culminating at the end of the seven years of great tribulation. Then, the Lord Jesus will come down to deliver Israel, rescue Israel, and destroy His enemies—the Antichrist and his armies. The Lord Jesus will reign for a thousand years after that.

This is what will happen, and we can be very sure it will happen. From the signs of the times and what is happening in the world today, we can see that it will happen sooner than we think.

That the nation of Israel exists today is really a miraculous sign from God to us and to the world. The fact that the nation of Israel still exists today after thousands of years, tells us most clearly that there is a living and true God, and He is the God of Israel. God has given many prophecies regarding the nation of Israel, made many promises to His chosen nation—promises regarding the Jewish people, the Jewish race, the throne of David, the government, the temple, and the worship of Jehovah. Promises concerning the land—the promised land. All these promises, physical and national, that God has given to Israel must find fulfilment in Israel, and many of them have been fulfilled. However, some are still yet to be fulfilled and must be fulfilled.

One of God's promises that must be fulfilled is the land promise. Now, please don't think that since Israel is back in the promised land, the land promise has been fulfilled. Yes, they are occupying that part of the promised land, just a sliver of land next to the Mediterranean Sea, but is that all to the land? No, not at all. The land is even bigger than that—more extensive than just that little strip of land by the Mediterranean Sea.

So, what exactly is the promised land? From where to where? Well, the promise was given to Abraham. If you turn to Genesis chapter 15, we read in verse 18: *“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”* The land stretches all the way from the river Nile (the river of Egypt) to the river Euphrates. That entire stretch of land is the promised land. Now, does Israel possess this land right now? No, not yet. But one day, she will. Israel will possess that promised land from the river Nile to the river Euphrates, and that will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to deliver Israel from the Antichrist.

When that happens, their eyes will be opened, and they will confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Jesus will sit on the throne of His father David in Jerusalem, which will become the capital city of the world, and He will rule over Israel. The citizens of Israel will dwell in this land, from the river Nile to the river Euphrates. The Lord will rule over the entire world for a thousand years, and we, as Christians, will rule with Him for that same period. We will learn more about this when we get to Revelation chapter 20.

This is God’s promise, and God is a faithful and true. God will keep His promises. The very fact that God has kept His promise to regather Israel back to the promised land after being scattered the second time proves His faithfulness.

Remember, the first dispersion happened during the time of the Babylonian exile when the Israelites were taken out of the land and held captive in Babylon. They spent 70 years there before returning to the land of promise, according to God’s prophecy and promise. However, there was a second dispersion, and this time they were scattered to all four corners of the earth. But the Lord said, *“I have not forgotten you, I have not forsaken you.”*

Yes, the Israelites sinned greatly when they crucified their Messiah. The Lord Jesus was sinless and totally innocent. Even Pilate himself declared, *“I find no guilt in Him”* three times. Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but they cried out, *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”* And when Pilate declared himself free from the blood of Jesus, they said, *“Let His blood be on us and on our children.”* They chose to take the judgement and punishment upon themselves and crucified the Lord Jesus.

Jesus was crucified in AD 30, and 40 years later, in AD 70, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was razed to the ground, and the Jews were scattered to the four corners of the earth. Jews can now be found all over the world—even in Singapore, where there is a small Jewish community, and two Jewish synagogues in the country.

I remember when I was in Israel during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I was standing in a marketplace in Jerusalem, watching pilgrims buy their lunch, when an elderly Jewish gentleman approached me. He asked, *“Are you from Singapore?”* I was surprised, as in those days, many people from China were visiting Israel. The Arabs and Jews knew how to greet us with *ni hao*. But this elderly Jew didn’t think I was from China. He said, *“You’re from Singapore.”* I asked, *“How do you know?”* He replied, *“Through your speech, your accent.”* He then told me, *“I was born in Kerdang Kerbau, but now I have returned to Israel.”* I too was born in Kerdang Kerbau. As God promised He would regather the Jews from all parts of the world, including those from Singapore, many are now resettled in the promised land, never to be uprooted again.

Where do we find this prophecy? Turn to Isaiah chapter 11. In Isaiah chapter 11, verses 11 and 12, we read: *“And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall*

assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

This has already happened since 1948. The nation of Israel was reconstituted, and after nearly 1,900 years of scattering and dispersion, there is still a nation of Israel. Don't you think this is a miracle? Surely, if it were Singapore that went through what Israel went through after all these hundreds of years, do you think there would still be a Singapore or Singaporeans? We're not much larger than Israel. There would be no more Singapore, no more Singaporeans—we would have lost all our identity. But the fact that Israel remains to this day, speaking the same language, with the people back in the land, with all its culture and religion still in place, and the Tanakh (ie the Hebrew Old Testament) still in their hands and in our hands as well, speaks to the sovereignty of God.

There is a God in heaven—the God of Israel—who is sovereign, who is in control, and who is a God of providence. He has kept His promise to regather them, and Jews from all over the world are still returning to Israel since 1948. Since that time, Israel has remained a nation, and God says no one will take them out again. Although Israel has fought many wars since its independence in 1948, none of the nations have succeeded in driving Israel out. The surrounding nations have tried to do so, but each time, it ended in failure. Why? Because there is a God in heaven, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—our God—and He will preserve His own. He will keep His promise.

This is a comfort to us. God has made many promises to us as well. Those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus will receive eternal life. One day we will be raised from the dead, and we will live forever with Him in heaven. The Lord will keep His promise, just as He has kept His promise to Israel. He will keep His promise to us, and we have believed in the living and true God, the God of this Word, who is a God of peace, and He wants us to make peace with Him.

Why don't you make peace with God now before He comes to make war with you? For one day, the world will be at war with God, led by the Antichrist, possessed by the devil himself, with his demon-possessed armies. And God will wipe them all out. You don't want to be part of that group. You want to be part of God's army, and if you are on God's side, you are safe.

May the Lord help us to realise this before it's too late. Believe in the Lord Jesus. Believe in Him today, and you will be saved.

XXI

TIME NO LONGER

Revelation 10:1-11

We read in Revelation 10:6: *“That there should be time no longer.”* What does this mean?

There is an English saying: *“Time and tide wait for no man.”* It means that we cannot stop the passage of time. Time comes and time goes, and once it is gone, it cannot be recovered. If this is the case, then we should not waste time. Do not waste time, for time waits for no man.

I remember my school anthem when I was in St Andrew’s. There is a stanza that goes:

*Life and time will not delay,
Time is running fast away,
Life is now, today, today.
Up and on!*

“Up and on” was the school motto, and we must indeed be *up and on* because time is running fast away. Life is now, today. We must not delay in doing what we need to do.

I find the anthem quite biblical. *“Time and tide wait for no man.”* There will come a time when time will be no more. In other words, time will be up, and God will act—there will be no more delay.

To understand the meaning of “time no longer”, we must go back to Revelation 6. Here, God is answering the prayers of His saints—His martyrs—those who have died for the faith. In Revelation 6:10, they cried out to the Lord: *“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”*

For their godly testimony, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, they paid with their lives. They died at the hands of wicked and cruel men. Is there no justice? Will the Lord not judge?

Yes, the Lord will judge. But He is patient, waiting for sinners to repent and believe in Him so that they might be saved.

Yet, there is a cutoff point. There will come a time when God will say enough is enough—time is up! He will judge and avenge His saints. Vengeance belongs to the Lord, and He will repay. The saints cried, *“How long?”* And now, God says, *“Now! Time no longer!”* There will be no more delay. Judgement will come.

God has waited patiently, but people have taken Him for granted. Many say, *“Let me enjoy my life now. I’m still young. When I am old, when I am on my deathbed, I will cry out to God and be saved.”*

But God will say, *“You fool!”* When there was time, you did not act. You took Me for granted and told Me to wait. But who guarantees that you will live to see your dying day? Do you know when your last breath will be? You might go to bed tonight and not wake up tomorrow. And you will find yourself in hell. What a tragedy!

Today, if you hear the voice of God, do not harden your heart. Do not delay. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ today. He is knocking at your door.

In Revelation 3:20, the Lord says: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”*

God desires that you be reconciled to Him. He wants to be your Saviour. If you open your heart’s door, He will come in, and you will have fellowship with Him forever.

But one day, He will knock no more. When that time comes, you will find the door shut. You will cry out, “Lord, Lord, open unto us!” But He will answer, “I know you not!”

Luke 13:23-27 records a solemn warning. When asked whether few would be saved, Jesus answered: “*Strive to enter in at the narrow gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*”

Many despise the Lord’s calling. They take Him for granted. They delay. But when they finally try to enter, it will be too late. “*When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.*” Time will be no longer. The door will be shut forever.

Do not play the fool with God. Do not think you have all the time in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us how fragile life is. Many thought life would go on as usual—then suddenly, in a matter of weeks, everything changed.

“*They say, ‘Peace and safety,’ then sudden destruction comes.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:3). The Lord warns us: do not assume that tomorrow is guaranteed.

Revelation 10 describes a mighty angel descending from heaven. Who is this angel? Based on the description, it is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. See how He is *clothed with a cloud*—just as He ascended into heaven and will return in the same manner (Acts 1:9-11). There is a *rainbow* upon His head—reminding us of Noah’s time, when judgement came by water. This time, judgement will come by fire. His *face shines like the sun*—just as He was transfigured on the mount (Matthew 17:2). His *feet are as pillars of fire*—signifying judgement.

Jesus came the first time as the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. But He will return as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to judge and reign. “*He cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth.*” (Revelation 10:3). No longer the Lamb to be slain, but the Lion to slay.

When He comes, there will be *time no longer*. No more delay. Judgement will fall upon the world. Do not wait until it is too late. The time for salvation is now. Open your heart to Christ today.

In verse 4, when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, John was about to write. He then exclaimed, “Oh wow! These are powerful words!”—words he heard from the voice of God, the seven thunders. But God forbade him. Though John wanted to write and reveal what he had heard, God commanded him not to. As Revelation 10:4 states: “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.*”

This is the opposite of what we read in Revelation 5, where there were sealed scrolls, and no one was able to open them—except one. Only one was found worthy: the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone could open the seals and reveal their contents. So, in Revelation 5, we see an opening and revealing, whereas here, in Revelation 10, we see the opposite: God commands that the revelation be sealed, not written.

This reminds us that God is sovereign over His revelation. What He chooses to reveal, He reveals; what He chooses to withhold, He keeps hidden. Deuteronomy 29:29 states, “*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.*”

John was not the only one to whom God forbade revelation. The Apostle Paul also had a similar experience. God took him up into the third heaven, where he heard “*unspeakable words, which*

it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4). God did not permit him to reveal what he had seen and heard in heaven—it was for Paul alone, to strengthen and encourage him.

This principle applies to Christ’s earthly life as well. Do not think that what we read in the four Gospels is everything Jesus ever did or said. John himself wrote in John 21:25: *“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”*

God, in His wisdom, has revealed to us only what is necessary for our salvation. The 66 books of the Bible contain all we need to know Him and be reconciled to Him. Yet, though the Bible is a single volume, it holds infinite depth—one can spend a lifetime studying it and never exhaust its riches.

This is the wisdom of God. He has given us just enough revelation to guide us to salvation, and when we reach heaven, we will continue to learn and discover more about our great God. John, in his Gospel, said there were many things he did not write. Imagine being in heaven and asking him, “John, what were those other wonderful things Jesus did and said?” Perhaps he will invite us to a class where he reveals more!

Not only John, but the other apostles, the prophets, and countless others will share the glorious works of God throughout history. And even then, we will never fully comprehend everything. It will take eternity to know our infinite God—and even eternity will not be enough!

Returning to Revelation 10:5-6, we read: *“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth forever 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.”*

Verse 6 is not an easy passage to understand. The angel speaking here is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God Himself. Yet, He swears by God—the one who lives forever, the Creator of all things. Some commentators struggle with this, questioning how Jesus could swear by God if He Himself is divine.

This is a profound demonstration of the doctrine of the Trinity—one God in three persons. This is not unique to Revelation; we see a similar expression in Genesis 1:26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”*

God speaks to God—the Father speaks to the Son and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, in Revelation 10, God the Son swears by God the Father, affirming with absolute certainty that what He declares will come to pass.

When God speaks, His word alone is enough, for He is a God of truth who does not lie. What He promises, He fulfils. What He says He will do, He will do. Yet, at times, God lowers Himself to our level so that we will not doubt Him.

As the Word says, *“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”* (2 Corinthians 13:1). So God humbles Himself to reassure us. He accommodates our need for confirmation—even though, as God, His Word is inherently true. In fact, when He speaks once, it is already a double confirmation, even more than double.

Yet, He is willing to lower Himself to our level to give us full assurance of His truth. He swore an oath. He took an oath. This is not new or strange. In Hebrews 6:16-18, Scripture says: *“For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath.”*

Men swear by something greater than themselves. In a court of law, people swear upon the Bible, invoking God's name, saying, "God is my witness." This is because men seek assurance from a higher authority.

However, God's Word is already unchangeable. His promise is immutable. Unlike man, He does not break His Word. Yet, to assure us further, He adds an oath. Why? To make it abundantly clear that if we believe in Him, we will never be lost. Once saved, always saved. He guarantees our salvation to the uttermost—by promise and by oath.

Hebrews 6 continues: "*That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*" (Hebrews 6:18).

God, by His very nature, cannot lie. We do not need an oath, yet He provides it for our assurance. He gives a double guarantee—His Word and His oath.

Now, when we turn to prophecy, we see that God likewise confirms His judgement. In Revelation 10:6, we read, "*There should be time no longer.*" Judgement will not be delayed—it will surely come. The inhabitants of the earth must not doubt this.

Do not assume that life will go on indefinitely, that millions of years remain, and that everything is business as usual. No! Time is running out. Life is now. Today!

Repent and return to God before it is too late. He is knocking now. If you open, He will save you. But there will come a time when the knocking ceases, and instead, you will knock—but the door will be shut forever.

God swears it here. God the Son swears by God the Father that there will be time no longer.

Revelation 10:7 declares that the mystery of God will be finished, as He has declared to His prophets. What is this mystery? It is not something secretive, but something now revealed—the coming kingdom of God.

Revelation 11:15 confirms this: "*The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.*"

The time for judgement and for Christ's reign has come. The angel, standing with feet like pillars of fire upon the sea and the earth, comes to judge and rule.

In Revelation 10:8-10, John is commanded to take and eat the little book from the angel's hand. It will be sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. What does this mean?

This is not the first time such an event occurred. In Ezekiel 3:1-4, the prophet Ezekiel was given a scroll to eat. It was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. The little book represents the message of the Gospel. To those who receive it, it is sweet—it brings salvation. But to those who reject it, it is bitter—for it warns of impending judgement.

Revelation 10:11 instructs John: "*Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*" Like Ezekiel, John is to proclaim the message—a warning of judgement and a call to repentance.

Right now, there is still a little time left. We are in the final moments before midnight. There is still time to repent. Still time to turn to God. But if people continue to reject the message, judgement will fall. At the end of the Great Tribulation, after seven years, comes Armageddon. Then Christ will establish His kingdom on earth. When that time comes, the door of salvation will close. Those who knock will find it shut.

Right now, there is still time. Why wait? *“To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”* (Hebrews 3:15).

Let the Word be sweet to you. Receive it for salvation. But if you reject it, it will be bitter—for judgement will come.

May the Lord grant us understanding and the right response to His Word and His warning.

XXII

END TIME WITNESSES

Revelation 11:1-14

The second war is past, and behold, the third war cometh quickly.

I want to draw your attention to the first three verses, especially because three things are spoken of here to which we must take heed. We must know what they are about so that we can prepare for the Lord's soon coming and understand what will happen in the future.

In verse 1, we first read about the temple: *“Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.”*

Then, in verse 2, we find a prophecy concerning Jerusalem, the holy city: *“And the Gentiles shall tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.”*

Finally, in verse 3, we read about two witnesses who will minister during the Great Tribulation for 1,260 days. Who are they? What will they prophesy?

To understand the first three verses of Revelation 11, we must go back to the Old Testament, to the book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel had already prophesied about these events, which will occur during the Great Tribulation period. Revelation 11:1–3 is an elaboration of what was foretold 2,500 years earlier.

Regarding the final week—the seventieth week of Daniel—when will it begin, and when will it end? Let's turn to Daniel chapter 9. The prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world are not exclusive to the New Testament. They go back to the time of Israel, during the days of the prophets. The Old Testament contains many prophecies regarding the end of the world and the Messiah's return, and one of the most important is found in Daniel chapter 9.

Daniel 9:24 states: *“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people [the Jews] and upon thy holy city [Jerusalem]...”* This prophecy concerns Israel and the city of Jerusalem. The seventy weeks are not literal weeks of days or months, but weeks of years. That means seventy times seven, equalling 490 years.

When will these years begin and end? In Daniel 9:25, we read: *“Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks...”* This passage tells us that the seventy weeks begin with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Historically, this happened during the Persian rule, when God allowed the Jews to return from captivity in Babylon to rebuild the holy city. This decree was issued in 454 BC, marking the starting point of the seventy weeks.

According to the prophecy, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (a total of 69 weeks, or 483 years) from the decree until the Messiah comes. Daniel 9:26 further states: *“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...”* This refers to Christ's crucifixion. He was “cut off” not for His own sins, but to make atonement for the sins of Israel and the world. If we count 483 years from 454 BC, it brings us precisely to AD 30, the year Christ was crucified—fulfilling the prophecy exactly.

The first 69 weeks (483 years) have already passed. That leaves one more week—the 70th week, a period of seven years—which is yet to be fulfilled. Daniel 9:27 states: *“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week...”* This verse refers to a false prince, the Antichrist, who

will make a seven-year peace treaty with Israel and many nations. This seven-year period is the Great Tribulation.

However, in the middle of the seven years (at the 3.5-year mark), the Antichrist will break the covenant: *“And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate...”*. He will stop all worship of Jehovah, desecrate the temple, and declare himself to be God. He will then persecute Israel until the end of the seven years, when Christ will return and destroy him.

Since the first 69 weeks have already been fulfilled, why didn't the final week follow immediately? In Acts 1, after Jesus' resurrection, His disciples asked: *“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* They expected Him to reign immediately, but Jesus replied: *“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons... but ye shall be witnesses unto me... unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

God, in His longsuffering, is delaying judgement to allow for the spread of the Gospel. This church age is a time of evangelism and missions. The disciples were commanded to preach, baptise, and plant churches—extending the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike.

For 2,000 years, the Lord has been waiting for sinners to repent. But time is running short. The final seven years of tribulation will come, and Christ will return.

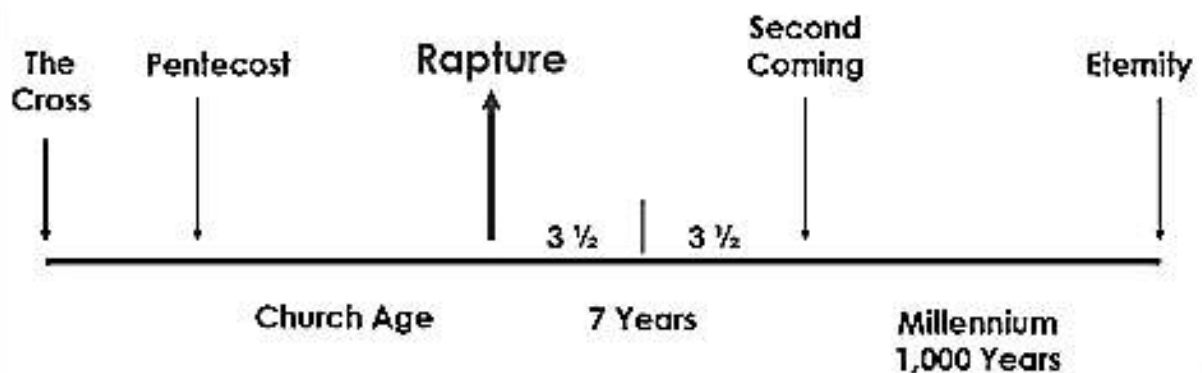
Since the Great Tribulation is imminent, we must be about the Lord's work. We must (1) Evangelise – Share the Gospel with your loved ones, friends, neighbours, and colleagues. (2) Distribute Gospel tracts – Give people an opportunity to hear the good news. (3) Pray for the lost – Intercede for those who have yet to believe in Christ. Before it is too late, may all come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Just as the first 483 years have already been fulfilled, the final seven years must also come to pass. There is an interval due to God's longsuffering and the Great Commission, which the Church must fulfil. However, the final seven years will surely come.

Take note that the final week is divided into two equal halves: three and a half years of peace, followed by three and a half years of war. This latter period involves the Antichrist and the nation of Israel, also known as the Great Tribulation or “the time of Jacob's trouble.” This aligns with what we read in Revelation 11.

To clarify, here is a timeline of the end times. The final “70th week” of Daniel represents seven years of Great Tribulation.

Timeline of the End Times



The timeline begins with the cross—a past event—where the Messiah was cut off in AD 30. Pentecost followed, marking the establishment of the Church. We are now in the Church Age, engaged in missions and evangelism, fulfilling the Great Commission.

The seven years of great tribulation will begin when the Antichrist brokers a peace covenant with many. At that point, the Church will be raptured, and the Great Tribulation will commence. The seven years are divided into two equal parts: three and a half years of peace, followed by three and a half years of intense tribulation. At the end of the seven years, Jesus Christ will return, fight the Battle of Armageddon, defeat His enemies, and establish His millennial reign on earth for a thousand years.

In Revelation 11:2, we read about 42 months—the period during which the Gentiles will trample the holy city. This corresponds to three and a half years when the Antichrist will break the peace treaty, desecrate the temple, and persecute the Jews. He will wage war against Israel during this second half of the Great Tribulation.

Additionally, Revelation 11 mentions 1,260 days, which also equals three and a half years. This period refers to the ministry of the two witnesses, who will prophesy during the first half of the Great Tribulation.

Let us now examine three key elements: (1) the temple, (2) the two witnesses, and (3) the Antichrist's desecration of the holy city.

Revelation 11:1 mentions a temple, implying that worship in Jerusalem will be restored during the Great Tribulation. Some argue that the temple will not be rebuilt during this time since the mandate to rebuild it belongs solely to Jesus Christ when He returns to establish the millennial temple. Others suggest that the temple in this passage could refer to a sacred site, such as the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem, which may be desecrated.

Regardless, Scripture states that a temple will exist during the Great Tribulation. Currently, Jewish worship is limited to the Western Wall, as the Temple Mount is occupied by the Dome of the Rock. However, the desire to rebuild the temple remains strong among the Jews.

It is possible that during the first three and a half years of peace under the Antichrist, the temple will be rebuilt. Some estimate that construction could take one and a half to three years. In fact, the Temple Institute in Jerusalem has already prepared furnishings such as the altar, candlestick, and Ark of the Covenant, ready for use once the temple is built.

However, in the middle of the seven-year period, the Antichrist will break his covenant, desecrate the temple, and declare himself as God, demanding worship from Israel and the entire world. This event, known as "*the abomination of desolation*," will mark the transition to the second half of the Great Tribulation.

During the first three and a half years, while the temple is being rebuilt, another significant event will take place—the ministry of the two witnesses. Revelation 11:3 states that they will prophesy for 1,260 days, preaching the gospel, warning of judgement, and calling people to repentance.

Like Noah, who preached for 120 years before the flood, these witnesses will proclaim God's message, but most will refuse to believe. The world, enjoying a time of peace under the Antichrist, will reject their warnings and despise them. Many will seek to kill them, but God will protect them for the duration of their ministry.

Verse 5 describes their supernatural protection: fire will proceed from their mouths to devour their enemies, similar to Elijah calling down fire from heaven. They will also have power to

shut the heavens, preventing rain, just as Elijah did in the Old Testament. Additionally, they will turn water into blood and bring plagues upon the earth, reminiscent of Moses in Egypt.

Because of these miraculous abilities, the identity of the two witnesses is often linked to Moses and Elijah. These two prophets already appeared together during Jesus' transfiguration and may return as God's end-time witnesses.

This aligns with the prophetic timeline given in Daniel and Revelation, affirming that God's plan will surely come to pass.

In verse 3, we read about two witnesses who will come and prophesy, preach, and proclaim the gospel of Christ. They will preach salvation and warn of impending judgement and the end of the world. They will carry out this ministry for 1,260 days, which equals three and a half years.

During the first half of the tribulation, a period of relative peace when the temple is being rebuilt, these two witnesses—sent by God—will be actively preaching and prophesying. The whole world will know about them, but they will be widely despised. This is because, while people are enjoying peace and prosperity, these witnesses will proclaim impending judgement, urging everyone to repent and believe in Christ or face destruction.

This situation parallels Noah's time. Noah was a preacher of righteousness who warned of judgement while building the ark. Likewise, as the temple is being rebuilt, these witnesses will be preaching. Just as people in Noah's day refused to believe, the majority in that future time will also reject the message. They will scoff, asking, "What judgement? What end of the world? Life is just beginning!" With economic boom and global peace under a charismatic world leader, they will refuse to heed the warnings of these two witnesses.

The world will so despise them that people will wish them dead. However, their ministry is divinely appointed to last for three and a half years, and no one can harm them until their mission is completed. God will empower them to perform miracles and protect them from harm. As stated in verse 5, if anyone attempts to hurt them, fire will proceed from their mouths and consume their enemies. Their authority will be evident, as they will have power to shut the heavens so that it does not rain during their prophecy. They will turn waters to blood and strike the earth with plagues as often as they wish.

This description strongly suggests that the two witnesses will be Moses and Elijah. Elijah was the prophet who called down fire from heaven, as seen on Mount Carmel, and he also controlled the rain during a period of drought. Moses, on the other hand, turned water into blood and called down plagues upon Egypt. These miraculous signs point to the return of these two great prophets for an end-time ministry.

There is a precedent for this. When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain before His crucifixion, Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Him. It seems that they are divinely appointed as partners in ministry, not only in Christ's first coming but also in His second.

For three and a half years, these two witnesses will lead the evangelistic efforts during the tribulation. With the church taken up to heaven, the witnessing role will shift to the Jews. These two witnesses will lead 144,000 Jewish evangelists in proclaiming the gospel.

When their ministry is complete, they will be put to death. As described in verse 7, the beast from the bottomless pit—the Antichrist—will wage war against them, overcome them, and kill them. This will coincide with the midpoint of the tribulation, when the Antichrist will break his peace treaty with Israel and turn against them.

Their dead bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days. The world will refuse to bury them, choosing instead to display their corpses publicly. There will be a global

celebration, as people rejoice over their deaths. The Antichrist will declare an international holiday, and people will exchange gifts, celebrating the end of what they saw as torment from these prophets.

However, God cannot be defeated. After three and a half days, the breath of life from God will enter them, and they will stand on their feet. This will strike terror into all who witness it—especially as the event will be broadcast worldwide through live media. Those watching their celebrations on television will suddenly see the two witnesses rise from the dead, filling them with dread.

At the same moment, a great earthquake will strike the city, causing a tenth of it to collapse and killing 7,000 people. The survivors will be terrified and give glory to the God of heaven. This proves that God always wins. No one can fight against Him and prevail.

Jerusalem is spiritually called “Sodom and Egypt” in verse 8. This is significant, as Sodom represents immorality and Egypt represents idolatry. Though Jerusalem is known as the “Holy City,” at this point in time, it will be far from holy. The great tribulation serves as God’s means to purge Israel of its sin and idolatry.

Today, Israel is a centre of secularism, immorality, and idolatry. Tel Aviv hosts the largest LGBTQ pride parade in the Middle East, and atheism is prevalent among the people. The land and the people must be purified before the kingdom can be restored.

At the three-and-a-half-year mark, the Antichrist will reveal his true nature. He will desecrate the temple, halt all worship, and wage war against the Jews. This will mark the beginning of the second half of the tribulation, the time of “great tribulation.” It will be a period of intense suffering for Israel, but ultimately, it will lead them to cry out for their Messiah.

Just as the Israelites cried out to God during their bondage in Egypt, they will call upon their Messiah to deliver them. Then, the greater Moses—Jesus Christ Himself—will return. They will finally recognise Him as the one they had crucified, their true and rightful King. He will come to save them, to rule, and to reign. As the Son of David, He will sit on the throne of His father David and establish His millennial kingdom.

At the end of the seven years, Christ will return to destroy the Antichrist and his armies in the battle of Armageddon. Revelation 13 will provide more details about the Antichrist, Revelation 19 will describe the final battle, and Revelation 20 will outline Christ’s 1,000-year reign.

In summary, the prophetic timeline follows this sequence: (1) The church will be raptured before the tribulation. (2) The seven-year tribulation will begin. (3) During the first half, the two witnesses and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will proclaim the gospel. (4) At the midpoint, the Antichrist will break his peace treaty with Israel and begin intense persecution. (5) The two witnesses will be killed but will rise after three and a half days. (6) The Antichrist will wage war against Israel. (7) The Jews will cry out to Jesus, and He will return to save them. (8) The battle of Armageddon will take place. (9) Christ will establish His millennial kingdom and rule for 1,000 years. (10) After that, eternity will begin.

Understanding this sequence helps us see how God’s plan unfolds step by step. The next major event on the prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church. The Lord has not appointed us to wrath, but to salvation. The tribulation is a time of God’s wrath, but believers have been delivered from the wrath to come.

May this knowledge lead us to be vigilant and ready for Christ’s return.

XXIII

KINGDOM NOW AND NEXT

Revelation 11:15-17

We pray *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”* But the question is: Has the kingdom already come, or is it yet to come? Is the kingdom present now, or is it still in the future?

The doctrine of the kingdom is very important and highly relevant for us today. It is practical because it helps us understand how we ought to live our lives.

In Revelation 11:15, we read: *“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”* So, does this refer to the present kingdom, or the future kingdom?

To understand the kingdom of God, we must first define it. What does “kingdom” mean? For a kingdom to exist, three essential elements must be present. There must be (1) a king – without a king, there is no kingdom, (2) a people – citizens or subjects over whom the king rules. (3) a domain – a place or territory where the king exercises authority.

For example, Singapore can be considered a kingdom in a general sense: (1) It has a government (the ruling authority). (2) It has citizens (the people). (3) It has a land (the geographical territory).

Likewise, God’s kingdom must have these three elements: (1) A King – The Lord Jesus Christ. (2) A People – Those who belong to Him. (3) A Domain – Where He exercises His rule.

Is the kingdom of God present or future? The Bible reveals that there is both a present and a future aspect to God’s kingdom.

In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus said: *“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”* This means that the kingdom of God is already present within believers. It is a spiritual kingdom. When a person is born again, they enter into this kingdom.

Just as we become citizens of Singapore by being born in Singapore, we become citizens of God’s kingdom by being spiritually born again—born of the Spirit. To be born again means more than just believing in Jesus as Saviour. We must also enthrone Him as Lord. Some people say, “I want Jesus to save me, but I don’t want Him to rule over my life.” However, this is not possible.

Jesus is both Lord and Saviour. We must submit to Him, acknowledging Him as King. As Romans 10:9 says: *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

When we are born again, the kingdom of God enters our hearts. At that moment: (1) We have a King – Jesus Christ rules over us. (2) We become His people – Members of His kingdom. (3) He reigns in our lives – Our hearts and the church become His domain. That is why Romans 14:17 states: *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”*

God’s kingdom is about spiritual transformation, not earthly power. Since the kingdom of God is spiritual, we do not fight with physical weapons. Some people misunderstand this and wrongly believe they must take up arms to establish God’s kingdom on earth. However, Jesus taught otherwise.

In John 18:10-11, when Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant, Jesus told him: *“Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me,*

shall I not drink it?” And in John 18:36, Jesus said to Pilate: *“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight... but now is my kingdom not from hence.”*

This shows that Jesus’ kingdom is not established by earthly warfare. Instead, our battle is spiritual—against sin, Satan, and falsehood. Our weapon is not a physical sword but *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”* (Ephesians 6:17).

This is why as Christians, we do not carry weapons to defend the faith. Instead, we preach the gospel of peace. We use the Word of God to bring people into His kingdom.

There are those who misinterpret and misapply the doctrine of the kingdom, leading to tragic consequences. Some advocate violence, thinking they are establishing God’s rule on earth. This occurred between the 11th and 13th centuries when the Roman Catholic Church organised the Crusades. Those of you who have studied history would know that there were a total of four Crusades spanning two centuries.

What was the purpose of the Crusades? The Roman Catholic Church raised armies composed of church members, declaring that they must recapture Jerusalem. At that time, Jerusalem had fallen into foreign hands—the Turks and Muslims had conquered and taken control of the city. When Christian pilgrims visited Jerusalem, they were treated cruelly, which angered the church. In response, the church mobilised armies to retake the city.

There were four Crusades, with the last one famously known as the Children’s Crusade. Even children as young as 12 years old participated. They called this a “Christian holy war,” claiming that Jesus taught and the Bible endorsed such actions. However, nowhere in Scripture does God command His people today to take up arms and wage war in this manner.

Those who promoted the Crusades misinterpreted the biblical teaching of God’s kingdom. The result was tragic—over two centuries, five million lives were lost. And in the end, did they succeed in reclaiming Jerusalem? No. It was a colossal failure, with countless lives lost due to a misunderstanding and misapplication of the doctrine of the kingdom.

My heart especially goes out to the children who were misled. While their zeal was commendable, it was tragically misplaced. Many of them perished, and those who survived were sold into slavery. This was one of the most tragic periods in church history.

Jesus had already declared, *“My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight”* (John 18:36). The kingdom of God is a spiritual one. Our battle is not physical but spiritual—we are called to fight against sin, strive to become more like Christ, and stand against Satan and the forces of darkness. Ephesians 6 speaks of the spiritual armour of God, not physical weapons like rifles, grenades, or missile launchers.

Yet even today, some still hold to the erroneous idea of a militant Christian movement. The World Council of Churches (WCC), for example, promotes a doctrine known as Liberation Theology. This teaching advocates that Christians should take up arms to overthrow oppressive governments, dictators, and political or economic systems that they deem unjust. This doctrine was active in the 20th century and continues to influence churches in the 21st century.

In a 2009 article, Dr. Walter Altmann, speaking as a representative of the WCC, stated: “Liberation Theology is alive and well.” They continue to believe, promote, and practice this ideology. This is why we cannot be unequally yoked with the WCC. The kingdom of God is not an earthly political movement. Jesus commanded Peter to put away his sword, warning that *“those who take the sword shall perish by the sword”* (Matthew 26:52). The Crusades serve as a sobering reminder of the consequences of misunderstanding God’s kingdom.

We must correctly understand the biblical doctrine of the kingdom, or we may find ourselves practising our faith in ways that bring harm to both ourselves and others.

So what about the future? Will there ever be a physical kingdom of God?

The answer is yes—but not now. It will happen when Jesus returns. He will wage war against the Antichrist and his armies, bringing judgement upon the wicked and unbelieving. Revelation 11:15 declares, *“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”*

The Old Testament prophecies of this future kingdom, particularly in the book of Daniel. Daniel 2 describes the great statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, representing successive world empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—culminating in a final revived Roman Empire under the Antichrist. But then comes a fifth kingdom, not of this world: *“In the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed... It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”* (Daniel 2:44).

A stone, cut without hands, will strike the statue, destroying all human empires. This stone represents Christ’s return. He will establish His millennial kingdom, ruling the earth for a thousand years. We, His saints, will reign with Him. Israel will be restored, and Jesus will sit on the throne of His father David, ruling from Jerusalem.

There will indeed be a crusade—but it will not be led by men or the church. It will be led by the Lord Jesus Himself, coming from heaven with His saints on that final day.

The future kingdom is a physical one—a literal and physical kingdom.

The Jews are looking forward to this great event. The disciples of the Lord, after Jesus rose from the dead and before He ascended to heaven, understood His program—the timetable of His redemptive plan. In Acts 1:6, they asked the Lord an important question concerning the kingdom: *“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”* They had a clear concept of the kingdom—a physical and glorious one. Jesus must reign as King, Israel must be great, and Jerusalem must be the capital city of the world. So they asked, *“Lord, is it now the time? Will you restore the kingdom to Israel?”* They understood that the kingdom would be as great as in the days of David, or even greater, because now the greater David—the Messiah—would come to rule and reign.

Jesus did not rebuke them for asking that question. Many times, when they asked foolish or incorrect questions, Jesus would correct or rebuke them. But here, He did not. It was a valid question. Instead, Jesus simply responded in Acts 1:7: *“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”*

Yes, that kingdom will come. Israel shall be a great nation again. All Israel shall be saved. The Lord promised these things regarding the land, the throne, the temple, and the people in the Old Testament, and He will keep His promise. But is the time now? No. *“It is not for you to know.”*

For now, the role of the church is to establish His spiritual kingdom. Jesus had come, died on the cross for the sins of the world, shed His precious blood, was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures. The church’s mission is clear: Go, make disciples, teach, preach, baptise, and teach some more. Its duty is to fulfil the Great Commission—proclaiming the gospel so that people might be saved.

At present, the kingdom of God is spiritual. But the physical, national kingdom will come in due time—when the Lord returns, and all Israel shall be saved.

The coming kingdom is not only about Israel. The Church also has a role in the kingdom of God to come. There will be a physical reign, and we will reign with Christ. Revelation 5:10 states: *“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* Revelation 20 confirms this, declaring that when the Lord returns, we will reign with Him for a thousand years. We will discuss more about the millennial reign when we reach Revelation 20, but we can be sure that we will reign with Christ in a literal, physical way for a thousand years.

For now, it is not yet time. Right now, the church is a spiritual nation, speaking and teaching spiritual truths—the Holy Scriptures and the gospel of Christ. That is why we read in 1 Peter 2:9: *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”* The gospel light is within us, and our duty is to shine that light into the world. That is our current responsibility.

With regard to governing and ruling—it is not yet time. Peter himself initially thought he was going to help Jesus establish His physical, national kingdom when he drew his sword to fight. But later, he understood that when Jesus first came, He came as the Lamb to be slain. The next time He comes, He will come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah to judge and to reign.

Right now, the kingdom of God is spiritual. We are not ruling; we are being ruled. We are to submit to human authorities. That is why Peter later wrote in 1 Peter 2:13-15: *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”* That is how we are to live right now. We are a spiritual people in a spiritual kingdom, with Christ ruling in our hearts and lives.

For now, we are under human governments. So, when the government announces new taxes—whether income tax, property tax, or goods and services tax—what do we do? Do we riot? Protest? Take up arms? No! Jesus Himself said in Matthew 22:21: *“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”* We give to the government what belongs to the government. But our heart, our life, and our ultimate allegiance belong to the Lord. The kingdom of God is within us—it is spiritual.

But the day will come when we will reign over this world. That time has not yet come, but it will. Until then, we do not take up arms. Instead, we pray for our rulers, our kings, and our governors. We submit to their authority, as the Lord has commanded us.

The day will come when we will reign—physically, literally, internationally—when Jesus returns to reign over the whole world for a thousand years. Then, and only then, will there be true peace on earth. And we will assist the Lord in governing the world.

So, if anyone here aspires to be a politician, I suggest you wait. You don’t want to be a politician now. Wait for the Lord Jesus to return.

*Don’t join the PAP.
Don’t join the SDP.
Don’t join the WP.
Join the JCP—the Jesus Christ Party!*

When Jesus comes, we will come down with Him, and we will rule with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:6 says: *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

This reign is physical—not in heaven, but on earth. Revelation 5:9-10 confirms this: *“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”*

The physical reign is future. The spiritual reign of Christ is now.

May we understand the kingdom of God rightly so that we may live our lives in the right way and receive the Lord’s blessing. May the Lord help us.

XXIV

WRATH AND REWARD

Revelation 11:18-19

We read in verse 18, “*Thy wrath is come,*” and that “*thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants.*”

Today, we are living in a very angry world, full of angry inhabitants. Not only is the world filled with angry people, but it is also full of angry nations. Here, we read: “*The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come.*”

Anger can be very destructive. As we know, “*The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*” Sinful and wicked anger breeds hatred, and hatred, in turn, breeds murder. Today, the world is full of angry nations and angry inhabitants. That is why we see so much fighting and killing.

This world is sinfully sick with wrath and anger. This anger is not only directed toward fellow men—there is no love for one’s neighbour, no love for fellow human beings—but also against God. The world at large is angry—angry at God, angry against Him.

With everything happening in the world today—the war in Ukraine, the COVID pandemic, and the immense suffering—those who do not believe in God refuse to put the blame on themselves. Instead, they seek to blame God.

They ask, “Where is God? If He is a good God, why is there suffering in the world? Why war? Why pandemics? Why this? Why that?” They speak against God, blaspheme, and curse Him.

Yes, God is almighty. He is good. He is loving. But He is also holy, just, and righteous in judgement.

All this anger directed against God will not go unanswered. God has said, “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*” There will come a time when His wrath will come. Here, it says, “*The nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come.*”

Right now, God is still patient, waiting, and longsuffering. But one day, His longsuffering will end, and His wrath will come. He will judge. Thus, the wrath of men against God will be answered by God’s wrath against them.

Not only do we see God’s wrath here, but we also read of God’s reward—His reward for the righteous, for His people. Colossians 3:23-24 says: “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*” We thank God for His salvation, which is a gift. But when we labour for the Lord, work for Him, and serve Him, He will come with His rewards.

Today, we want to study more about the two things mentioned here: wrath and reward—God’s wrath and God’s reward.

Here, we see that the nations were angry, and God’s wrath had come. The world is becoming increasingly defiant against God. Earlier in history, we did not see nations behaving in such a way. In fact, they were frightened and afraid of God.

If we look at Revelation 6, we read in verses 15–17: “*And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the chief captains, the mighty men, every bondman, and every free man hid themselves in the dens 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 that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?*”

So, we find that the inhabitants of the earth were once very afraid and frightened of God. But now, in the end times, they are no longer afraid. They are no longer frightened. Instead, they are defiant. They want to resist God all the more. They reject Him and rebel against Him.

God has been very gracious and longsuffering, even during this time when His wrath has come. He has set aside 144,000 witnesses and two special witnesses to preach the good news of salvation in Christ. These witnesses also prophesy the coming judgement, urging people to repent: “You better repent! Repent of your sins now! Confess the Lord Jesus so that you can be saved! Otherwise, God is coming to judge. The Lord Jesus will come to punish very soon.”

But what was their reaction? Instead of humbling themselves, they became prouder. They grew more and more angry against God. At this point, they are no longer afraid. They want to fight against God. They defy Him, resist Him, reject Him, and rebel against Him.

In response to this defiance, God will answer with His wrath. His wrath will intensify as the years go by during the Great Tribulation. This will eventually culminate in the war that will end all wars—Armageddon.

Some people say that World War III has already started with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. But is this really World War III? No, not yet. The real World War III will be a hundred times worse. The whole world will gather to fight against God, led by the Antichrist. Christ and His saints will come down to wage war.

Of course, the victory belongs to the Lord. That will be the final war—the true World War III, Armageddon. That time is not yet here, but the world is heading toward this final showdown. God will judge. His judgement will be physical—the wages of sin is death. People will die physically.

As we read in Revelation 19, God’s judgement is also spiritual. People will die spiritually. Revelation 20 describes the judgement of the Great White Throne. The books will be opened. People will be judged for their sins. Those whose sins are not forgiven—those who are outside of Christ and His kingdom—will be judged according to their works, their sinful deeds. They will be cast into the lake of fire.

So, God’s judgement is both physical and spiritual. A double death will come upon all who remain impenitent.

God is angry, but His anger is not without reason. His wrath is righteous. However, the wrath of men—the anger of nations against God—is always unrighteous. The wrath of men is self-destructive. Not only do they destroy themselves, but they also destroy others.

And because of their wrath, God will come and destroy them. We know this from James 1:19–20: “*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*”

That is what we see in the world today. Why is there war in Ukraine? It is because of the wrath of men. And the wrath of men does not work the righteousness of God. There is no love for one’s neighbour. There are no qualms about invading, killing, shelling, and shooting.

As a result, many lives have been lost. That is what anger does. The wrath of men does not produce the righteousness of God.

Wrath—sinful anger—results in hatred and bitterness. Hatred and bitterness lead to murder and killing. This is not only true on a global scale, but it can also happen personally in our lives. If we do not check ourselves, we too can easily become angry. If we allow anger to fester and grow into hatred, we will eventually act on it.

We may not kill with our hands, but we can kill with our words. That is why James warns us: *“Be slow to speak, slow to wrath.”* When we get angry, we often lose control. We go mad. We start shouting, and the words that come out of our mouths are destructive.

Today, it is not only our lips that speak—words also come from our devices. We type, text, and tweet. Some people can type faster than they can speak. With just one click, their words can be sent to many people. Angry, sinful and slanderous words can destroy. That is why we must be slow to speak, slow to wrath, slow to tweet, and slow to text. For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Sometimes, we fall into this trap. Sinful anger leads to destructive behaviour. How careful we must be! Be careful, little mouth, what you say. Be careful, little fingers, what you type. Be careful, little thumbs, what you text or tweet. For God will judge.

And for those who are angry at God, it is even worse. There are people who have no qualms about speaking against God. So, what will God do? Here, we see the wrath of the nations—they are angry at God, fighting against Him. What will God do with their anger? God knows how to deal with the wrath of men and nations. He can turn their wrath to fulfil His purposes. No one can fight against God and win.

Some people think that their anger can hurt God, that their words and deeds can destroy His work. But no! God will turn all their sinful, wicked, and wrathful words and actions around. He will use them to fulfil His holy purpose. At the end of it all, they will be defeated, but He will be glorified.

Psalm 76:10 says: *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”* This is a profound truth. The wrath of men shall praise God. How? We might wonder—how can anger, blasphemy, and rebellion against God bring Him praise? We praise God because we love Him. But these people hate Him! How, then, does their wrath result in His praise?

I think there’s an excellent example in the Bible from the time of Babylon. In the book of Daniel, we find an account of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel’s three friends. It is excellent example of how *“the wrath of men shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”*

In Daniel 3:14, we find Nebuchadnezzar, very proud of his empire and his kingdom, and very proud of himself. He set up a golden image, a golden statue of himself, and demanded that the whole world worship him—bow down and worship his image.

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to compromise their faith. There was no way they were going to bow down to this golden image. They must worship only the living and true God, Jehovah Himself.

Daniel 3:10 says, *“Thou, O king, hast made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, have not regarded thee. They serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”*

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury—you see here the wrath of man—commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, *“Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that ye do not serve my gods nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready, that at the time ye hear the*

sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer; and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well.”

You sing to my tune. You dance to my tune. You just do what I say—fall down and worship my golden image—and everything will be okay.

“But if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Not only were these words spoken against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but also against God Himself. Who is your God? An open challenge and defiance. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to fight God. *“Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”* We shall see how the wrath of man shall yet praise Him.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, *“O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.”* Yes, He is the living and true God. He is all-powerful. You are nothing before Him, really.

And we are not worried. We are not anxious at all. If God wants to deliver us, He can and will. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not—if He does not deliver us—*“be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”* We rest secure in our God. Even if we die, we live, because we believe in the God of the resurrection. We are saved, and death has lost its sting. We will be raised from the dead.

Daniel 3:19 tells that Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury. The wrath of man! His face was set against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Therefore, he spoke and commanded that they the furnace be heated seven times hotter than it was normally heated.

Look at how very angry—extremely angry—he became! The wrath of man. He is now seven times angry. But what happened? When he did this, it led to his own defeat and destruction. He commanded that the most mighty men in his army—the best soldiers—bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. *“Therefore because the king’s commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.”* (Daniel 3:22). It backfired on Nebuchadnezzar by his own wrath!

The wrath of man will yet praise God. You are angry with God? You want to spite Him? You want to fight Him? You challenge Him? You heat up your furnace seven times hotter? Who died? Your own soldiers! The very best of your soldiers perished because of this.

How the wrath of men will praise Him! God will turn the anger and wrath of men to serve Him, to glorify Him, to show His power, and also to judge angry men. So the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fire perished.

In Daniel 3:23, we are told that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, *“fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace”*. What happened? Nebuchadnezzar the king saw something most astonishing and remarked, *“Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said to the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt. And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”*

The second person of the Holy Trinity—the Lord Jesus Himself, the Son of God—was in the midst of the furnace with His saints and servants, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to protect and deliver them. *“Then Nebuchadnezzar came near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace*

and spoke and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth and come hither!” (Daniel 3:26).

Wow! Now Nebuchadnezzar began to speak very respectfully to them. At first, he was full of fury—anger, rage, and wrath! Ah, the wrath of man will yet praise Him! Now, he acknowledged that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is the Most High God.

How his angry words turned into words of praise to God! You cannot fight God and win. God will turn everything around to His advantage. You think your actions will harm God? He will turn them for His glory!

“Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth out of the midst of the fire. And all the princes, governors, captains, and counsellors saw these men—upon whose bodies the fire had no power.” (Daniel 3:27). Not a single hair was singed, their coats were unchanged, and there was no smell of fire on them!

Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, *“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!”* The wrath of man shall yet praise God. God turns the wrath of men to serve His holy purpose—to glorify Him and to promote His saints!

How important it is for us to make sure we make peace with God. You don’t want God to be angry with you. Because when God’s wrath comes, there is no escape from His judgement. But now, there is still time. God is very loving, very kind, and very patient. He speaks good words to you: Repent and come back to me. Don’t reject the good gift of salvation that I have prepared for you. I gave My only begotten Son, and He suffered and died for your sins. He was crucified by wicked hands—your sins nailed Him to the cross, and He bore your sins. My Son shed His blood so that your sins can be forgiven.

Have you confessed the Lord Jesus? Believe in Him, and you will be saved. Your sins will be forgiven, you will be declared righteous, and you will become a child of God and a servant of the Lord. Isn’t that good? So much better than what you are right now.

One day, God will raise us from the dead, or when Jesus returns, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air. Why miss out on all this? So, make peace with God right now. You have no reason to be angry with Him, but God has every reason to be angry with you because of your sin.

And yes, the wrath of men will praise God, and the remainder of wrath God is able to restrain. You know, angry and wrathful men can go mad, run amok, and do very foolish things.

Right now, we see a very angry Russian president, a man with no qualms about invading and killing. He is now also preparing his nuclear arsenal and putting it on alert. Such a powerful man, with such weapons of mass destruction, needs only to push a button—and that’s it. If a man gets so angry, he can do very, very foolish—even wicked—things. I am amazed that the button has not yet been pressed. Is it because man is good? No. It is because God is restraining him. *“The remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain.”*

God has a plan, a schedule, and a timetable. And by His grace, He still wants to give people time to repent and make peace with Him. So, do make peace with God. And when we make peace with God and become His children, we are saved, and we are saved to serve.

And when we serve the Lord, He will reward us. He is such a good and generous God. We read how the Lord will come with His rewards: *“that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name.”* A prize-giving day is coming!

We also read this in Revelation 22:12: “Behold, I come quickly,” the Lord Jesus says, “and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” So, there will be a time of reward.

We also read in 2 Corinthians 5:10 about the judgement seat—the *Bema*—of Christ: “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Now, some say that this judgement seat is about punishment—how Jesus will punish all wicked unbelievers on the last day. They say the judgement seat here is the same as the Great White Throne Judgement. Are they the same? No.

The Great White Throne Judgement in Revelation 20—which we will study later—is the judgement of sinners. Those still outside God’s kingdom, still in their sins, unforgiven, will be judged according to their works. The books will be opened, and when it is seen that they fall short of the glory of God and have violated His commandments, the Lord must punish and condemn all the finally unrepentant in the lake of fire. That is the judgement of sinners at the Great White Throne.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST vs. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT	
Judgment Seat of Christ	Great White Throne Judgment
1 Cor. 3, 2 Cor. 5, Rom. 14	Rev. 20, possibly Matt 25:31-46
judgment of believers	judgment of unbelievers
reward based upon work done for Christ	punishment based upon rejection of Christ

But here, we see a different judgement—the judgement seat of Christ. This is the judgement of saints, where rewards are given. We know this from the context. The judgement seat here—the *Bema*—can be a place of punishment, as it was in Roman tribunals. But it was also a place of rewards. For example, in the stadium, where sports competitions were held, the *Bema* was where the champion was crowned.

So, I believe that in this context, the judgement seat is not a place of punishment but a place of reward. This judgement is for believers. Paul is speaking to Christians—those who are

labouring for the Lord: *“Wherefore we labour; that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.”*

The same people who labour for Christ will one day stand before Him at the judgement seat. And this judgement is not about our sin—because our sins are already forgiven. It is about our service. So, are we rendering to God good service or bad service? Our service for Him will be evaluated. If it is good service, the Lord will reward us. If it is bad service, we will suffer loss.

We also see this in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15: *“We are labourers together with God... Let every man take heed how he buildeth upon the foundation. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest... the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”*

If any man’s work abides, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned, he will suffer loss—but he himself shall be saved. So at the judgement seat, the Lord will evaluate our service for Him. Salvation is not by works—salvation is a gift, fully paid for by Christ. But after salvation, our service matters.

And we will be rewarded not for the amount of work we do, but for the quality of our work. Some think, “If I do many things, I will get more rewards.” No. It is not the quantity of work that matters, but the quality.

We must build with gold, silver, and precious stones—serving with right motives. Do we serve because we love the Lord? Or do we serve for the praise of men? Do we serve because we want recognition? Or do we serve because Christ has saved us, and we love Him? God sees our hearts, and He will reward us accordingly. That is the work that is gold, silver, and precious stones.

When serving the Lord, our motives and attitude must be right. Some people may be running all over the place—serving behind the scenes, while others may be in the spotlight—serving as pastors, preachers, or full-time workers. Some may wrongly think that pastors, preachers, missionaries, and full-time workers will be the ones rewarded the most because they have done so much for the Lord. But not necessarily. They may not be first; they may be last. The Lord Jesus said, *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.”* (Matthew 19:30).

There are those who preach the gospel out of envy and strife, with sinful and selfish motives—seeking personal gain and fame. They may be preaching and teaching rightly, proclaiming the truth accurately, but their hearts are not right. Paul said that some preach out of envy and strife. People may not see their true motives, but the Lord knows.

On that day, when our works are tested, will they endure? Will they be like gold, silver, and precious stones, or will they be wood, hay, and stubble? Do we serve the Lord because we love Him, or do we serve for self-glory, recognition, and the praise of men?

Some desire popularity, wealth, and status—preaching more to receive more pay. But if their service is rooted in self-interest, it is wood, hay, and stubble—and on that day, it will be burned up. They will suffer loss. Though they may be saved, their works will not stand the test of fire.

However, if the foundation is truly in Christ, their faith will remain intact. They will be saved, but what about their service? If it is of wood, hay, and stubble, all will be burned up. But if it is of gold, silver, and precious stones, it will endure, and they will receive a reward.

How have we served the Lord? We must not only serve with pure motives, a right heart, and a godly attitude, but we must also serve according to God’s Word. We must serve Him according to His rules. If we break His rules, our work becomes wood, hay, and stubble—there will be

no reward. We must serve Him according to His Book and according to His will. Then, there is a reward for us: gold, silver, and precious stones—eternal treasures that will remain.

Do not think that preachers and pastors will automatically be first in God’s kingdom. You may be a humble cleaner in the church—sweeping the floor, washing the toilets—but if you do it because you love the Lord, rather than for recognition, the Lord sees.

Perhaps no one notices your work because you clean the sanctuary when it is empty. People come later, never knowing what you have done. But you do not care, because you do it for the Lord, not for men. You say: I serve because I love the Lord. He has saved me. I do not care if people see or thank me. As long as the Lord knows, I am happy.

There are those who serve in that way. I know of an elderly lady in the church who comes on weekdays to clean the sanctuary. She wipes the pews and spends hours ensuring everything is properly cleaned. She is not a young woman. She is already quite old, yet she serves joyfully, always saying, “Praise the Lord. Thank the Lord.” She was once a Hindu, but after hearing the gospel, she believed and got saved. Now, she loves the Lord deeply because she has experienced His love. Though she is given only a small token for her work, she does not serve for money. She serves because she loves the Lord. She also prays faithfully. She often tells me, “Pastor, I am praying for you.”

Such a heart and service are gold, silver, and precious stones. She may be an unknown, unnoticed cleaner in the church, but she gets an A from the Lord. The preacher may stand in the spotlight but do not assume that the preacher is first. On that day, the Lord may say to the preacher who served with impure motives, seeking self-glory rather than His glory, “You get a D. Go behind.”

So, dear friends, let us serve the Lord rightly. The Lord is so generous. He has already given us the gift of salvation, yet He desires to bless us even more when we serve Him faithfully. Let us continue believing, trusting, and serving Him—with the right heart and spirit.

When you come to worship on the Lord’s Day, do you delight in keeping the day holy? Do you rejoice in gathering with God’s people? Or do you see it as a mere duty or burden? Come not because you have to, but because you love to. He has done so much for us. He left heaven, came to earth, suffered, and died for us. Now He invites us: Come, meet with me in my house. Worship me. Learn of me. Be a blessing to others.

When you worship with the right heart, when you listen to the Word attentively, sing praises joyfully, pray sincerely, and give cheerfully, you are storing up gold, silver, and precious stones. Even if you are not actively serving in a public role, you are worshiping in spirit and in truth.

Beyond the worship service, in every area of service, do God’s work in God’s way, with a right heart. Then, when the Lord comes with His reward, you will not suffer loss.

I pray that all of us will examine our hearts and align our ways with God’s Word. May we be found faithful, so that when Christ returns, we may hear Him say: *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”*

XXV

TWO WONDERS

Revelation 12:1-9

In this passage (Revelation 12:1-9), we find two “wonders” being mentioned. The first wonder appears in verse 1: *“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman...”*. The second wonder is found in verse 3: *“And there appeared another wonder in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon.”*

So, these two wonders—a “wonder woman” and a “wonder dragon”—who or what do they represent?

From Revelation 4 up to this point, we have been studying prophecy, particularly events that will take place in the future—specifically during the final seven years of this world’s history, known as the Great Tribulation. However, here in Revelation 12, we are given a glimpse into history—a look behind the scenes at how God has been working out His redemptive plan. This passage reveals not only past events but also future occurrences in the spiritual realm.

What does the word “wonder” here mean? The word “wonder” in verses 1 and 3 refers to a “sign”. The term “wonder” is sometimes translated as “sign” and is often used together with “*signs and wonders*”—as in the miracles of Jesus Christ (healing, casting out demons, walking on water, feeding the 5,000). These miracles authenticated both His person and His ministry. Likewise, the apostles performed signs and wonders to validate their message.

Thus, in this passage, the word “wonder” refers to something miraculous, extraordinary, and awe-inspiring.

Now, let us examine these two wonders.

The first is the woman clothed with the sun. Who is this “wonder woman”? Verse 1 describes her: *“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”*

We are not left to speculation regarding her identity. The Bible interprets itself. To understand the meaning of this vision, we must turn to Genesis 37:9-11, where Joseph had a dream: *“And behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.”*

In that passage, the sun and moon represent Jacob (Israel) and Rachel, while the eleven stars represent Joseph’s brothers—the twelve sons of Jacob, who became the twelve tribes of Israel.

Thus, the woman in Revelation 12 represents the nation of Israel. She is not the church, nor any single individual, but God’s chosen nation.

The passage continues, stating that the woman was in travail, experiencing labour pains. This indicates that Israel would endure great suffering in bringing forth the Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ. This is confirmed in verse 5: *“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God and to his throne.”*

This child is none other than Christ, who was born through the nation of Israel, lived, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven.

The second wonder is the great red dragon. Verse 3 states: *“And there appeared another wonder in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon.”* Who is this dragon? We do not have to guess. Verse 9 clearly identifies him: *“And the great dragon was cast out—that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.”* Thus, the dragon is Satan himself. The colour red may signify his murderous nature (John 8:44).

Satan has opposed God's redemptive plan from the very beginning. He sought to destroy Christ, and he continues to persecute God's people. Verse 4 reveals that his rebellion led to the fall of a third of the angels: *"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth."*

The "stars" here symbolise angels, meaning that one-third of them fell with Lucifer when he rebelled against God. These fallen angels are now demons under his command. So take note that Satan is great because he has power and authority over the other fallen angels who do his bidding. He is also called great because he is a great deceiver and is great in terms of his cruelty. He is very fierce and very cruel—full of rage.

That is why the word "red" here tells us how wrathful and angry he is. Red is the colour of anger—he is red with anger, hatred, and bitterness against God and His people. The word "red" also symbolises blood—he is bloodthirsty, out to kill and destroy. He is a murderer. The devil is a murderer and a liar from the beginning, the father of lies. He is full of anger against God and His people.

How does he seek to kill? Through his lies. The word "devil" in verse 9 refers to him as the devil and Satan, meaning "accuser." He is an opposer, an adversary, and he accuses us with false accusations. That is what he does.

Verse 10 states: *"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."*

He is a false accuser of the brethren, of the saints, of the people of God, accusing them day and night, nonstop, incessantly. He never tires of deceiving, speaking lies, or falsely accusing God's people. He tries to persuade God—to convince Him that we are not worthy of salvation, that we are undeserving of heaven. "Look at how bad these people are," he keeps accusing. Day in, day out, he accuses, thinking that God will be so exasperated and persuaded to send them to hell along with him.

Satan would love to see that, but he never will—because our God is a God of truth. God is faithful. He promised that though we are unworthy and undeserving, He has declared us righteous because of His Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, in His crucifixion and His death for us on the cross, God applies the shed blood of Christ upon us to wash and cleanse us from all our sins. The moral perfection of the sinless Lamb of God—the righteous garment of Christ's righteousness—is placed upon us.

How dare Satan falsely accuse us! When he does so, he is accusing God and His Son. It is on this basis that we are saved. Jesus rose from the dead—He is alive! He has the victory over death and has already defeated Satan.

Yet Satan keeps accusing, driven by his pride, anger, hatred, and bitterness. He was cast out, but in his malice, he seeks to spite God, to get back at Him by trying to destroy us. He thinks he can accomplish this through his incessant complaining and false accusations.

But he will not succeed. We see how desperate Satan is—how blinded by his pride and rage. His anger against God, against His truth and His people, has made him blind. This is what pride and anger do: they blind a person to their sin and ultimately lead to their destruction.

This is Satan—the accuser, the devil, the slanderer, the deceiver who speaks lies constantly and deceives the whole world. Yet he is already defeated. He was cast out into the earth along with his angels, and they will finally end up in the lake of fire.

Nonetheless, he will engage in a final assault on God, His kingdom, and His people. This will happen during the Great Tribulation. But we know he is already defeated and cannot win this battle.

History shows us that Satan, in every attempt to fight against God and destroy His plan, has been defeated time and time again. He will try to fight against God and overturn His plan, especially in the restoration of Israel during the Great Tribulation, particularly in the second half of the final three and a half years. But we know he will be defeated, just as he has been before.

Revelation 12:3 states: *“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”*

Who is this? What does this represent? The ten horns are mentioned again. There is no need to guess—we go back to the Old Testament.

Daniel 7:24 states: *“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them.”* This kingdom is the revived Roman Empire—the iron-and-clay kingdom, as seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision. The ten toes—part iron, part clay—represent a revived Roman Empire, which will come in the future.

Out of this will arise the Antichrist. He will be different from the first kings and will subdue three of them. Verse 25 states: *“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”*

The Antichrist will blaspheme God and persecute Israel and all who believe in the Lord Jesus. He will set himself up as a world ruler, changing laws and policies to suit himself. He will declare himself to be God and demand worship, requiring people to receive his mark to buy and sell.

This will last for three and a half years—a time (one year), times (two years), and half a time (half a year).

During this period, he will persecute Israel and the tribulation saints, enforcing laws that demand global worship. If people refuse, they will face persecution. Initially, he will appear friendly toward Israel, but at a critical moment, he will turn against them and begin his persecution.

And here, the woman—Israel—will flee into the wilderness for refuge. There will come a time when the Israelites, the Jews, will be refugees.

Right now, we see a similar situation. When Russia invaded Ukraine, an exodus of refugees took place—2.5 million people fled their homeland seeking safety. Likewise, during the three and a half years of the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will wage war against Israel and persecute God’s remnant, including the 144,000 who will be preaching the gospel. Many will come to salvation—both Jews and Gentiles, the Tribulation Saints—who will refuse to take the mark of the Beast or worship him.

The Antichrist will go after them, and they will flee to find safety and security in the mountains and the wilderness of Judea. That region contains many caves and pockets of oasis, providing shelter and sustenance. This is reminiscent of how David, when fleeing from King Saul, hid in the wilderness of En-Gedi—a place with water, waterfalls, vegetation, and even animals for food.

Just as God provided for David, He will provide for His people during the Tribulation. The Israelites will flee, and the Lord will hide and protect them. As it is written: *“And the woman*

fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.” (Revelation 12:6). For three and a half years, God will provide for His people, protecting and preserving them.

Right now, we may be facing trials—small tribulations, pain, suffering, and troubles in this world. We endure economic hardship, sickness, disease, and the burdens of old age. We have visible and invisible enemies. We are constantly tempted and attacked.

But we need not fear, for God is our Protector, our Provider, and our Preserver. He will keep us to the very end, just as He will keep the remnant of Israel during the Great Tribulation. We must continue to believe and trust in Him.

Here in Revelation 12, we see the woman contending with the dragon. Verse 4 describes the dragon standing before the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as He was born. This child is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the virgin-born Son of God—*Immanuel*—who came to save us from our sins.

Jesus came not only as our Saviour but also as our Ruler. As Scripture declares: *“Who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.”* (Revelation 12:5)

Jesus was born, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is now seated on His throne, ruling over all. One day, He will return to establish His kingdom on earth, ruling for a thousand years and, ultimately, for all eternity in the New Jerusalem.

Satan, the dragon, is furious at this. He has always sought to destroy God’s work and Christ Himself. When Jesus was born, Herod the Great—undoubtedly influenced by Satan—tried to kill Him. Herod deceived the wise men, claiming he wished to worship the Christ Child, when in reality, he sought to destroy Him. When the wise men failed to return, Herod ordered the massacre of all male infants two years old and under—a satanic act of murder.

Yet Herod failed. Christ was not destroyed. He lived, died, rose again, and accomplished His mission of salvation.

Soon after Herod tried to kill the baby Jesus, he himself faced divine judgement. Though God is patient, giving sinners time to repent, there are times when His judgement is swift. Jesus was born in 5 BC, and Herod died just a year later, in 4 BC. He was struck with a terrible and painful disease. It is said that he suffered from kidney trouble which caused his flesh to rot and his genitals to turn gangrenous. His fate serves as a reminder that Satan and his agents are ultimately defeated.

In the end times, when Satan launches his final assault on Israel, all Israel will be saved. Christ will return, defeat the Antichrist and his armies, and cast Satan into the lake of fire.

Not only will there be war on earth, but there will also be war in heaven. Revelation 12:7 says: *“And 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.”*

Satan will be permanently cast out of heaven. Though he was initially cast down to earth when he fell, he still has access to heaven, as seen in the book of Job, where he stood among the angels and accused Job. But in the final days, Michael the Archangel will wage war against him, and Satan will be cast down once and for all.

Until that time, we on earth must contend with the devil. He prowls like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is a deceiver, a murderer, and a destroyer. How then do we overcome him?

Revelation 12:11 gives us the answer: *“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.”*

There are three ways to overcome the devil:

(1) By the Blood of the Lamb – The atoning work of Jesus Christ is our victory. His sacrifice on the cross cleanses us from sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us. This is why we partake of the Holy Communion—to remember His saving work. His blood gives us power to resist sin and defeat Satan.

(2) By the Word of Their Testimony – The Word of God is our weapon. It is our supreme and final authority. In these last days, we must uphold and defend the infallible, inerrant, and preserved Word of God. Without it, we are defenceless against Satan’s lies. Some claim that we no longer have the perfect Word of God today, but if that were true, we would be at Satan’s mercy. Thank God that He has preserved His Word for all generations!

(3) By Faithfulness unto Death – We must remain faithful to Christ, no matter the cost. True believers will not deny their Lord, even in the face of death. As Jesus said: *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”* (Revelation 2:10)

Are we fully committed to Christ? Are we willing to trust and obey Him at all costs? If we remain steadfast, He will give us the victory.

So let us continue to believe, trust, and obey our Lord. The dragon may rage, but he is already defeated. Christ has overcome, and in Him, we are more than conquerors.

XXVI
THE ANTICHRIST
Revelation 13:1-18

The Antichrist will one day come. But what about now? Are there antichrists running loose?

The answer is yes. In fact, in 1 John 2, the Apostle John already warned in verse 18: *“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.”*

The “last time” or “last days” began when Jesus came the first time and will continue until He returns. This entire period is known as the last time or the last days. We believe we are living at the tail end of this period.

John said: “...as you have heard that Antichrist shall come.” This refers to a particular individual—the Antichrist with a capital “A”—the one who will come during the Great Tribulation. He is the “big one.”

However, even now, there are many “little” antichrists. These are individuals who embody the spirit of the Antichrist, opposing Christ and persecuting His saints. The presence of these antichrists is a sign that we are indeed in the last time.

Throughout history, we see these “little antichrists.” For example, in the days of Rome, Emperor Nero was a type of Antichrist. He was a cruel and wicked man who burned the city of Rome and blamed the Christians. He arrested, tortured, and executed them in horrific ways, such as coating them in wax and setting them ablaze as torches in the streets.

Another historical figure who embodied the spirit of Antichrist was Adolf Hitler. He orchestrated the mass murder of six million Jews in the Holocaust—a monstrous act of unimaginable cruelty. Other examples include Joseph Stalin and Pol Pot, both responsible for the deaths of millions.

Yet, as terrible as these figures were, they are but precursors to the ultimate Antichrist who is yet to come.

The term “Antichrist” (from the Greek *anti*) has two meanings: it can mean “against Christ” or “in place of Christ.” The Antichrist will be both—he will oppose Christ and attempt to replace Him.

Revelation 13 describes the Antichrist as a beast: *“I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea...”*

The “sea” here symbolises the world empires. The Antichrist will be a world ruler, a dictator with immense power. He is described as having seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on his horns and blasphemous names upon his heads.

The ten horns represent the last world empire, a revived Roman Empire, as prophesied in the book of Daniel. The seven heads symbolise seven prior world empires that have had a connection to Israel: (1) Egypt (Israel was in bondage there), (2) Assyria (which conquered the Northern Kingdom in 721 BC), (3) Babylon (which conquered the Southern Kingdom in 586 BC), (4) Medo-Persia (which ruled over the Jews after Babylon), (5) Greece (under Alexander the Great), (6) Rome (the empire during Jesus’ time), and (7) the revived Roman Empire (yet to come). From this revived empire, a “little horn” will emerge—the Antichrist.

Revelation 13:2 further describes him: *“The beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”* These characteristics parallel the beasts in Daniel

7: The lion represents Babylon. The bear represents Medo-Persia. The leopard represents Greece.

The Antichrist will have the combined strength, speed, and ruthlessness of these previous empires. He will conquer rapidly, rule with an iron fist, and command global worship.

The dragon (Satan) will empower the Antichrist, giving him authority over the world. Unlike ordinary demonic possession, the Antichrist will be directly possessed by Satan himself.

This is reminiscent of when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would bow down and worship him. Jesus rejected the offer, saying, "*Get thee hence, Satan!*" (Matthew 4:10).

The Antichrist, however, will accept Satan's offer, selling his soul in exchange for worldly power.

The Antichrist is not only against Christ; he is also an imitation of Christ. Just as Jesus will return to rule the world for 1,000 years, the Antichrist will attempt to establish a counterfeit reign. But whereas Christ's reign will be one of righteousness, peace, and justice, the Antichrist's rule will be marked by terror, evil, and oppression.

Now, look at verse 3: "*And I saw one of his heads as if it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world wondered after the beast.*" This is also described in verse 14, how the Antichrist "*had the wound by a sword, and did live.*" It appears that there will be an assassination attempt, and he will die. However, after his death, he will come back to life. The passage states that "*his deadly wound was healed*"—he suffered a fatal shot and yet lived. The whole world will be amazed and will marvel at him. People will say, "Wow! What a great man!" They will be so impressed and mesmerised by him.

Here again, the Antichrist is someone who will imitate Christ. He is a counterfeit Christ—an imitation, a false Christ. The Antichrist will attempt to replicate the death and resurrection of our Saviour. Just as Christ died and rose from the dead, the Antichrist will stage an imitation resurrection to deceive the world.

He will present himself as the Messiah, saying: "I am Christ. I am the Messiah. Look at my power—I was killed, and now I have come back to life!" People will be in awe and say, "Who can go against him? Who can fight him? He is invincible! We had better follow him." Thus, they will begin to worship him. Verse 4 states: "*And they worshipped the dragon (Satan) which gave power unto the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?*"

No one will be able to oppose him, and people will think it is in their best interest to follow him. After all, with such power, he can give them what they want.

Just as Satan tempted Jesus by offering him all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship (Matthew 4:8-9), the Antichrist will have a man-pleasing message: "Follow me. Make me your king, your god, and I will give you whatever you desire." The world will gladly follow him.

Verse 5 states: "*And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.*" The Antichrist will be an eloquent orator. He will have a way with words—able to make people laugh one moment and cry the next. He will be a charismatic speaker, highly persuasive.

The passage continues: "*And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*" This means his reign of terror will last 42 months—three and a half years. This is consistent with previous references in the Book of Revelation.

For example, in chapter 12, verse 6, it states: *“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”* This refers to Israel fleeing into the wilderness for protection from the Antichrist. The 1,260 days mentioned here equal 42 months or three and a half years.

Similarly, verse 14 of chapter 12 says: *“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”* “A time” refers to one year, “times” to two years, and “half a time” to half a year—again, totalling three and a half years.

Thus, the Antichrist will rule with great power for this period.

Verse 6 states: *“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”* The Antichrist will openly speak against God, cursing Him and mocking heaven.

Verse 7 states: *“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.”* These “saints” are the believers who come to faith during the Great Tribulation. We, the believers in the present Church Age, will have already been caught up in the rapture and will not be on earth during this time. The Lord has promised that believers today will escape the coming wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

However, during the Tribulation, those who turn to Christ will face intense persecution. The Antichrist will seek to destroy them, and many will be killed.

Yet, though they may be overcome by the Antichrist, they will ultimately be overcomers in Christ. Revelation 12:11 states: *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* These Tribulation saints will remain faithful, even to the point of death, knowing that their eternal reward is secure. Jesus said: *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* (Revelation 2:10).

The Antichrist will capture and execute many, but ultimately, justice will be served. Verse 10 states: *“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.”* The Antichrist and all who follow him will face divine judgement.

Thus, the passage concludes: *“Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”* Their faith will be tested, but true faith will endure. Those who remain steadfast—denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Christ—will be victorious in the end.

Here we find the Antichrist being worshiped by the whole unbelieving world. Revelation 13:8 states: *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

This means that all unbelievers—those who reject the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ—will worship the Antichrist. When he comes, they will rather believe in and follow this false Christ than the true Christ. He will rule over them and receive their worship.

The passage continues with an exhortation: *“If any man have an ear, let him hear.”* Do you have ears to hear? This prophecy is being preached to you now, explained and expounded. To “hear” in this context means to understand and take heed. If you understand what is happening and what will happen, then you must repent. Confess the Lord Jesus, believe in Him, and be saved. If you still have ears to hear, it means there is still a chance for you to be saved. But you must not only hear—you must believe.

Romans 10:9 declares: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

During the Great Tribulation, when these events unfold, those who open the Bible and read for themselves will see that what Scripture declares is true. They will realise they are in grave danger. But they must not delay—believe and be saved!

Why wait until then? Believe now and be delivered before these things come to pass. It is far better to trust in Christ today than to endure the horrors of the coming judgement.

“Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Do not delay. Please, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ today. This prophecy will surely be fulfilled. God’s Word is true, and what He has declared will certainly come to pass. Do you have ears to hear? If so, hear now, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and escape the wrath to come.

Moving to verse 11, we find another beast—another figure of great deception: *“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”* This figure is not the Antichrist but another beast like him. He has two horns like a lamb, appearing innocent and harmless. Yet, despite his appearance, he is full of danger and destruction, for he speaks as a dragon. His words are filled with lies, falsehoods, deception, and seduction—just like the devil. Though he looks good, he is extremely evil. He is a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a dragon disguised in lamb’s wool. Just as Satan masquerades as an angel of light, this beast is a master of deception.

He is the false prophet, a minister of propaganda. His purpose is to deceive, to lead people to worship the Antichrist. He promotes the Antichrist, directs worship toward him, and performs miracles to deceive the masses.

This forms an unholy trinity: (1) The Dragon (Satan), (2) the First Beast (the Antichrist), (3) the Second Beast (the False Prophet). This counterfeit trinity seeks to mimic God in a perverse and deceptive way.

The false prophet will perform great wonders, even making fire come down from heaven, imitating the prophet Elijah. He will mesmerise and impress people, convincing them to follow the Antichrist. But will you be deceived? As believers, we are children of light. We must discern truth from falsehood, light from darkness, and good from evil. That is why the Bible gives us so much teaching and warning.

Jesus Himself said in Matthew 7 that in the last days, many will say to Him: *“Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?”* But He will declare to them: *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

The false prophet will be the ultimate deceiver. Just as God sent true prophets to Israel, Satan will send false prophets to deceive. Some of their prophecies may even come to pass, and they may perform miracles. But how can we discern between true and false prophets?

The Bible tells us: *“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”* (Matthew 7:20). By their doctrine, you shall recognise them. If a prophet calls for the worship of false gods or leads people away from the truth of Scripture, he is a false prophet. God allows these deceivers to test the faith of His people. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 warned, *“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Do you truly know and love the Lord? Do you truly know your Bible? If you believe in Christ, you should hunger and thirst for His Word. Doctrine is not something to be avoided—it is what

keeps us safe. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Timothy 2:15).

We must not remain spiritual infants but grow in knowledge and understanding. Many today cannot discern between truth and error. That is why some have left the faith and joined false churches, impressed by signs and wonders rather than grounded in sound doctrine.

Biblical and theological studies are important. That is why we have Sunday School. That is why we have the pulpit ministry—to faithfully expound and apply Scripture. Do you value these ministries, or do you despise them? That is why we have Bible colleges. Thank God for institutions that train believers deeply in the Word of God, not only to know what and why but also how to apply doctrine in daily life. Many claim to know God, yet they live as though He does not exist, making unwise and unbiblical decisions. If we neglect our spiritual growth, we leave ourselves vulnerable to deception.

The false prophet will have the power to give life to the image of the beast, causing it to speak and to decree that all who refuse to worship it should be killed. This could involve modern technology—television, social media, propaganda, and mass manipulation. Today, we see how easily people are influenced by carefully crafted messages. The false prophet will be a master manipulator, using every means to promote the Antichrist.

The false prophet will enforce the mark of the beast, ensuring that no one can buy or sell without it. He will make the Antichrist’s rule seem attractive, offering benefits to those who comply. But once a person accepts the mark, they belong to the Antichrist—just as slaves in ancient Rome were branded with the mark of their masters.

This is a warning for our digital age. With increasing control over finance, education, and healthcare, it is possible for a global system to regulate all aspects of life. The technology already exists for such control.

Some speculate about the meaning of the number 666, but the precise identity of the Antichrist is not yet revealed. Throughout history, people have tried to calculate his identity—whether Hitler, Napoleon, or other world leaders. But the true Antichrist has yet to arise.

Nevertheless, the warning is clear: The Deceiver is coming. The Antichrist will demand allegiance, and the false prophet will compel worship.

The only way to be protected from the Antichrist is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not wait for the Great Tribulation to come before you believe. It may be too late. Believe in Christ today.

XXVII

WORSHIP IN HEAVEN

Revelation 14:1-7

Saint Augustine has aptly said, “Worship is the mother of all virtues.” Worship is a vital part of our spiritual life. We cannot live without it because it is transformative. If we worship the Lord in the right way—His way, according to His Word, and with a right heart and spirit—it will change our lives for the better.

Therefore, let us not take the worship service on the Lord’s Day lightly. The Lord’s Day worship is the nerve centre of church life. God is pleased to be present in our midst, and what a privilege we have! In the New Testament era, every Lord’s Day we enter the very presence of the Most High God, the Holy of Holies—a privilege that was not given in the Old Testament. Only the high priest could enter, and even then, only once a year, with sacrifice.

When Jesus declared, “*It is finished,*” the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two, signifying that we now have direct access to God. We come freely and personally to worship Him. Were it not for this grace, we would all be struck dead in His presence. Yet here we are, alive and able to worship in a new and living way. We live in better days than those of old, yet we often take it for granted, sometimes not even bothering to come to church.

Let us learn to worship the Lord. It will change our lives for the better and deepen our relationship with God, our Father in heaven, and our Saviour. Worship is one thing we will do forever and ever. Many earthly activities will cease when we get to heaven, but worship will continue without end. When we worship rightly and in the right spirit, we experience a foretaste of heaven on earth.

As we worship, we look forward to the day when all saints from all times and nations will worship together. What a wonderful gathering that will be! Worship is vital and valuable, and we should never grow tired of it. Some may ask if heaven will be boring if all we do is worship. But if you know your God and Saviour, it will not be boring at all. In His very presence, seeing Jesus face to face and surrounded by the angels and saints, there will be no room for boredom.

If worship feels boring now, it may be because you are not worshipping rightly. True worship transforms and causes us to long for more of God. If we appreciate all He has done—His incarnation, His atonement, His resurrection—we will be moved to worship Him. Jesus came down from heaven, lived for us, died for us, rose from the dead, and bore the pains of hell on our behalf. How then can we consider worship boring?

True and right worship will transform us for the better. It will make us long to glorify and enjoy God more. We will eagerly anticipate heaven, where we will worship Him in His heavenly temple. Children, too, should not miss out on the joy of worship. They should be present from start to finish, learning what it means to fear and worship God. Parents and the church family have a role to play in teaching them the importance of worship.

Some may physically attend church but mentally they are not there. They are daydreaming or doing something else. This behaviour does happen, and it needs to stop. Worship must be taken seriously.

Now, four questions to consider regarding heavenly worship:

(1) Whom do we worship? Revelation 14:1 reveals the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. This Lamb is the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He alone is worthy of our worship. Revelation 5:11–14 vividly describes the heavenly worship of the

Lamb, emphasising His worthiness to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessing.

(2) Why is the Lamb worthy? Jesus is the Lamb without spot or blemish, the perfect, sinless sacrifice. In the Old Testament, lambs offered in sacrifice had to be spotless, symbolising Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God. He perfectly obeyed God's law for us and bore the punishment we deserved. Through His righteousness, we are clothed in the garments of salvation and made acceptable before God.

(3) How are we redeemed? 1 Peter 1:18–19 reminds us that we are not redeemed with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. No earthly wealth could ever purchase even one drop of His blood. The Lord gave His all—His best—for us, and that alone should compel us to worship Him.

(4) What does the Lamb symbolise? The Lamb metaphor evokes strong feelings of love and gratitude. Unlike bowing to a king out of duty, bowing to the Lamb is an act of love. The Lamb represents Jesus' humility and sacrifice—He is both the Lamb who was slain and the Lion of Judah, King of kings. Our response should be worship filled with deep reverence and love.

I bow because the Lamb has done so much for me. I love Him deeply. The word “Lamb” should stir our hearts with strong emotions and love for our Saviour. He loved us first, not the other way around. His love for us calls us to love Him. Now, I looked and saw a Lamb standing on Mount Zion. When we worship the Lord—the Lamb—we remember Him as the Lamb who was slain for our sins, the one who takes away the sin of the world. Lest we forget, this is why we observe Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, in our worship services.

If a church does not observe the sacraments or the Lord's Supper, it cannot truly be called a church. A church that does not practice the sacraments is not a church but a parachurch organisation. For example, Sunday school and fellowship groups are parachurches because they meet to study God's Word but do not conduct sacraments like Holy Communion.

A church is only a church when it observes the sacraments. A worship service is complete when the sacraments, particularly the Lord's Supper, are observed. The Lord's Supper is critical to church life and must not be taken lightly. Only an ordained minister should administer the sacraments—not just anyone. These sacred ceremonies carry spiritual value and impact and must be conducted and partaken in rightly.

This is why children should not be excluded from worship services. We baptise infants so that they are included in the covenant. They should witness how the Lord's Supper is conducted so that each observance becomes a visual demonstration of the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the gospel being preached in picture form, with the bread and cup as visual aids.

Our children should be present, observing these things, thinking, and allowing the Spirit to guide them to understand the good news and desire communion with the Lord. They should yearn to be born again and to affirm their faith at the right time.

Parents must take the lead in instructing their children about baptism and the Lord's Supper—explaining their significance. The sacraments are not mere formalities but have deep spiritual meaning for our lives.

In Exodus 12, the Lord instructed the Israelites to observe the Passover—a sacrament of the Old Testament. The New Testament equivalent is Holy Communion. In Exodus 12:24–27, God commanded the Israelites to observe the Passover for all generations. When their children asked why they kept the Passover, parents were to explain that it was to remember how God delivered them from Egypt.

Similarly, we must teach our children why they were baptised and how they are part of God's covenant family. They are responsible for knowing the Lord personally, and parents have a sacred duty to guide them.

Sadly, some young parents stop attending church after having children, thinking their little ones won't understand. However, if they wait too long, their children may never develop the habit of attending worship and may grow cold toward spiritual things.

Bring your children to church, even as infants. If they make noise, it should be music to your ears—a sign of life and blessing. If they cry loudly, take them out briefly to pacify them, then bring them back. Through prayer and the Spirit's work, they will learn to sit still and listen over time.

God works in their hearts when they are brought to Him. This is part of His covenant promise. Instruct them as God instructed the Israelites to teach their children about His deliverance, so they learn to fear and trust Him. I pray that no child in our midst will be lost—that all will be saved.

Now, where do we worship? Revelation 14 tells us that the Lamb stood on Mount Zion, the place of worship. Mount Zion can refer to Jerusalem, where the whole world will one day worship the Lord during the millennium. He will rule from the throne of David for a thousand years, and there will be a millennial temple where people from all nations will come to worship Him (Zechariah 8:20–23).

However, Mount Zion also has a spiritual meaning. Hebrews 12:22–23 describes Mount Zion as follows: *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”*

We worship the Lord now, here on earth. In the millennium, we will worship in Jerusalem. Afterward, we will worship Him in the heavenly Jerusalem for all eternity.

Revelation 14:2 speaks of a powerful call to worship—a voice from heaven like the sound of many rushing waters and great thunder. Harps accompany this call, symbolising solemn, dignified worship. Just as a parade commander calls people to attention when a head of state arrives, this heavenly call to worship commands our attention and reverence. In our worship, let us give full attention to the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our worship services, we have the keyboard or the piano (which functions much like a harp—essentially a horizontal harp). Hymns are played to still our hearts in preparation for worship. The sanctuary should not resemble a fish market before the service, filled with idle chatter. All should remain silent as the hymn or prelude plays, with the message, *“The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him,”* setting a solemn tone.

We should be prepared to worship the Lord in reverence, sitting attentively and ready to stand and give honour when called to worship. When Scripture is read as part of this call to worship, it should be done clearly and audibly, not in a soft or casual manner. The opening hymn, which is always one of worship and praise, begins with everyone standing to honour God. Each part of the worship service is patterned after Scripture, emphasising that we must follow the Lord's instructions if we seek His blessings.

We should arrive early, prepared for worship, not late and casually sauntering in. When attending concerts at prestigious venues like the Esplanade, patrons are told to arrive early, and those who arrive late are not allowed in until intermission. If we show such respect for earthly

performances, how much more should we show reverence when worshiping the Lord? Coming to church is not truly “free”—it was paid for at a great cost by Christ’s sacrifice.

Are we true worshipers? Revelation 14:1-5 mentions the 144,000, whose lives reflect purity, holy separation, and dedication to God. These worshipers did not commit spiritual adultery and kept themselves spiritually pure, worshiping only the true God. True worshipers are those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, practising self-denial and living a Christlike life.

Their mouths were found without guile, and they were blameless before the throne of God. What comes from our mouths reflects the state of our hearts. If we are truly born again, our speech will be filled with praise, thankfulness, and confession of the Lord Jesus. Cynical or critical speech, on the other hand, reveals a heart not right with God. True worshipers glorify God with their words and actions, not by finding fault or spreading negativity.

In heaven, worship includes singing—a lot of singing. Some may worry about not being good at singing, but in heaven, the Lord will perfect our voices. We will sing with sweet and melodious tones, offering heartfelt praise. Martin Luther said, “Music is next to theology”. Indeed, singing will be central in heaven. The “new song” mentioned in Revelation is described as *kainos* in Greek, meaning new in quality. Just as the New Testament is built on the Old Testament and is superior in quality, our singing in heaven will surpass anything we know now.

Our founding pastor—the Rev Dr Timothy Tow—noted that believers will sing better than the angels because we have experienced salvation—the depths of misery and the heights of glory. Our four-part harmony, reflecting the richness of our experience, will surpass the angels’ melodies. Let us sing to the Lord even now with all our hearts and voices, for this is how we prepare for eternal worship.

Some of the greatest hymn writers composed their works from deep personal experiences. Fanny Crosby, who was blinded at a young age, wrote over 8,000 hymns, including “Blessed Assurance.” William Cowper, who battled depression and nearly took his own life, was saved by God’s providence and penned the hymn “God Moves in a Mysterious Way.” These hymns were born from real experiences of God’s grace, providing hope and comfort for many.

In our midst, there are those like Sister Joycelyn, who, through her battle with cancer, wrote poems that became hymns. These hymns, published in *The Burning Bush*, are deeply meaningful, especially for those facing challenges. Let us sing these hymns and draw strength from their messages. Our founding pastor himself had written many hymns and they are published in a beautiful hymnbook called *Heavenly Melodies* which can be freely downloaded from our church website.

Worship in heaven will be a glorious experience with singing, praise, and many activities that time does not permit us to detail now. But above all, the central focus of worship is to glorify the Lord, who is worthy of all praise. Let us begin now to worship the Lord in spirit, sincerity, and truth.

XXVIII

BABYLON IS FALLEN

Revelation 14:8-20

The name Babylon is mentioned many times in the Bible—a total of 294 occurrences. This great city is described here as “Great Babylon” and is declared to have fallen. Indeed, it was a great city—the capital of the ancient Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar. However, there is a modern Babylon yet to come, which will be the kingdom of the Antichrist.

The Lord declares that Babylon will fall, and the phrase “*Babylon is fallen, is fallen*” is repeated to emphasise the certainty of its destruction. This fall will be monumental, and its cause is explained in verse 8: “*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*” Babylon will exert a global influence, leading all nations astray. The Antichrist, ruling over this final world empire of iron and clay, will lead the nations to drink from the cup of Babylon’s corruption.

End-time Babylon will be marked by physical and spiritual fornication, idolatry, and pervasive immorality. The gravity of its sin will provoke God’s judgement. Revelation 17:5 describes Babylon as a harlot with the name “*Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*” written on her forehead. She is said to be drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus.

Those who engage with this Babylon—worshipping the Antichrist and taking his mark—will face judgement. Revelation 13 reveals that the mark, known as 666, will be required to buy or sell, symbolising total submission—politically, economically, and religiously—to the Antichrist. His followers must even bow to his image, which will be made of gold or some other form, and worship it.

The judgement for those who worship the Antichrist is severe. Revelation 14:10 declares that they will “*drink of the wine of the wrath of God, poured out without mixture,*” meaning fully concentrated wrath. They will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb, reminiscent of the judgement that befell Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, will execute this judgement.

Chapter 16 further describes this judgement: The fourth angel pours out his vial upon the sun, scorching men with great heat. Yet, instead of repenting, they blaspheme God. In chapter 18, Babylon is declared fallen and becomes the dwelling place of devils and foul spirits. The kings and merchants of the earth, who grew rich through Babylon’s immorality and luxury, will mourn her destruction.

Her plagues will come suddenly—death, mourning, and famine. She will be burned with fire, for the Lord God is mighty in judgement. The kings of the earth, who indulged in fornication with her, will lament as they see the smoke of her burning.

The warnings of Revelation should prompt us to vigilance. The Antichrist’s influence is already evident in the world’s increasing moral decay. As believers, we must resist temptation by standing firm on God’s Word. When Jesus was tempted, He repelled Satan by declaring, “*It is written.*” We, too, must know and apply the Scriptures to avoid being deceived. God’s Word remains perfectly preserved and authoritative for all time.

The church is the bride of Christ, and we must present ourselves as a pure bride for our heavenly Bridegroom. It is every pastor’s duty to prepare the church for this day. Therefore, we cannot afford to neglect the study of God’s Word, prayer, and fellowship. We must also strive to deepen our understanding through further study of God’s Word.

The time is short. We must repent, dig deeply into God's Word, and be prepared to withstand the coming evil day. Those who bow to the Antichrist and receive his mark will face God's undiluted wrath. But those who remain faithful to the Lamb will be spared from judgement and preserved for eternal life in Christ.

Are you troubled by inflation? Prices keep rising, but your salary stays the same. Why should that trouble you? Be thankful—the Lord is our Provider, and our God is a God of providence. Have we missed any meals? Don't we have a house to live in, a roof over our heads, and clothes to wear?

"Godliness with contentment is great gain." So, don't be troubled by these things. Think of the Kingdom of God to come, where true riches lie. Our hearts will be at peace, and we won't be anxious or worried when we hear the news of rising prices. God knows how to care for us. If He provides for the birds, grass, and flowers, how much more precious are we to Him?

But beware—don't bow to the Antichrist or his world system of politics, economics, and religion. If we want to know how to respond to such challenges, is there a precedent or example for us to follow? Yes, there is! Let's go back to ancient Babylon. Under Nebuchadnezzar, God's faithful people were there—Daniel and his three friends.

In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold and demanded that everyone bow down and worship it. The Antichrist, in the future, will do something similar—whether it's a physical or digital image, we don't know. Nonetheless, the whole world will be commanded to worship it, just as they were in Nebuchadnezzar's day.

Nebuchadnezzar gathered all his officials to dedicate the image and required everyone to bow down at the sound of music. Similarly, the Antichrist will demand allegiance, and those who refuse will face death. In Nebuchadnezzar's time, refusal meant being thrown into a burning fiery furnace.

Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to bow. They were faithful to the one true God, and they would not compromise by worshipping false gods. When Nebuchadnezzar confronted them, they responded with calm faith: *"We are not careful to answer you in this matter. Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand. But even if He doesn't, we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image."*

Their faith was not dependent on what God would do for them but on who God is. Many today have a mercenary faith—believing only if God provides health, wealth, and comfort. But true faith remains steadfast even in trials.

This faith echoes Job's words: *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."* Is that the kind of faith we have? This is the faith we need today.

When Nebuchadnezzar heard their response, he was filled with fury and commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. In his rage, he acted foolishly. He even called his strongest soldiers to bind the three men—who were civil servants, not warriors.

The heat was so extreme that the soldiers who threw them into the furnace perished. Yet God intervened miraculously. The flames did not harm Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Instead, they were seen walking in the furnace, unharmed, with a fourth figure—*"like the Son of God."*

Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and acknowledged the greatness of the true God. He declared that no other god could deliver like this.

This historical event reminds us that God is sovereign, and our faith must remain unshaken, even in the face of severe trials. In the coming days, when we face challenges to our faith, may we, like Daniel’s friends, stand firm and declare: “*We will not bow.*”

At the time of Armageddon, the Antichrist and his armies will gather together, filled with hatred for God, to fight against Him. As they assemble at Armageddon, the Lord Jesus will return with the saints and defeat them with the sword of the Spirit that proceeds from His mouth. The sickle of judgement will be applied, and blood will flow. We are told the blood will rise to the height of a horse’s bridle—about five feet—and will flow for a distance of 1,600 furlongs, or roughly 200 miles.

This river of blood will stretch from Mount Megiddo, where the battle takes place near Haifa, down to the tip of the Red Sea at Eilat (Gulf of Aqaba)—a powerful symbol of the great judgement to come. How we must make peace with God now before that day arrives.



Believe in the Lord Jesus today. Consider the story of Nebuchadnezzar, who, by God’s grace, came to believe. After throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace and seeing the Son of God with them, he acknowledged their God as the Most High. Though he

promoted them and protected them, Nebuchadnezzar had not yet fully converted—he still referred to God as “your God.”

However, later on, Nebuchadnezzar experienced a turning point. In Daniel 4:29-30, he walked through his palace, pridefully declaring, “*Is not this great Babylon that I have built by my own power and for my majesty?*” Giving no glory to God, he was struck down with temporary insanity as God humbled him. But after this period, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and his understanding returned. In Daniel 4:34-37, he blessed the Most High, acknowledging, “*His dominion is everlasting, and His kingdom is from generation to generation.*” Nebuchadnezzar declared that no one could resist God’s will, and he was born again. He no longer said, “Your God”—he confessed that the Most High was now his God.

Will you not do the same? Confess Jesus as the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the only Saviour. There is one God and one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Believe in Him, and you will be saved, just as Nebuchadnezzar was saved.

Unless you humble yourself like a little child, you cannot see or enter the Kingdom of God. Why not believe today and be saved?

XXIX

JUDGEMENT AND TRIUMPH

Revelation 15:1-8

Now let us turn to Revelation, chapter 15. Here, we read about the seven last plagues of Revelation. Earlier, we saw the seven seals and the seven trumpets—both representing God’s judgements. Now we see the seven last plagues, which are described as the seven vials or bowls of God’s wrath poured upon the earth.

The seven seals and seven trumpets belong to the first three and a half years of the Great Tribulation. They serve as warnings that the end is near unless people repent and believe in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.

Now we come to the second half of the Great Tribulation, which features the seven last plagues. These represent God’s final judgement and ultimate victory. Satan will be defeated.

Who will you follow? It is better to be on God’s side—the winning side—so that you may have victory over sin and Satan. If you choose otherwise, defeat is certain. Those who align themselves with the Antichrist, receive his mark, and sell their souls to the devil will be condemned.

When the seven last plagues are released, there will be no more opportunities for repentance. Those who side with Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet will share their fate in the lake of fire, as described in Revelation chapter 20.

In Revelation 15, we are introduced to the bowl judgements—the seven last plagues. This chapter highlights two themes: judgement and triumph. There is judgement for sinners and victory for the saints.

The term “plagues” is used 15 times in the book of Revelation and reminds us of the plagues God sent upon Egypt during the time of the Exodus. Just as God plagued Pharaoh and Egypt to deliver Israel, He will send plagues upon the earth to bring about His righteous judgement.

God demonstrated His control over creation through the ten plagues of Egypt—turning water into blood, sending diseases to livestock, and controlling insects, weather, and even the sun. In the Great Tribulation, God will again display His power. Pestilences, earthquakes, and wars are all signs that He is the righteous Judge.

If you do not repent, God’s wrath will intensify. He is just, and those who break His laws will face His righteous judgement. Therefore, repentance and belief in Christ are urgent. Only through the blood of the Lamb can we be saved from destruction.

The plagues are a visible demonstration of God’s righteous anger against sin. Just as He took the lives of the firstborn in Egypt, He has the authority to take what is most precious to us. Only by coming under the blood of the Lamb can we be spared from death.

In Revelation 15, we also read about the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb—a song of triumph. This parallels the triumph of the Israelites in Exodus 15, which followed their deliverance from Pharaoh’s army in Exodus 14.

The mention of the Lamb in Revelation points us to the Passover lamb of Exodus, whose blood protected the Israelites from death. Today, only the blood of Jesus—the Lamb of God—can save us from spiritual death.

Revelation 15 is a call to faith and repentance. Those who harden their hearts, like Pharaoh, will face judgement. But those who respond to God’s conviction, repent, and trust in the blood of the Lamb will be saved.

Believers should also examine their hearts. Are we sensitive to God's teaching and guidance? Let us not harden our hearts or resist His will. Let us rather submit to His leading. For God is both Saviour and Judge, and He desires that we be on the winning side—singing the song of victory with Moses and the Lamb.

We wish everyone is saved. But just like in the Exodus, those who exited Egypt were a mixed multitude. There were not only believers but also unbelievers. Some joined the exodus, but they did not believe in Jehovah. You see it when Moses was away—they became discontented and built a golden calf, dancing and committing fornication. When Moses came down, he smashed the law of God, symbolising their breaking of God's law. There were false believers—those who professed belief but were not true. They always complained and murmured against God and Moses.

Exodus chapter 14 foreshadows what will happen to the Antichrist, the Pharaoh of the end-times. Here we have a picture of judgement. The Lord instructed Moses to speak to the children of Israel and direct them to turn and encamp by the sea. Pharaoh would say they were trapped, and God would harden Pharaoh's heart. This was because Pharaoh had already hardened his heart repeatedly while Moses demanded, "*Let my people go.*" After the last plague—the death of the firstborn—Pharaoh relented and released Israel. However, he hardened his heart again, bringing judgement upon himself. God declared He would harden Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh would pursue Israel so that God would be glorified through Pharaoh's downfall.

The Israelites appeared trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's oncoming army, with no weapons, chariots, or horses—only donkeys and burdens. Yet God promised victory. Pharaoh approached, and the Israelites, filled with fear, cried out to the Lord. Moses told them, "*Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.*" Though the odds seemed overwhelming, the Lord would bring triumph.

Moses stretched out his hand, and the Lord caused the sea to part with a strong east wind, making the seabed dry land. Over two million Israelites crossed the sea overnight on dry ground. The division of the sea must have been vast to allow so many people to cross in one night. God ensured the ground was smooth and dry to ease their journey.

The Egyptians pursued, but the Lord troubled their forces by removing the chariot wheels. Recognising God's intervention, they attempted to flee. The Lord instructed Moses to stretch out his hand again, causing the waters to return and cover the Egyptians. Every Egyptian who pursued the Israelites into the sea perished, including Pharaoh. The Lord saved Israel, and the people feared, worshiped, and believed in God and His servant Moses.

In the future, there will be a similar deliverance. Today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your heart. Though God is patient and longsuffering, there is a limit. If you persist in unbelief, judicial blinding and hardening may occur, leading to destruction.

For believers, there is triumph and victory. In chapter 15, the Israelites sang the song of Moses after witnessing the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of their enemies. We, too, will sing the same song when delivered. "*Great and marvellous are thy works.*" God, in His providence, controls nature and provides for His people.

God's providence can be miraculous. Some believe God only works indirectly through nature and secondary causes, but He can intervene directly to save and deliver. His extraordinary providence reflects His covenant faithfulness. God, as the Lord, is a covenant-keeping God, and His people must live by His covenant to receive His blessings.

God keeps His covenant, but do we keep the covenant we have with Him? Sometimes we fail, sometimes we don't see our failings, and the Lord reveals them, sanctifies us, and causes us to see more deeply. If that's the case, we need to repent, change, and do what is right and good.

Know that He is the Lord, our covenant Lord, and our Creator. As Creator, He is almighty and all-powerful. He is also just and righteous, and His judgements are based on His law. His Word is true, and we must believe every word He says. *"Just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints."* He is our King, and the saints refer to those believers washed by the precious blood of Christ—those who will end up in heaven, triumphant and victorious because God is their King.

Do we say that God is only the God of the Israelites or that He only worked during the Old Testament, or in the days of Jesus, or the first-century church? No, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We see His providential hand at work, keeping us as a church.

True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church has existed for nearly 20 years, since 2003. The Rev Dr Timothy Tow, our founding pastor, was also the founder of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church. He pastored Life Church faithfully for 53 years before he was compelled to resign because he believed and taught that the Bible was perfectly preserved—100% perfect, without any mistake.

After his resignation, he did not retire from ministry but had the faith to start a new church—True Life—despite his age. By God's grace and providence, he succeeded. Although some expected the new church to be stillborn, here we are 19 years later. For *"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."* (1 Cor 1:27-29).

God's providential work is evident not just in the church, but also in Far Eastern Bible College. In 2008, Life Church took FEBC to court and challenged its teaching on the verbal and plenary preservation (VPP) of the Holy Scriptures. Life Church sought to evict FEBC from the shared premises at 9A and 10 Gilstead Road, arguing that the VPP doctrine was a deviation and that FEBC had no right to occupy the premises. However, the Court of Appeal ruled that FEBC had not deviated from the fundamental doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. The court affirmed that VPP was consistent with the Westminster Confession, which teaches that the Old and New Testaments have been kept pure by God's singular care and providence.

This ruling was nothing short of God's providential hand at work, protecting FEBC's birthplace and home and vindicating His truth. We did not expect it, but God provided the best law firm in Singapore—Allen and Gledhill—to help and defend us. Our young lawyer, Mr Ang Cheng Hock, was promoted to Senior Counsel after taking our case. He and his colleagues represented us with integrity.

The court's doctrinal declaration was also remarkable, highlighting God's work in upholding the truth of His Word. His Word is infallible and inerrant—not just perfect in the past, but still perfect today. However, knowing and understanding this requires faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Human reasoning may fail, but through the eyes of faith, we see His truth.

These triumphs—whether biblical or personal—are God's way of showing us the good path. Do not harden your heart. Believe in the Lord, trust and obey Him, and you will see the Red Sea parting before you. Do you believe?

XXX

PRAISER OR BLASPHEMER?

Revelation 16:1-21

In Revelation 16, we see the outpouring of God's wrath at its highest and ultimate level through the vial judgements. This is the grand finale of the Great Tribulation.

In verse 1, we read: *"And I heard a great voice out of the temple."* This divine announcement declares the end with a "great voice." The word "great" in the original Greek is *mega*, so it is essentially a "mega voice," or God's divine megaphone. This voice is not from an angel but from God Himself because it comes from the temple, symbolising God speaking directly. We can confirm this from Isaiah 66:6, which says: *"A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies."* The same voice now speaks in Revelation, addressing His enemies—those who have the mark of the beast and worship the Antichrist, rejecting God and Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

These individuals have rebelled and fully given themselves over to worship the devil. As declared from His temple, God will now repay their wickedness.

In verse 2, the first angel pours out his vial upon the earth, and a grievous sore falls upon those who have the mark of the beast and worship his image. These painful sores will cover people from head to toe, much like Job's affliction. However, unlike Job, who remained faithful, these people will blaspheme God even more, revealing the hatred in their hearts. They can never repent because they have wholly given themselves over to the devil.

The second plague is described in verse 3: *"The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea."* This results in the total destruction of sea life. While we hear today about the depletion of fish populations, on that day, not a single sea creature will remain.

The third plague follows in verses 4-7: *"The third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood."* This judgement turns all fresh water into blood, leaving no drinking water. This is a terrible, total, and global judgement.

In verses 8-9, the fourth angel pours out his vial upon the sun, and men are scorched with fire and great heat. This is far beyond any global warming—it is global boiling. The scorching heat will make the earth nearly unliveable, yet men will still blaspheme God and refuse to repent.

The fifth plague, described in verse 10, brings pitch-black darkness: *"The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness."* This intense darkness will cause life to come to a standstill. Despite their suffering, people will gnaw their tongues in pain and continue to blaspheme God.

The sixth plague, in verse 12, involves the drying up of the great river Euphrates to prepare the way for the kings of the East. Unclean spirits, representing the unholy trinity—Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet—will deceive the kings of the earth and gather them for the great battle against God. This is the lead-up to the battle of Armageddon, where the nations will gather to challenge God, thinking they can defeat Him.

Finally, in verse 17, the seventh angel pours out his vial into the air, and a great voice from the temple declares, *"It is done."* A tremendous earthquake follows—greater than any in human history. The great city (Babylon, symbolising the Antichrist's final world empire) will be divided into three parts. Every island will flee, and mountains will be levelled. Singapore, along with all islands, will disappear. This unprecedented judgement will demonstrate God's wrath against humanity's wickedness, blasphemy, and rebellion.

God will reveal His almighty power and show that He alone is the Creator and Judge. God showed my love to the utmost, to the extreme, by sending His beloved and only begotten Son to suffer and shed every drop of His blood to save you. And now, you refuse, you challenge me, and you even blaspheme Him. God is holy. God is just, and He will judge.

If you say a word against a king or president, you may be punished—just as in Thailand where there is a law called *lèse-majesté*, where a word against the king can lead to imprisonment for life. And now, you speak against the Lord God Almighty, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and think you won't be judged? You will surely be judged.

Here we see global destruction—not just islands disappearing and every mountain flattened. In verse 21, it says that great hailstones fell upon men from heaven, each about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail, for the plague was exceedingly great. Have you seen hailstones? Sometimes they are small pellets, and sometimes as big as golf balls. But here, the hailstones are the weight of a talent—about 100 pounds (45 kilogrammes). Imagine just one hailstone being as heavy as some of you! This shows the immensity of the earth's wickedness at that time and the intensity of God's wrath.

“Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. The time of His vengeance has come—global destruction. Today, we often hear the phrase, “Save the earth.” People promote the green movement and reducing carbon emissions. While they may try, every effort will ultimately be in vain. The earth cannot be saved. The seven last plagues will come to pass, and God will prove He is God, and you are nothing. I gave you everything. You spit in my face, cursed me, blasphemed me, and even killed my servants. How can God not judge? He will judge.

Knowing that these seven vials and plagues will come, what is our response? There are only two responses—one right, one wrong. I pray we respond the right way.

The right response is praise. In verses 5–7, when the plagues are poured out, the angels praise God: *“Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.”*

Another voice from the altar declared: *“Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgements.”*

The angels praise God because He is just, and His judgements are right. God is justified in all He does, even in pouring out His wrath. He is the Almighty God—He can do all things, and all He does is right. He has all authority. Not only is He all-powerful, but He is also altogether holy. Verse 5 declares, *“Thou art righteous.”* His judgements are holy because He knows everything perfectly. He knows every sinner's wicked thoughts, feelings, and deeds. He does not judge out of ignorance but with full knowledge.

For a judge to make a right judgement, all facts must be presented—nothing hidden. God knows every fact and judges righteously because He is omniscient. Being present in the past, present, and future, He sees everything. You cannot hide from God. Every dark corner is known to Him.

God is incorruptible. A righteous judge cannot be swayed by money, power, or influence. Human judges may err without all facts, but God has all the facts by nature and makes perfect judgements. Every judgement He makes is good, just, and right. No one is guiltless—all have sinned and fallen short of His glory.

In verse 6, the angel declares: *“They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.”* God gave them time to repent after they killed His people and servants, but they refused. Now, justice will be served—life for life, as God metes out equal judgement. They are guilty as charged and deserve judgement.

Look at today's world—the killings in Ukraine and the wickedness in human hearts know no bounds. How can God not judge? He will judge.

So how do we respond when we see all these things?

Do we praise God and worship Him, knowing who He is and saying, “Yes, Lord, what You do is right,” or do we respond in the opposite way? If we respond negatively, it reveals the condition of our hearts. Do we truly love the Lord, or do we merely say we love Him while harbouring resentment or hatred in our hearts?

Do we find fault with the Lord, using our human reasoning to question Him: “Why didn't God do this? Why didn't God do that?” Are we people who find fault with God and demand that He act according to what we think is right, as if we are righteous and God is not? Sadly, even some believers think this way. They question God, and that is blasphemy—just like the unbelievers who have the mark of the beast.

As we read in Revelation, men were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God (verse 9). They blasphemed again in verse 11 and in verse 21, when they cursed God because of the hail plague. They blasphemed over and over again, just like incorrigible children. I pray that none of our children are like this.

Sometimes, when you teach and discipline your children, they may rebel. But if they truly love their parents, they will acknowledge their wrongdoing, say they are sorry, and repent. They feel sorrowful for disobeying. That is the sign of a good heart.

As children of God, how do we respond to Him? Do we praise Him, or do we blaspheme Him? If we don't have Christ in our hearts and lack love for Him, we will hate and curse Him even more. This is what we see here—they blaspheme God.

Why? Because of pride. Pride blinds people into thinking they can do no wrong and that God's actions are unjust. They refuse to see their own sin and believe they are good. Pride is the root of this problem. Satan himself is the proudest creature in the universe. Even though he knows his end, his pride deceives him into thinking he can still overthrow God if he gathers enough followers. Those who are proud, sinful, and ambitious for their own glory will follow him. When they fail and are defeated, they become angrier at God rather than acknowledging their sin.

Our sin, especially pride, is incredibly destructive. Pride blinds us, makes us foolish, and causes us to deceive ourselves. Scripture says, “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*” Those who refuse to repent are headed for destruction.

When the truth is preached and it convicts us, how do we respond? Do we criticise the preacher or pastor? The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to convict our hearts. The preacher may not know your specific sins, but God does, and His Spirit speaks to you through His Word. Do you respond with humility and repentance, or with anger and resentment?

When the Holy Spirit convicts you, it is not the preacher pricking your heart—it is the Lord. Do you say, “Lord, I'm sorry. I want to change. Please forgive me,” or do you get angry at the truth and curse God and His Word?

May the Lord help us examine our hearts. How do we respond when tested, tried, or tempted? Do we praise God, or do we curse Him? If we curse Him, we behave no differently than those who bear the mark of the beast. May the Lord be merciful to us. When rebuked, may we repent quickly, just like Peter.

Peter once opposed Jesus, and the Lord said to him, "*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*" Yet, Peter repented and was restored, becoming the leading apostle.

I pray that we all have the right heart in these last days. Let us make sure we have a heart of faith and humility. How do you respond to the Lord, His Word, and His dealings with you? You can tell by how you react. Let us be praisers of God, not blasphemers.

XXXI

MOTHER OF HARLOTS

Revelation 17:1-18

What is this Babylon? This is not the first time the name is mentioned—it was already introduced in chapter 14, verse 8. In chapter 14, verse 8, we read: *“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”*

Babylon is also mentioned in chapter 16, verse 19: *“And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.”*

This great city, Babylon, will one day be reduced to dust and ashes, and here we read of it again in chapter 17, verse 5.

In all three mentions of Babylon, we see two aspects: first, a political Babylon—a one-world empire and government that will arise in the last days under the rule of the Antichrist, also known as the Beast. Second, there is a religious Babylon. Chapter 17 emphasises this religious Babylon, which represents a counterfeit, apostate church that has fallen away from the faith.

How do we know this? In verse 1, we read: *“Come hither; I will show thee the judgement of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters.”*

This Babylon is described as a harlot, or prostitute. In verse 5, she is referred to as *“the mother of harlots,”* meaning she is the chief harlot, leading many apostate churches. This symbolism of harlotry and prostitution is found frequently in the Old Testament, where it represents spiritual adultery.

In the Old Testament, this charge of spiritual adultery was levelled against the nation of Israel, which is described as the wife of Jehovah. Jehovah, the living and faithful God, had shown His love for Israel through miraculous deliverance from Egypt and the promise and possession of the land of Canaan—a land flowing with milk and honey. Despite all of God’s demonstrations of His power and love, Israel often went astray, prostituting herself by worshiping the gods of the surrounding nations.

God, being a jealous and holy God, had to punish and chastise Israel when she fell into idolatry. This same imagery of fornication and adultery also applies to the church, which is called the bride of Christ. The bride must remain chaste and pure, ready to present herself clean before the Lord. However, just as Israel went astray, the New Testament warns that the church will do the same.

Many liberal and modernistic churches today deny the fundamentals of the faith. They reject the virgin birth, deny the miracles of Christ, and teach that His death was not a substitutionary atonement but merely a moral example. These churches deny His resurrection, calling it a myth. Such apostate churches deny the very essence of the gospel, and at the top of them all is the “mother of harlots,” a church that leads others astray.

This harlot church is described in feminine terms in verse 1 and as a “woman” in verse 3. The Greek word for “church” (*ekklesia*) is feminine, pointing to a religious institution that has prostituted itself with the world and fallen into idolatry and immorality. This church will also have political ties, aligning itself with the kings and governments of the world.

There will come a time when a one-world government under the Antichrist will arise, supported by a one-world church. This church will also support the government in a mutually beneficial relationship. Together, they will rule the earth and fight against Christ and His saints.

This Babylon is described as sitting on many waters, representing peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues—a global entity with immense influence. Unlike small, obscure churches with limited reach, this institution will be well-known, grand, and powerful, with billions of followers.

In verse 2, we see that the kings of the earth have committed fornication with this harlot church, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication—her idolatry. Unlike true churches that worship in spirit and truth, this church is steeped in idolatry, with statues, images, and worldly practices infiltrating its worship.

We are reminded that we must remain pure and chaste, worshiping God according to His Word, and not be tempted to conform to worldly practices. If other churches follow Christ, we may follow them; if they do not, we must not. The Bible must be our sole, supreme, and final authority for faith and practice—not traditions or customs.

If we understand God’s Word more deeply as we mature in faith, we must change to follow His way—the straight and narrow path. When we obey His Word, God will bless us.

Returning to the text, we read in verse 3: *“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”*

This scarlet beast with seven heads represents the seven world empires of history in relation to Israel: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived Roman Empire (the seventh head). The ten horns symbolise the revived Roman Empire, out of which the Antichrist (the “little horn” described in Daniel 7) will arise. This political Babylon—a one-world government—will be ruled by the Antichrist, who will blaspheme against God and His Word.

In verse 4, the woman is further described as being arrayed in purple and scarlet, dressed regally with royal colours, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. She is depicted as a church full of power, pomp, and wealth. She holds a golden cup—not just an ordinary glass or clay cup—but one filled with abominations and the filthiness of fornication. This is a very vivid description.

In verse 5, the mystery is revealed more clearly. Upon her forehead is written, *“Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.”* A mystery refers to something that was hidden or unclear in the past but is now revealed, especially in the New Testament.

In the Book of Daniel, chapter 12, Daniel was shown many visions of the future. However, certain things were sealed and not understood in his time. Chapter 12, verse 4 says, *“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”* In Daniel’s time, it was not yet the time for full understanding. These mysteries would only be revealed at the end times.

Today, we see much travel with planes taking off and landing frequently. Changi Airport is one of the busiest airports in the world. People from all over are travelling here, there, everywhere. In addition, knowledge has increased with the internet and mass media, signifying that we are living in the end times. These mysteries are now being revealed one by one, many of them in the New Testament. One such mystery is Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.

In verses 6 and 7, John saw the woman—the harlot—drunken with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Despite bearing the name of Christ, this woman kills believers and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. She is drunk with their blood, representing the mass martyrdom of many saints, thousands, and tens of thousands.

Church history reveals the fulfilment of this prophecy. This woman represents a murderous church, persecuting believers. When John saw her, he marvelled at her ability to do such things. In verse 7, the angel said to John, *“Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and ten horns.”*

The beast represents the kingdom of the Antichrist. In verse 8, it is described as *“the beast that was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition.”* Those whose names are not written in the Book of Life will marvel at the beast. This beast, none other than the Antichrist, is described as one who was alive, seemingly died, and then came back to life—a counterfeit resurrection mimicking Christ’s death and resurrection. He is a false messiah presenting himself as the Saviour of the world.

Verse 11 describes the Antichrist as *“the beast that was and is not.”* He is the eighth king and comes out of the seven. The Antichrist will be destroyed, going into perdition like Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition. The Antichrist is an end-time Judas—a false disciple of Christ.

In verse 12, the ten horns represent ten future kings who have not yet received kingdoms. They will receive power from the Antichrist and rule with him for a short time, which likely refers to the last three and a half years of the Great Tribulation. During this time, the Antichrist will reveal his true nature and openly rebel against Christ, persecuting Israel. These ten kings will support the Antichrist and give their power to him.

In verse 13, these ten kings are described as having one mind, acting by consensus to give their power to the beast. Verse 14 reveals that they will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.

The Antichrist, together with his kings and kingdom, will fight against the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. What will be the outcome? You may be following the SEA Games right now, watching how many medals Singapore has won and our current standing—fourth or fifth place. It’s exciting to see our progress. But in this end-time battle, the outcome is already determined: Jesus wins hands down.

He will achieve complete victory, symbolically claiming all the gold, silver, and bronze medals. As Lord of lords and King of kings, no one can challenge Him. And we, too, will share in the victory. Those with Him are described as “called, chosen, and faithful.” We are God’s faithful children and servants, and we will also share in His victory.

Even as terrifying events are prophesied to unfold, we need not be afraid. We are on the Lord’s side and are already safe in His victory. Because we are called, chosen, and faithful to Him, He will keep us. He cannot deny His word or fail in His promises.

Verse 15 states, *“The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.”* In verse 16, we see that the ten horns on the beast *“shall hate the harlot and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”*

At first, the Antichrist and this harlot—the apostate church—appear to support each other. But eventually, one will destroy the other. The ten horns, representing ten future kings or governments that will align with the Antichrist, will ultimately turn against the harlot. Initially, they pretend to love her and use her, but once she has served her purpose, they will humiliate and destroy her. This is a betrayal, much like Judas betraying Judas.

The wicked will destroy the wicked in wicked ways. As seen in Psalm 76:10, God uses even the wrath of men to fulfil His purposes: “*Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*” God, in His providence, will cause the wicked to judge and destroy each other as part of His divine plan.

In verse 18, it is revealed that “*the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*” This is symbolic of the end-time Babylon—a one-world government and empire ruled by the Antichrist. This final world government is expected to arise from a revived Roman Empire, likely involving Europe and the United States. The European Union is gaining power, and though the United States is not part of the EU, it is a leading member of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Could this revived Roman Empire and NATO alliance give rise to the end-time world government? It remains to be seen. The identity of the Antichrist is also still unknown. However, it is clear that we are living in the end times.

We must be certain of our salvation. Those who are saved, called, chosen, and faithful are safe. Trusting in the Lord leads to salvation, but trusting in the devil will only lead to betrayal. May the Lord help us remain faithful and secure in Him.

XXXII

COME OUT MY PEOPLE

Revelation 18:1-24

This chapter essentially tells us about the final destruction of end-time Babylon. Its destruction is as certain as the destruction of ancient Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. Just as that Babylon was destroyed, so will the future Babylon be.

Who will ensure its destruction? God Himself.

In verses 5–8, we read that God will judge Babylon for its sins, for her iniquities have reached heaven. Please don't think that God doesn't know—He is in heaven and knows all things. He has remembered her sins: *“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works. In the cup which she has filled, fill to her double.”* There is justice.

Verse 8 declares: *“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day—death, mourning, and famine. She shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord who judges her.”* Since Babylon was ruthless and merciless in killing the children of God—the apostles, prophets, and saints—God will show her no mercy when He judges her.

In verse 20, the Lord declares that His servants will be avenged: *“Vengeance is not ours; vengeance is God's. Vengeance is mine, and I have My time.”* God says, *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.”*

Verse 24 reveals that *“in her was found the blood of prophets, saints, and all who were slain on the earth.”* Here we see the sovereign God of justice and judgement ruling over all events on earth. Nothing escapes His attention. His providence toward His children is good, but His providence against the wicked is judgement. Evil will come upon them, and God will judge accordingly.

Today, we see the harlot church flirting with the world and seducing it. The world, in turn, commits fornication with her, making the harlot church full of uncleanness. Verse 2 states: *“He cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen.”* The phrase is repeated to emphasise its certainty. Babylon has become the habitation of devils, filled with demons, foul spirits, and unclean, hateful birds—utterly unclean.

This mirrors the time of Jesus when the temple in Jerusalem, meant to be a house of prayer, was turned into a den of thieves by the chief priests and Sadducees. What did the Lord do? He cast them out, cleansing the temple. This foreshadows how He will purge His nation and church in the future, restoring pure worship when His kingdom comes and He returns to rule from Zion in Jerusalem.

Given the sins and uncleanness around us, what should the church do? Verse 4 tells us: *“Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins and receive not her plagues.”* This is the doctrine of biblical separation. The Greek imperative used here is a command, not an option—it is a divine law. The Lord commands His people to be separate, living holy lives in His kingdom.

We must separate because we do not want to partake in Babylon's sins or plagues. The word “partaker” comes from two Greek words: one meaning “with” and the other being “fellowship” (*koinonia*). It's a strong word that implies having no close relationship or active participation with Babylon's sins.

If we are linked with Babylon and found in close company when God judges her, we risk suffering alongside her. Therefore, we must flee, just as one evacuates an area before a volcanic eruption. God commands us to come out for our safety.

A story about the Apostle John illustrates this. According to Polycarp and Irenaeus, John once went to a public Roman bathhouse. When he saw Cerinthus—a chief heretic—enter, John fled, warning everyone to leave because the building might collapse. This reflects John’s command in 2 John 9–11: “*Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house or greet him, for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*”

Do not receive heretics or show them hospitality, for doing so makes you a partaker in their sins.

The command of separation is not new. It dates back to the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 7:1–12, God commanded Israel not to make covenants or intermarry with pagan nations, as they would lead Israel astray. They were to destroy altars, images, and idols because they were a holy people chosen by God. The command to be holy is rooted in God’s holiness: “*Be holy, for I am holy.*”

The doctrine of separation is essential for church purification and preservation. It is not merely a denominational distinctive but a fundamental doctrine in the Holy Scriptures. In the spiritual body of Christ, just as we have red blood cells (life-giving doctrines like the virgin birth and resurrection), we also need white blood cells (the doctrine of separation) to protect against spiritual corruption. Without separation, the church commits ecclesiastical suicide and will become apostate, like Babylon.

God again commands in Revelation: “*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues.*” This command is ancient, found even in Deuteronomy 7. God’s people must remain separate, holy, and faithful to Him.

This was specifically for Israel, but the principle must be applied to our personal lives. Any idolatry—visible or invisible, including the love of money—must be thrown out, cast out, and destroyed. Any idols in our homes should be removed. Take note of this important spiritual principle that applies here.

Our mission today is to evangelise. In Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus gave the Great Commission. In Acts 1:8, He said, “*Ye are my witnesses.*” How can we be witnesses? The doctrine and practice of separation are evangelistic. God commanded Israel to keep themselves separated and not be contaminated so the world would know there is only one living and true God. The truth must be clearly seen and the line distinctly drawn. There is only one true God—all other gods are false.

For people to be saved, they must believe in the God of Israel. God told Israel, “*Ye are my witnesses.*” (Isaiah 43:10, 12). To fulfil this, Israel had to live separated lives so the truth of the only living God and Saviour of the world would be clearly visible. At the same time, they had to bear good and godly testimony, to be holy as God is holy. God gave them His holy laws—the Ten Commandments—so they could be a light to the nations.

The doctrine of separation is a command, not merely a suggestion. Today, we separate ourselves from the unclean so our testimony and the truth may be visible, and so we are protected and preserved from the world’s evil and corruption. This allows us to maintain a godly testimony for Christ’s sake.

Although we are in the world, we are not of the world. Jesus made this clear: separation is not isolation. We are not called to pack up and live in a remote place. Rather, we are in the world, but not of it.

In John 17:11, Jesus said, *“Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world.”* His disciples, like us, remain in the world. Yet, in John 17:14, Jesus declared, *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”* He emphasised that the world hates believers because we are different, obeying the Word of God. Verse 17 states, *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* To be sanctified means to be set apart and cleansed from all uncleanness.

By being sanctified through God’s Word, we are separated from the world for the purpose of evangelism. Our separation should demonstrate clearly the way of salvation—how people can be saved from sin, Satan, and judgement.

Separation is not to be despised. It is lifegiving and lifesaving. We are in the world but not of it. Separation is not isolationism.

In 1 Corinthians 10:19–21, Paul warns against participating in idol worship, which includes eating food offered to idols. Although idols are nothing more than wood, metal, or clay, the sacrifices made to them are offered to demons, not to God. Paul commands, *“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”* Participating in both the Lord’s Table (Communion) and idol worship is impossible because it creates a contradiction.

When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we declare our close relationship with Him. If we also participate in idol worship, we imply fellowship with demons. God is a jealous God and will not tolerate spiritual adultery. We must worship God alone.

Does separation mean we cannot eat food sold by unbelievers or offered to idols? No. In 1 Corinthians 10:25, Paul says, *“Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake.”* You are not participating in idol worship by simply buying and eating food from the market.

If an unbeliever invites you to a meal, you may eat without asking questions. However, if the host declares the food has been offered to idols, Paul advises refraining for the sake of conscience and testimony (1 Corinthians 10:26-27). Eating in that situation may imply participation in idol worship and blur the line between truth and falsehood.

Separation does not mean isolation. We can eat with unbelieving friends or colleagues, using such opportunities to share the gospel. Isolation would make evangelism impossible.

If we only rented facilities or bought goods from Christians, it would be impractical. Separation means living distinct, holy lives—not avoiding all interaction with unbelievers.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1, the command of separation is emphasised four times: (1) *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”* (2) *“Come out from among them.”* (3) *“Be ye separate.”* (4) *“Touch not the unclean thing.”*

God desires holiness from His people. When we are holy, we enjoy close fellowship with Him and His blessings. However, if we embrace spiritual adultery, God will distance Himself. Therefore, let us keep ourselves clean and separate so God may receive us and we may enjoy His blessings.

XXXIII
HEAVENLY SERVICES

Revelation 19:1-10

We are transported into heaven—it is a heavenly scene. Over here, we have a glimpse of what we will do in heaven. And what will we do in heaven? Over here, we find two services in heaven. First is a worship service, and the second is a wedding service.

First, let's look at the worship service, which is found in Revelation 19:1–5.

In Revelation 19:1, we read: *“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.”*

Not only is worship found in verse 1, but also in verses 4 and 5: *“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”*

So worship in heaven is for sure. Worship is the primary activity in heaven.

Who will worship the Lord? His angels will worship Him, and we, His saints—all believers from the beginning to the end, from Genesis to Revelation—will bow down to worship the Lord with one unified voice and our whole hearts.

It says here there are *“much people,”* not just a few.

What will they be shouting or singing? A great voice saying, *“Alleluia.”* What's the meaning of *“Alleluia”*? It's a Hebrew word: *hallelu* means praise, *lu* means you, and *Jah* refers to Jehovah or the LORD. So *“Praise ye the LORD”* or *“Praise Jehovah”* is what it means.

Why do we praise the Lord? We worship Him because He is worthy. Revelation 4:11 tells us: *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*

Not only here in chapter 4, but also in Revelation 5:12: *“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”*

Worthy is God. Worthy is our Saviour, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

We worship Him because He is worthy. Some say that worship is *“worth-ship.”* We are worshipping His worth—His infinite, eternal worth. Surely, He alone is worthy of all worship and praise.

We praise Him not only for who He is, but also for what He has done. In Revelation 19:1, we read: *“Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.”*

Why? Because He has given us salvation. He has saved us and shown us His bountiful grace and mercy. He saved us from our sin and paid a great price—giving His only begotten Son to suffer and die for our sins. He didn't just suffer for a day or two. He suffered for three and a half years on earth, culminating in His suffering on the cross.

On the cross, He bore the sins of the world and shed His precious blood so we might receive the forgiveness of sins. He was buried, and on the third day, He rose again. We thank God for this Saviour and His salvation.

All the glory belongs to Him. Salvation is not our work—it is of the Lord. Ephesians 2:8–9 says: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

Even our faith is a gift from God. There’s no room for boasting, except in the Lord. We glorify and thank Him because He loved us when we were unlovable. We give Him all glory and honour, for He alone deserves it.

We also praise Him for His power. Revelation 19:6 says: *“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”*

He is all-powerful, omnipotent. Because He is all-powerful, none of us will be lost. Jesus said in John 10:28–29: *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”*

We are safe in His almighty hands. He is faithful to His promises. Romans 8:30 assures us: *“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”*

The entire process of salvation—from predestination to glorification—is unbreakable. He will see it through because He is all-powerful.

We also praise Him for His justice. Revelation 19:2 says: *“For true and righteous are his judgements: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”*

His judgements are true and righteous. He makes no mistakes. Human judges may err, but God’s judgements are perfect and final. His justice is based on His perfect moral standard, as given in the Ten Commandments.

Though it may seem that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, there will be justice on the final day. 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

God gives people time to repent. But there is an appointed time of judgement. He will judge the harlot church—a church filled with idolatry, immorality, heresy, and persecution of the saints.

Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Romans 12:19 says: *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

In the meantime, we must preach the gospel so people may come out of this world and into the Lord’s church.

Finally, there will also be a wedding service in heaven—a glorious, eternal worship service filled with joy and praise to the Lord for all eternity.

There will also be a wedding service in heaven, as we read in Revelation 19:6-10.

In verse 6, we read: *“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude.”* The passage mentions the voices of many people in heaven, sounding like many waters and mighty thunderings. Imagine how majestic and loud that praise will be when the great multitude, made up of all who have believed in the Lord Jesus from the beginning to the end, praises Him. This multitude includes both Jews and Gentiles saved throughout history.

They will praise the Lord, saying, *“Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”*

Why do we praise the Lord at that time? Because the wedding of the Lamb has come. Verse 7 tells us: *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”*

The phrases “glad” and “rejoice” are noteworthy, and they appear together in Matthew 5:10-12, the final part of the Beatitudes. Matthew 5:10-12 says: *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*

The words “rejoice” and “be exceeding glad” in Matthew 5 are the same words used in Revelation 19:7. The context is also persecution, as the saints were persecuted and executed by the harlot church. Now, God fulfils His promise with great rewards.

If we are experiencing persecution for righteousness’ sake today, we should not be discouraged. Instead, be encouraged by God’s promises. We can be glad and rejoice, knowing we will be part of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Who is the wife? The bride of Christ is the church, as seen in Ephesians 5:25-27: *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

Verse 32 says, *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* The church is the bride, and Christ is the bridegroom.

Paul also affirms this in 2 Corinthians 11:2: *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”*

The bride contrasts sharply with the harlot church, which is corrupt and adulterous. The true church, however, is sanctified, kept pure, and faithful. One day, she will be presented to Christ, perfect and purified.

When we reach heaven, we will be perfected—sinless, with no more tears or weaknesses. Our resurrected bodies will be powerful, and we will be clothed in fine linen, symbolising the righteousness of Christ. Revelation 19:8 says: *“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”*

This righteousness is not our own but the righteousness of Christ, who clothes us with His salvation. The wedding garment will be white and pure because of Him. The bride will be justified, sanctified, and glorified—completely ready for the marriage.

The timing of this wedding service is significant. Before it takes place, there will be a house-cleaning: the world must be judged. Revelation 19:11 onward describes the judgement at Armageddon, where Christ will come down to earth with His saints. Afterward, the great white throne judgement in Revelation 20 will occur. Only after these judgements will the marriage take place. The number of saved believers—the bride of Christ—will be complete, and the wedding will occur.

We see more clues in Revelation 21:2: *“And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

This event takes place after Armageddon, the Millennium, and the great white throne judgement. The new Jerusalem, the eternal residence of the bride, will descend from heaven. Jesus promised in John 14:2-3 to prepare a place for us, and this place will be ready at that time.

The new Jerusalem is a literal city but also symbolises the church—the bride of Christ—beautiful, bright, and glorious.

The wedding service and feast will occur when the church is complete, and the bride's eternal residence is ready.

Now is the time to prepare for the wedding. How do we prepare? By coming out from the world and being sanctified by the truth—God's Word.

As we observe the Lord's Supper, let us remember what Christ has done for us and look forward to His return. He longs for the day when He will receive His bride. Until then, we must worship, praise, glorify, and honour Him, for He is worthy.

XXXIV

ARMAGEDDON

Revelation 19:10-21

Here we find that when Jesus comes back to fight the Battle of Armageddon, not only will He land on Mount Megiddo, but He will also step on the Mount of Olives, which will split in two. This has not yet happened; the Mount of Olives is still intact, and the Lord is still graciously waiting for people to repent and believe in Him so they will not come under judgement.



Tel Megiddo

However, a time will come when this event will occur. God says, *“I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle,”* which is the Battle of Armageddon. This battle pertains to the nation of Israel, and the armies will march against Israel.

Today, things are shaping up. In the Bible, we read of Gog and Magog, which refer to Russia. Russia will be hostile towards Israel, and we see a very hostile Russia today—one that has no qualms about invading a sovereign state. Additionally, we see the European Union and NATO becoming stronger and more united, with a revived Roman Empire in the works.

How about Israel? Just a few days ago, on June 16, news reported that Israel will be supplying gas to Europe. The Lord has blessed Israel with abundant natural gas off its shores in the Mediterranean Sea. With Russia cutting its supply, Israel is now stepping in to supply Europe with gas.

Things are shaping up, dear friends. Do you doubt that we are living in the last days? Be discerning and watchful. We are not children of darkness; we are children of light. God has given us the light of His Word to warn us and prepare us for His soon return.

In Revelation 19:11, we read how Jesus will come back from heaven. It says, *“And I saw heaven opened.”* This fulfils what the angels said in Acts 1. Remember when Jesus ascended

to heaven? The angels told the disciples that this same Jesus, who was taken up into heaven, would come back in like manner. Although this promise was spoken about 2,000 years ago, God has not forgotten. He will fulfil His Word.



Mt of Olives Today

When Jesus first came, He rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey, humble and ready to lay down His life as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He endured humiliation and crucifixion for our sins, shedding His precious blood and suffering the pains of death and hell. But He was raised from the dead. His first coming was marked by suffering and humiliation.

However, the second time He comes, He will be riding a white horse as a victorious, warring King—the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This white horse symbolises His victory and coronation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He who sits on this white horse is called “Faithful and True,” for the Lord Jesus is faithful to His promises. He cannot break His promises, for they are “yes” and “amen.” He will judge and make war in righteousness, which refers to His personal holiness and the perfection of His law. Only God, who is perfectly righteous and omniscient, has the right to be judge, jury, and executioner. His eyes, like a flame of fire, symbolise His omniscience—He sees and knows all, even the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Revelation 19:12, we read that He has a name written that no one knows except Himself. Although the Bible gives us many names for God, such as Jehovah and Jesus, no one can fully comprehend His person and attributes. God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. We may study God’s Word and know Him more and more, but we will also realise how much we do not know. God’s nature is unfathomable.

After studying theology for many years, one realises how inadequate human understanding is. Studying God’s Word is not just a lifelong endeavour; it will continue in the life to come. God’s Word remains fresh and enriching every time we revisit it. Like the manna in the wilderness,

His Word is ever sweet when received with thanksgiving and worship. Calvin was right when he said the key to studying God and His Word is “humility, humility, humility.”

In Revelation 19:13, it says, “*He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God.*” This identifies the one seated on the white horse as none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His precious blood for our atonement on the cross. It is not the Father who died for us, but the Son.

There is no doubt about it: the one who is coming, the one riding on a white horse, the one who is faithful and true, the one who will judge and make war, and the one whose eyes are a flame of fire, wearing many crowns and bearing the name of God that no man knew—it is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was crucified on the cross for our sins, shedding his precious blood, and He is the Word of God.

In verse 14, we see the armies coming with the Lord Jesus. The armies in heaven follow Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Who are these armies? There’s no need to guess—their identity is revealed here as those clothed in fine linen, white and clean. The context further clarifies this in verse 8: “*To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*”

The armies refer to saints—believers, blood-bought and cleansed by the Word of God, now clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. They will come down with Him at this moment. Before the Great Tribulation, they were caught up and resurrected, and now, at the end of the seven-year tribulation, they will descend with him, also riding on white horses.

Some may ask, “Will we be riding with the Lord to come down and fight?” The answer is no—we will not fight at all. We will merely be spectators, witnessing the glory and power of our Saviour. There’s no need to prepare by learning hand-to-hand combat or taekwondo. Even the Lord Jesus doesn’t need to strike or punch.

How will He destroy the armies of the Antichrist? Verse 15 tells us: “*Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword.*” This sharp sword is His Word. With it, He will smite the nations, rule them with a rod of iron, and tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. He is the same God who created heaven and earth with his Word, saying, “Let there be light,” and there was light. His powerful, creative Word will now become a destructive Word of judgement. One word from the Lord Jesus, and all the armies of the Antichrist and the devil will be defeated and destroyed.

In verse 16, we read: “*And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*” This title, written in capital letters, emphasises His unique authority. It fulfils Philippians 2:10-11, which states that “*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

Verse 17 describes an angel standing in the sun, crying out to all the birds flying in the heavens to gather for the “*supper of the great God.*” This is in contrast to the “*marriage supper of the Lamb*” mentioned in verse 9: “*Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.*”

Believers, bought by the blood of Christ and cleansed from sin, will partake in the joyous wedding supper of the Lamb. Unbelievers, however, face the dreadful supper of the great God—a supper of death. God will gather vultures and scavenging birds to feed on the carcasses of those who rebel against him.

Verse 18 says: “*They may eat the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, horses, and all men, both free and bond, small and great.*” No matter one’s rank or status, they will all be consumed

by the vultures. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Why make war with him when you can make peace? The gospel is the gospel of peace—be reconciled to God. Believe in Him and trust that He suffered and died for our sins. He invites us all to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

In verse 19, the beast (the Antichrist) and the kings of the earth gather their armies to make war against Christ and his army. They will be utterly defeated. Verse 20 tells us: *“The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who wrought miracles before him, deceiving those who received the mark of the beast.”*

Both the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone. This judgement is immediate—they are not killed, nor do they go to hell first. They are cast body and soul into the lake of fire directly, becoming the first inhabitants of this eternal place of torment.

Revelation 20 describes the Great White Throne Judgement: *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”*

Death and hell will give up their dead, and all whose names are not written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Will Christians stand before the Great White Throne and be judged? Some “Christians,” in name only, will be there. These so-called “believers”, who claim Christ but never truly knew Him, will not find their names in the book of life.

Matthew 7 warns: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”* But Jesus will respond, *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

These false Christians who practise a corrupt version of the faith will face eternal separation from God. Let this be a solemn reminder to trust fully in the Lord and follow Him in truth and sincerity.

XXXV

THE MILLENNIUM

Revelation 20:1-6

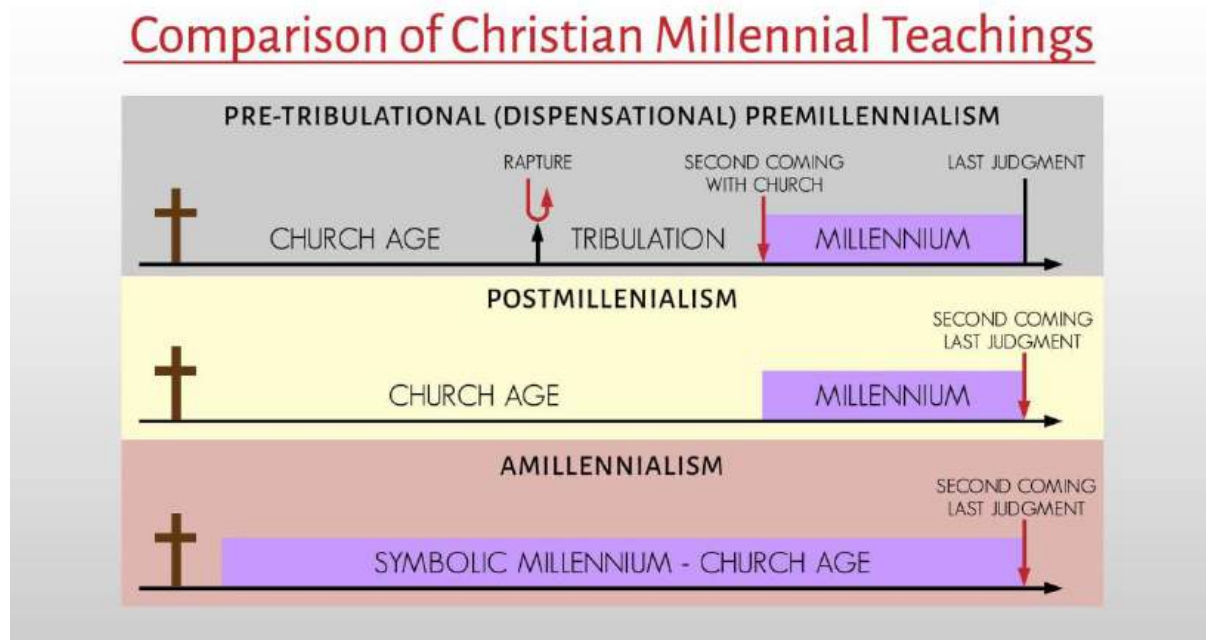
When Christ came the first time, the angels sang a doxology: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*” But we may wonder, where is this peace? Do we see peace on earth today?

There is no peace. Wars, conflicts, and killings dominate the world. A recent shocking example is the assassination of Japan’s former Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe. The ongoing war in Ukraine, with Russia invading a sovereign state, further illustrates the turmoil. Additionally, society is plagued by murders and violence—there is no peace on earth.

What about within the church? Sadly, there is also much strife, envy, and discord. Where is the good will among men? It seems absent, replaced instead by hatred. Where is the charity that ought to be evident among us? It is scarcely found today.

If we think things are bad now, worse times are yet to come. So where is the promised peace on earth and good will among men? Has God forgotten His promise?

Take heart—God has not forgotten at all. His promises are always true, yes, and amen. However, He fulfils them in His own time. A time will come when the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords—our Lord Jesus—will return. He will destroy all His enemies and reign on earth for a thousand years. This period is known as the Millennium, which means one thousand years. The Bible mentions this six times in Revelation 20. It will be a blessed and glorious time of peace.



Revelation 20:6 declares: “*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*”

Here’s the key question: Is this thousand-year reign of Christ on earth a literal, physical rule, or is it a spiritual reign from heaven in the hearts of men? Is the Millennium a present reality, or is it a future reign?

There are two views:

(1) Amillennialism – This view denies a literal, physical reign of Christ on earth. It teaches that the Millennium is happening now, that Christ is reigning spiritually from heaven through His church. It also holds that the nation of Israel has been replaced by the church.

(2) Premillennialism – This view holds that Christ will reign literally and physically on earth for a thousand years after His return. His people will reign with Him.

So, which view is correct? There is only one correct interpretation because God’s Word has only one meaning. God means what He says and says what He means. Our duty is to understand what God has said and what He means by what He says.

We cannot rely on human reasoning to interpret Scripture. Instead, we must interpret Scripture with Scripture.

How should we understand biblical prophecy? God has already shown us how to interpret prophecy—by looking at how prophecies about Christ’s first coming were fulfilled.

Consider the famous prophecy of the virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14: *“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*

Did this prophecy have a spiritualised meaning, or was it fulfilled literally? It was fulfilled literally in the birth of Christ through the virgin Mary. “Virgin” means virgin—the Hebrew word is precise, referring to a young, unmarried woman. “Son” means Son—it does not symbolise an institution, the church, or a nation. It refers to a literal person. “Immanuel” means God with us—the Son of God became the Son of Man.

Similarly, the prophecy of Christ’s birthplace in Micah 5:2 was fulfilled literally: *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”*

Again, this was fulfilled literally—Jesus was born in Bethlehem Ephratah, the Bethlehem in Judea, not the one in Galilee. Bethlehem means Bethlehem. Jerusalem means Jerusalem. Israel means Israel.

The Bible must be read literally, plainly, and naturally. When the plain sense makes good sense, we should seek no other sense.

Of course, the Bible contains figures of speech, and the context helps us identify them. For example, when Jesus said, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches”* (John 15:5), He did not mean He was literally a plant—this was clearly a metaphor.

However, when prophecies are written in plain, literal terms, they should be interpreted literally.

Another example is the prophecy of the triumphal entry. In Zechariah 9:9, the Bible prophesies how Jesus would enter Jerusalem: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”*

This was fulfilled literally when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey before His crucifixion. Zion means Zion. Jerusalem means Jerusalem. King means King. A colt means a colt. Every detail was fulfilled literally.

The same principle applies to Christ’s second coming. If prophecies about Christ’s first coming were fulfilled, then prophecies about His second coming will also be fulfilled literally. God is

consistent. Therefore, when the Bible says that Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years, it means exactly that—a future, literal, physical reign.

We must not spiritualise away what God has plainly stated. Instead, we must submit our thinking to the authority of Scripture and interpret prophecy the way God has already shown us—literally.

God's Word is true. Christ will return, and He will reign!

In the book of Zechariah, there are not only prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ, but also prophecies concerning His second coming. For instance, Zechariah 14:1 says: *"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee."* Verse 2 continues: *"For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle..."*

Here, "Jerusalem" must mean Jerusalem. Do not interpret Jerusalem to mean the church or something else—Jerusalem means Jerusalem. God says, *"I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle."*

Verse 2-3 describes the dire situation in Jerusalem: *"The city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."*

This means that terrible things will happen to Jerusalem. The Jews will be persecuted in the end times by the Antichrist and his armies.

Verse 3 declares: *"Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle."*

The Lord Himself will come to defend and deliver Israel.

Verse 4 states: *"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives..."*

The Mount of Olives means the Mount of Olives—no other mountain. Just as Bethlehem means Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives means the Mount of Olives. This passage specifies that Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east. The verse also prophesies that the Mount of Olives will split in two, creating a great valley.

This has not happened yet. It will happen in the future when Jesus returns. Therefore, do not expect Bukit Timah or Mount Faber to be split—only the Mount of Olives will be split when Jesus comes.

Verse 9 proclaims: *"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one."* Verse 11 further states: *"And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited."*

Has this happened yet? No. Jerusalem is not yet a peaceful place, though its name means "City of Peace."

In past Holy Land pilgrimages, people often asked me, *"Pastor, is it safe to go?"* I always told them the truth: No, it is not safe. There is trouble in Israel. There is no peace. Bullets may be fired, missiles may fall, and riots and violence occur.

However, if we go, we must be sure that it is God's will. We must go with much prayer and trust in God's protection. Thank God that FEBC has organised 20 Holy Land pilgrimages, all of which were blessed. God has preserved us and granted spiritual blessings.

Yet, the time will come when Jerusalem will be truly peaceful—no more bullets, no more missiles, no more fighting. This will happen when Jesus rules over Jerusalem and the entire world.

This passage also demonstrates how Scripture must be interpreted literally in its plain sense. God means what He says and says what He means.

The 1,000 years mentioned here, as well as in Revelation 20, must mean 1,000 years. If numbers in the Bible are to have meaning, they must be taken at face value.

Likewise, other numbers in Revelation—42 months, 1,260 days (three and a half years), and the 24 elders—should not be reinterpreted into something else. 42 months means 42 months. 1,260 days means 1,260 days. 24 elders mean 24 elders—12 representing the Old Testament and 12 representing the New Testament. The two witnesses are literally two witnesses.

All these numbers must be taken literally. A thousand years means a thousand years—it is not just a very long time.

Some who hold to the amillennial view claim that the millennium began when Jesus ascended to heaven. Yet, 2,000 years have passed, and we do not know how much longer remains. But this interpretation has no biblical basis.

God Himself tells us how to interpret these things—literally.

Are we in the Millennium now? Some claim we are currently in the millennium. But if that were true, then where should Satan be?

According to Revelation 20:1-3, Satan should be bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, unable to deceive the nations. *“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years...”*

But is Satan bound today? No! We see great satanic activity in the world.

Scripture must interpret Scripture. If Satan were bound, why would the Apostle Peter give this warning in 1 Peter 5:8? *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

Clearly, Satan is active. He is not bound in the bottomless pit. He is prowling the earth, seeking to destroy. That is why Ephesians 6 exhorts us to put on the whole armour of God—to protect ourselves from the devil’s schemes.

Revelation 20:6 states that believers will reign with Christ for a thousand years. Is this reign spiritual (from heaven) or physical (on earth)?

Revelation 5:10 clarifies: *“And [He] hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* This reign is physical, on earth, not just a spiritual reign in heaven.

Has this happened yet? No! Right now, believers are ruled over by others. But one day, we will reign with Christ when He returns and establishes His kingdom on earth.

This is why we reject the amillennial view. We hold to the premillennial view—that Christ will return before the millennium and establish His kingdom on earth.

This belief is part of our Bible-Presbyterian distinctive. If we do not believe in Christ’s premillennial return, then we should not call ourselves Bible-Presbyterians. Some within the Bible-Presbyterian Church are already questioning this doctrine, but it remains a foundational truth.

The original Westminster Confession of Faith does not explicitly address the millennium. However, the Bible Presbyterian Church in the United States amended its constitution to affirm premillennialism. Chapter 33, *Of the Last Things*, states: *“God hath appointed a day which, in Scripture, may represent a period of time, including the thousand years following the visible,*

personal, and premillennial return of Christ, wherein He will judge the world in righteousness.”

This clearly upholds premillennialism: Christ must return before the millennium. He will reign physically on earth for 1,000 years. Israel will be restored and delivered. God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be fulfilled literally.

In that day, Israel will be the greatest nation. Jerusalem will be the capital of the world. Christ will reign from the throne of David over the entire earth for a millennium.

That is why we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, *“Thy kingdom come.”* We are praying for Christ’s return and the establishment of His earthly kingdom.

Many Old Testament prophecies also describe the millennium, including Isaiah 2, which details the peaceful conditions that will exist in Christ’s kingdom.

The truth is clear. Christ will return, He will reign, and we will reign with Him.

Let us hold fast to this biblical doctrine and reject any attempt to spiritualise or explain away the literal return and reign of Christ.

So, you want to prepare yourself for the Millennium.

Don’t be a politician. If you want to rule, wait until Jesus comes.

But if you want to prepare, perhaps a good occupation would be farming. I think there will be a lot of farming in the Millennium. You can learn it from Adam—he was a farmer.

There are other things as well. Let’s turn to Isaiah 11. Isaiah 11:1-9 says: *“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor; and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.”*

This passage describes the Lord Jesus—Israel’s Messiah and our Saviour.

Now, look at Isaiah 11:6-9: *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. The calf, the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”*

Has this been fulfilled already? Are we in the Millennium now? No! We don’t see this happening yet. Try holding a poisonous snake and see what happens! But there will come a time when such conditions will exist—when Jesus is here on earth, ruling and reigning.

We can look forward to it—a thousand years of His reign.

I believe this will happen soon, considering the signs of the times.

As we partake of Holy Communion, let us think of the Lord’s return and the coming Millennium. The Lord’s Supper not only reminds us of the past, but it also teaches us about the

future—directing our minds and hearts toward the coming Kingdom of God. For in 1 Corinthians 11:26, Paul says: “*For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.*” Till He comes!

So when we partake of the bread and the cup, let us be reminded of God’s grace, which He gave to us and demonstrated on the cross. But let us not forget to look forward to the return of our God and Saviour, to His reign on earth for a thousand years.

May we be ready for it.

XXXVI

TWO RESURRECTIONS, TWO DEATHS

Revelation 20:5-6

Here we read about the first resurrection and the second death. *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.”*

If there is a first resurrection, it follows that there will be a second resurrection. Similarly, if there is a second death, it means that there must also be a first death. Two deaths, two resurrections.

Take note that the second death does not affect those who belong to the first resurrection. Thus, the first resurrection is a good resurrection, and those who partake in it are blessed by God.

The word “blessed” here is a beatitude. Please do not think of the beatitudes as being found only in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter five. There are eight beatitudes there, and we know them well, but in the New Testament, there are a total of 24 beatitudes. Here in verse 6, we find one of them.

The word “blessed” here, from the Greek *makarios*, is a wonderful word. It speaks of the Lord’s blessing—a blessing of happiness to us, His children. This blessing of happiness does not come from the world or the earth but from heaven, from God Himself. It is a supernaturally given happiness.

How can one be supernaturally happy? The Bible tells us how. Are you a blessed child of God? All Christians, all believers, should be a blessed people indeed. Not only are they blessed, but they are also holy. Those who are blessed are also holy ones; they are saints because they have the righteousness of God—the righteousness of Christ—imputed to them. We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and we will be part of the first resurrection.

There are two resurrections and two deaths.

What is the first resurrection and the second resurrection? What is the first death and the second death?

Make sure you belong to the right resurrection—the good one—and not the wrong one, the bad one. You must make sure you belong to the right resurrection.

Now, we know that before resurrection comes death. One must die before being resurrected. Let us first deal with death.

The Bible tells us there are two deaths: the first and the second. What are they?

The first mention of death in the Bible is found in Genesis. In Genesis 2:16-17, God gave a command to Adam: *“Of every tree in the garden, thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”* This is the first mention of death. In the Hebrew text, the word “death” occurs twice—it is a double death. Literally, it means “dying, you shall die.” There is a first death and a second death.

Why do we die? Why is there death? It is because of sin. We know how Adam and Eve broke God’s commandment. “Thou shalt not eat of it” was a strong, absolute prohibition, carrying the same force as the “Thou shalt not” of the Ten Commandments.

Yet, they took God’s command lightly. When tempted, they yielded and ate the forbidden fruit, and they died. *“The wages of sin is death.”* Adam and Eve died spiritually when they sinned

against God. Sin entered their minds, hearts, and whole being, corrupting them entirely. Ashamed, they hid from God. They died, and death entered the world.

The first death is the bodily death that most of us will face. The second death, however, is the death of the soul for eternity. The first death places the body in the grave, but the second death will cast both body and soul into the lake of fire. That is the second death.

How do we know this? In Matthew 10:28, Jesus says, *“Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

The destruction of both soul and body in hell is the second death. The first death is for a while; the second death is forever. This is a terrible reality—all because of sin.

However, the second death has no power over those who have believed in the Lord Jesus. Why? Because Jesus already suffered the pains of death and hell for us on the cross. He died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sins. He endured all shame, was nailed to the cross, and was pierced at His side, shedding His blood—all for you and me, that our sins may be forgiven. He was buried, truly died, and on the third day rose again so that we need not die eternally.

For the Christian, bodily death is but a temporary sleep. One day, we will awaken. Like a seed planted in the soil, we will sprout and live again. That is why we bury our dead rather than burn them—because we believe in the resurrection to come.

The second death has to do with fire, casting souls into the lake of fire forever. It is eternal. But those who believe in Jesus are delivered from the second death.

Those who have passed on as believers are said to be resting. Their bodies rest in the earth, but their souls are with the Lord in heaven. Yet, their state is not yet complete—their bodies must be resurrected, and only then will they be made whole and perfect in the Lord.

The second death has no power over us because we are no longer under judgement or condemnation. Only unbelievers, those still in their sins, will face the second death.

God does not desire anyone to go through the second death. He calls all to repent now. If you believe in Jesus, you die only once. If you reject Him, you die twice—forever. Why would you choose death when you can have life?

I pray that those who do not yet know Jesus will come to know Him today. He wants to be your Father, your Saviour, and your Lord. Trust in Him. *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Rom 10:9).

Death is conquered because of the resurrection. Now, let us consider the resurrection.

How do we know that there are two resurrections? Not only from Revelation 20, but also because Jesus Himself spoke about this when He was on earth. If you turn to John 5:28-29, it says: *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

Here, we see two resurrections. The first is a resurrection unto life, bringing eternal life. The second is a resurrection of condemnation, judgement, and damnation, which leads to the second death—the eternal death where both body and soul will be cast into the lake of fire.

There are two resurrections: the resurrection of eternal life and the resurrection of eternal damnation. Every human being will be raised up. Often, we hear about the resurrection of believers, but Jesus also spoke of the resurrection of unbelievers. He warned that we should

fear the Judge who will condemn both body and soul to hell. If the bodies of unbelievers must also go to hell, they too must be raised up.

Where are the souls of unbelievers now? They are in hell. One day, hell will release its inhabitants—the souls of the unsaved—who will then be joined with their bodies. These unbelievers, in body and soul, will stand before God to be judged. The books will be opened, and they will all be found guilty, without excuse. In their sin, they will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Thus, there are not just two deaths, but also two resurrections. Unbelievers will experience both the first and second deaths. Those who die without Christ will be part of the second resurrection—a cursed resurrection. But believers—the saints of the Lord Jesus—are blessed because we belong to the first resurrection, which is unto life.

The resurrection unto life will happen when Jesus returns. In 1 Corinthians 15:23, it says: *“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.”*

When Jesus comes back, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, the dead in Christ will be raised first. Then, those who are still alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This will happen before the great tribulation, before the wrath of God is poured out on the earth.

At the end of the tribulation, the blessed and holy ones of God will return with Christ to fight the battle of Armageddon, after which the millennial reign of Christ will begin.

Revelation 20:6 confirms this: *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”*

The first resurrection happens before the millennium and before the great tribulation. Those who are part of it will reign with Christ for a thousand years in their resurrected, glorified bodies.

The second resurrection, however, will not occur at Christ’s second coming. The resurrection of unbelievers, the resurrection unto damnation, will happen only after the thousand-year reign of Christ. Revelation 20:5 states: *“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.”*

After the millennium, there will be a final rebellion, followed by the final judgement—the Great White Throne Judgement. Revelation 20:11-12 describes this scene: *“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”*

Who are those standing before the Great White Throne? They are the unbelievers who died in their sins. Verse 13 tells us: *“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”*

No one can be saved by their works. Salvation comes purely by God’s grace through faith in the Lord Jesus. Our good works are not good enough, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Those who trust in their own righteousness will be condemned.

Finally, Revelation 20:14-15 says: *“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

There, they will join Satan, his demons, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet in eternal torment. Revelation 20:10 confirms this: *“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

Why would anyone want to go there? Surely, you don't. The good news is that Jesus saves. Only Jesus saves. Repent of your unbelief and sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will live.

For believers, even the first death is not a curse—it is a blessing. Paul says in Philippians 1:21: *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

To die is gain because it means entering into the presence of God, our Father, and Christ, our Saviour. But you must be saved. You must possess the blessing of salvation, which comes only from the Lord. You must be made holy by the Lord Jesus. If you are a believer, your sins are forgiven, the Holy Spirit dwells within you, and you have eternal life. Blessed and holy are you, for you will have part in the first resurrection and will not experience the second death.

If we belong to the first resurrection, there will be rewards for us in heaven. Our labour for the Lord is not in vain. As we serve Him in worship, in prayer, in singing hymns, and in faithful service to His church, He takes note and will reward us accordingly. Every act of worship, every humble service, whether seen or unseen, is known to God. We must serve Him with reverent, sincere, and humble hearts, knowing that our ultimate reward is to reign with Christ forever.

XXXVII

SATAN UNLEASHED

Revelation 20:7-10

Now, the question is why? Why must Satan be released? Wasn't he imprisoned in the bottomless pit? Why can't he stay there? Why wouldn't God cause him to remain there forever? Why, after a thousand years, must God release him for a season—for a while—to stage a final rebellion against Him?

Why can't there be a smooth transition after the millennium into the New Heaven, the New Earth, the New Jerusalem, and eternity? Why must there be this bad and ugly episode—a final rebellion against God and against Christ?

God must surely have a reason. And I believe the Lord permits this—He allows it—to teach and to convince mankind that they are utterly sinful. Surely, *“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9). Man is totally corrupt and depraved.

We are so corrupt and depraved that we are even blind to our own sins. We don't realise how wicked and evil we truly are. God must convince and convict us so that, in the end, when He judges, no one will have an excuse. When sinners finally stand before Him at the Great White Throne Judgement, they will have no justification for their actions when God sentences them to eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.

We have already seen that Satan will be imprisoned for a thousand years in the bottomless pit. Revelation 20:1-3 tells us: *“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”*

So, Satan will be locked up and locked down during the millennium—there will be no disturbances from him. People will live on earth under the rule of Christ, and they will live well, free from the devil's influence.

One might think that after being imprisoned for a thousand years, Satan would reflect on his actions, realising he cannot fight God and win. One might think he would be remorseful, regretful, or even repentant.

Today, criminals are not only sent to prison for punishment but also for rehabilitation, so that when they are released, they do not return to their criminal ways. In Singapore, for example, the prison system aims not only to punish but also to reform criminals.

But, with Satan, there will be no rehabilitation. It is impossible.

During his thousand-year imprisonment, he will only seethe in anger and hatred, devising new ways to stage a final rebellion against God. He still believes he can succeed in overthrowing God.

Satan has always sought to oppose and overthrow God. In the beginning, God created all things good, including the angels in heaven. Among them were three chief angels: Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer. But Lucifer, though created beautiful and powerful, rebelled. Pride entered his heart. He thought: *“Why must I serve God? I want God to serve me!”* He chose to exalt himself above God. His pride and rebellion led to his downfall. God cast him down, and he became Satan, the adversary.

Even after his fall, he continued his rebellion by tempting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He sought to destroy God's creation. When mankind fell into sin, Satan may have thought he had succeeded. But though humanity became sinful, God's plan was not thwarted.

Throughout history, Satan has repeatedly tried to derail God's plan: He tried to prevent the birth of Christ by inciting King Herod to kill the baby Jesus. He sought to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, trying to make Him sin. He incited men to crucify Christ, thinking that killing Jesus would destroy God's plan of salvation. But Christ died on the cross, shedding His precious blood, was buried and rose from the dead, defeating sin and death according to God's eternal plan and purpose to save His people from sin.

Time and time again, Satan has failed. And yet, even at the end of the millennium, he will still try one last time.

When Satan is released, what is the first thing on his mind? Rebellion. He wants to fight and overthrow God. He wants to reign in Jerusalem, not Christ.

And shockingly, he will gather an enormous following. Revelation 20:8 tells us that Satan will go out to deceive the nations from the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle, *“the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.”*

This is astonishing. Even after a thousand years of Christ's perfect and peaceful rule, the majority of the world will still choose to rebel against Him. How can this be?

Dr. Chia Yu Ming, the first theologian of China, once observed that *the sins of the spirit are ten times worse than the sins of the flesh*. And pride is the worst of all spiritual sins.

Pride blinds us to who and what God is. It blinds us to ourselves. It makes us think we are greater than we are. When we are nobody, we think we are somebody. We think we are greater and better than God. We believe in a lie, we deceive ourselves. It leads to our destruction.

Satan, the father of lies, is also the greatest self-deceiver. He deceives the world, and he deceives himself. He still believes he can fight God and win.

What will be the outcome of this last rebellion?

Revelation 20:9-10 tells us: *“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

Satan will finally face his ultimate defeat. Fire will come down from heaven, consuming the rebellious forces. Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will be tormented forever.

What can we learn from this?

Pride is dangerous. It blinds. It deceives. It leads to destruction.

We must humble ourselves before God. When the Spirit convicts us, we must repent quickly. We must not allow pride to make us blind to God, to His Word, or to our own sins.

We are not good. We are not able. Only God is good. Only He is able.

And in the end, God will fulfil His plan. Satan cannot thwart it. Sin cannot overturn it. Christ will reign forever, and those who belong to Him will reign with Him in glory.

Will you submit to Him, or will you resist Him in pride? The choice is yours—but eternity hangs in the balance.

But will the people believe?

The sad thing to note is that the people are still so hardened in their hearts, so sinful in their ways and their thinking.

Although they are under the good rule of Christ, they still harbour evil and wicked thoughts against Him. This shows how sinful we truly are. God is trying to convince us of the sinfulness of sin. Do we think we can save ourselves? We cannot. Do we think we are born good? We are not.

Yet psychologists and sociologists claim that we are born good. They ask, “If we are good by nature, how is it that we behave badly? How do we turn out evil?” Their answer: It is because of the environment. They argue that if you place someone in a good environment, he will turn out good; if you place him in a bad environment, he will turn out bad.

However, God proves to all that it is not about the environment—it is about the heart, it is about our nature.

Now, in the Millennium, people will live in the most wonderful environment—surrounded by goodness, ruled by a righteous King. Christ Himself will reign over them. And yet, at the end, they will still go against Him.

Yes, they are born in sin. They grow up under the good reign of Christ. But in their hearts, they harbour hatred against God. They only pay lip service to Him.

Do they show their hatred outwardly during His reign? No. They know they cannot. They hide it. Externally, they pretend to honour Him but the fact is they hate Him.

They pretend to worship Him. They pretend to serve Him. But in their hearts, there is rebellion against Him. They want to overthrow Him.

By the end of the Millennium, the population may have increased tenfold. If the world has around six billion people today, then in the Millennium, it may have sixty billion. With long life, health, and the ability to multiply, the earth will be full of people.

Now they will think, “We are so many. We are strong. And now Satan has returned. Look at how powerful he is! Maybe now we have a chance to overthrow God, to overthrow the Jesus, to take His throne and rule the world ourselves!”

They will see the world’s riches and say, “Why should we bow to Christ? Why should we submit to Him? Satan wants to rule! We want to rule also! We do not want Christ and His saints to rule over us. We want to rule over them!” And Satan says, “I want to rule over God! Follow me and I will give you the power to enjoy all the riches of the world according to the lusts of your eyes and flesh. Live according to your own rules. Why live according to the rule of God?”

Their pride blinds them to the sinfulness of their sin.

They believe the lie that, because of their vast numbers and Satan’s power, they can finally defeat God. They think they can overthrow Him, take His throne, and rule the world.

They will say to the saints, “You who ruled over us, we will now make you our slaves!”

Indeed, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Even under the good reign of Christ, sin remains.

Some today say, “If only I could see God. If only I could see Jesus Christ. If He would appear before me right now, I would believe.”

No! They would not.

In the Millennium, Jesus will be right there in Jerusalem. They will see Him. They will hear Him speak gracious, loving, truthful words. They will witness and experience His goodness and greatness with their own eyes. Yet, in the end, do they believe?

No!

They rebel. They only pay lip service to Christ. Their hearts are full of hatred. They pretend to believe, but they do not truly believe. They are not born again.

Is this unusual? Not at all.

Even today, we see the same thing happening—even in the church. False believers exist. They pretend to believe, but in reality, they do not. They pay lip service to God, but in their hearts, there is no true desire to obey Him, worship Him, or serve Him. Eventually, they will rebel against Him.

The Bible warns us about false brethren—false Christs, false prophets, false believers in the church. Sometimes, we deceive ourselves. We think, “Surely, I am a true believer!” But pride blinds us to our true condition. We think we are born again when we are not.

This is not unusual. Even among Jesus’ twelve disciples, one was a Judas. For three and a half years, Judas lived with Jesus and the other disciples. He behaved like them. No one suspected he was a traitor. Yet, in his heart, he harboured hatred for the Lord and would eventually betray Him.

No one knew.

When Jesus said, “One of you will betray me,” the disciples asked, “Who? Is it me?” They never suspected Judas—until Jesus exposed him.

How many of us are like that? Pretending to believe, but actually Judas in heart? Do not allow pride to deceive you. Do not think you are on your way to heaven when you are really on your way to hell.

What a tragedy! To be so near the kingdom of God, to be in church, hearing the good news of salvation, to have God’s Word in your hands, to taste the goodness of God, and in the end, to rebel, because you have never truly believed. How sad. How tragic.

The Lord gave us this warning so that we might examine ourselves now. Do not end up like those in the future rebellion.

Do not be counted among Satan’s followers. Birds of a feather flock together. Do not follow the devil.

Follow the Lord Jesus Christ. His way. His truth. His heart. Is there Christlikeness in your life?

I must examine myself too.

Do we truly know the Lord Jesus? Or are we deceiving ourselves?

I pray that none of us will be lost. For if we are lost, we are lost forever. And what is the final destination?

Revelation 20:9-10 says: *“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

The devil will be cast permanently, eternally, into the lake of fire. The Antichrist and the false prophet are already there. And the rest—the multitude that rebelled—will die. Then they will be raised up, stand before the great white throne, and be cast into the lake of fire.

Some claim that hell is not eternal, that punishment lasts only for a short time and then ceases. But this is against what the Bible clearly teaches. The Scripture says they will be tormented *day and night, forever and ever*.

Why fight against God? Why not bow to Jesus now? Confess the Lord Jesus. Believe on Him, and you will be saved. But make sure your confession is genuine. True faith involves repentance—

Turning away from the world, from the devil, from falsehood, from sin. Say, “I am nothing. I am wretched. I am sinful. I need Jesus.” Repent. Believe. Obey.

For us who are profess faith. Let us examine our heart. Is there true faith and true life? I pray that every one of us have true life and are experiencing true life in Christ. May the Lord help us.

XXXVIII

THE LAST JUDGEMENT

Revelation 20:11-15

We read here about the judgement to come in verse 11: “*And I saw a great white throne...*”. It is the judgement of the great white throne.

Hebrews 9:27 tells us: “*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement.*”

Yes, this judgement is certain—the great white throne judgement, which everyone should be terrified of.

Now, consider the great white shark. It is a massive, terrifying predator—something no one would want to encounter. However, far more fearful and terrifying is the great white throne of God.

Hebrews 10:31 warns us: “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*”

If you are still an unbeliever, outside His kingdom, not part of His family—still dead in your sins and not alive in Christ—then you have every reason to be afraid. This judgement is inevitable, whether you like it or not.

Hebrews 9:27 again reminds us: “*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement.*”

So, the question is: Are you ready?

What does the great white throne represent? What does “great” mean? What does “white” symbolise? What is the significance of “throne”?

The judgement to come is described as great because it speaks of the Judge Himself. He is the great God—all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, and ever-present. He is without comparison, the Creator of heaven and earth, and He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 5:22 tells us: “*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son.*” It is Jesus Christ who will sit on this great white throne and judge the world.

If you do not believe this, you must believe it now—Jesus is God Himself. Titus 2:13 affirms that Jesus is God Himself: “*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*” The phrase “the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” makes it clear—Jesus is the great God. The conjunction “and” here can be rendered as “even” or “which is”. So, it can be translated this way: “the great God even (or which is) our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

What does “white” symbolise? In the Bible, white represents holiness and righteousness. This throne is perfectly holy and righteous. The one who sits on it is without sin and will judge in absolute purity and justice. Unlike human judges, who can make mistakes, Jesus—the righteous Judge—will judge with absolute fairness, never making an error in judgement or in executing punishment.

The word “throne” tells us that the Judge is also the King. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. His judgement is final—there is no appeal. No one is higher than this Judge.

The law He will judge by is His perfect law—including the Ten Commandments. Every individual will be judged according to His righteous standard.

The One who sits on this throne is so powerful that even “*the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them*” (Revelation 20:11). This means the entire universe will

vanish before Him—by the power of His word. Just as He spoke the world into existence, He will also by His word bring the world to an end.

Shall we not fear Him? Proverbs 9:10 states: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”*

If you fear Him, you will bow before Him. You will recognise your own unworthiness, your sinfulness, your guilt before a holy God. You will see yourself as condemned and in need of salvation.

But fearing God is not enough—you must repent. Turn from sin, forsake the world, and seek salvation in Christ alone. Run to Jesus now and cry out: “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me and save me!”

Revelation 20:12-13 says: *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”*

Who will stand before the great white throne? The dead, small and great—the young and old, the rich and poor—all unbelievers. Those in hell right now—all who have died in unbelief. Those who perished in the Great Tribulation—who followed the Antichrist. Those who rebel against Christ at the end of the Millennium. All these will be resurrected and stand before the great white throne.

Note that the dead will be judged according to the books—plural.

Note also that there is only one Book of Life—because there is only one Saviour, Jesus Christ. There are many books of death—which record all the sins of the unbelievers. Romans 6:23: *“The wages of sin is death.”*

Everything is recorded. No sin is forgotten. Every secret thought, word, and deed will be revealed. Unbelievers will be judged according to their works.

No one can be saved by their own works, for *“all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6). Romans 3:23: *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* Romans 3:10: *“There is none righteous, no, not one.”*

The first book to be opened is the book of words—the record of all the evil, wicked, and proud words that we have spoken. Whether spoken privately or publicly, every word will be judged.

How do we know this? Jesus Himself said in Matthew 12:36–37: *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”*

James also warns us, saying, *“Be not many masters (teachers), knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation”* (James 3:1). This applies particularly to preachers and teachers of God’s Word. We must be extremely careful when we preach and teach, for anything inaccurately or wrongly taught will be judged by God.

It is a fearful responsibility to stand in the pulpit and proclaim God’s truth. That is why diligent study is required: *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). The goal is to minimise error when preaching God’s Word faithfully, truthfully, and accurately.

How do we speak to one another? What kind of words do we use? Are they evil, wicked, selfish, or proud? Jesus says that every idle word will be judged. The book of words will be opened, and God will judge us according to our words.

The second book to be opened is the book of deeds—not just our words but also our actions. What evil deeds have we done? We are accountable for them. Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 states: *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.”*

Many works may appear good outwardly but are evil in God’s sight. Every work will be tested and judged according to God’s standard, not our own. Paul reminds us that *“there is none righteous, no, not one”* (Romans 3:10). We are guilty of unrighteous, unholy, and wicked deeds, and God will judge not only our speech and outward actions but even the unseen things.

The third book is the book of motives and intentions. The heart, though hidden from human eyes, is fully visible to God. 1 Corinthians 4:5 says: *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”*

We often judge people prematurely, based on incomplete information, forming opinions in ignorance. Paul warns us against unrighteous judgement, for God alone knows all things. He will bring to light the hidden motives of the heart. If our intentions are pure and God-glorifying, we will receive praise; if they are selfish or deceitful, we will face condemnation.

Some people use the name of God for their own gain, deceiving others while appearing godly. But on the last day, Jesus will say to them: *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:23).

We must be careful about what we say, what we do, and what is in our hearts.

Is the judgement of the great white throne for sinners only, or does it include the saints as well? Theologically, we know that the judgement of saints and the judgement of sinners are distinct and separate. Believers will stand before the judgement seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10), not the great white throne.

At the judgement seat of Christ, believers will not be judged for their sins, for Jesus bore them on the cross. Instead, they will be judged for their service and rewarded accordingly. The great white throne judgement, however, is for unbelievers, as made clear in Revelation 20:12–15: *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

This judgement is connected to the second death, which is eternal condemnation in the lake of fire.

Why is the book of life mentioned here? It may be that some standing before Christ will claim to be believers. They might say, “Lord, surely my name is in the book of life!” But when the book is opened, their names will not be found. This serves as a final confirmation that they have deceived themselves. Jesus warned that many will say to Him, *“Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in thy name?”* Yet He will reply, *“I never knew you”* (Matthew 7:22–23).

Merely being a member of a church does not guarantee a place in the book of life. One may be on a church membership roll but not truly saved. The crucial question is: Is your name truly written in the book of life?

My prayer is that the name of every member of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church is written in the book of life. But only God knows for certain, and only you can examine yourself and

know for sure. Have you truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and been born again? Or do you deceive yourself. Make sure your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, for nothing is more important than that. Make sure you know for sure.

XXXIX

SEVEN EVILS NO MORE

Revelation 21:1-4

Have there been situations in your life when you said, “Enough is enough! Stop, no more!”?

The troubles, trials, and temptations of life can sometimes feel too hard to bear. You may find yourself saying, “Please, no more. Take it all away!” Have you ever had such experiences?

Sometimes, I feel that way. Life is certainly not easy. In fact, life today is full of evil—evil circumstances and evil people. Sometimes, we wish they would all just go away.

As we observe the world today, we see suffering everywhere in this sin-cursed world. The pandemic, the lockdowns, the wars, the hatred, and the conflicts—they are all around us. We also experience the weaknesses of our own bodies—sickness, disease, pain, and suffering. Some of us endure chronic illnesses. This world is truly not a pleasant place. Yes, there may be moments of happiness and peace in life, but we all know they are few and far between.

Some historians have studied the history of the world, which spans approximately six thousand years. Out of these six thousand years, how many have been years of peace? Their research shows that, in these six thousand years of world history, only about three hundred years have been peaceful. The rest of the time has been filled with war.

So, when can we have peace? When will peace finally come? When can we say, “No more”?

In Revelation 21:1, we read about a number of things that will be “no more”: *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”*

Revelation 21:4 further declares: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”*

No more! Sometimes, I wish this would happen right now. No more suffering, no more pain. How we long for this!

Here, we find that seven evils will be no more: the sea of trouble, sorrow, death, crying, pain, curse, and darkness. Let us examine each one and see how they will no longer exist.

Revelation 21:1 states, *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”*

The word “sea” in Scripture often symbolises trouble—a sea of trouble. Life is full of troubles, and the Bible likens the sea to troubles. Isaiah 57 speaks of the troubled sea, and in Revelation 13, we see that from the sea of humanity arises a very wicked person—the beast, or the Antichrist. From the sea of humanity, bad things emerge, and evil people arise.

Revelation 20:13 reveals that from the sea will come all the unbelieving rebels, who will one day stand before the great white throne judgement. The sea of humanity brings so much evil and trouble. This world is full of disorder, violence, unrest, hatred, and murder.

Will there ever come a time when we see such trouble no more? Yes! The Lord assures us that there will come a time when there will be no more sea—no more trouble, evil, and wickedness. All of it will pass away when the new heaven and the new earth arrive.

How we long for that day! Are we experiencing such a time now? No, we are still living in a sea of trouble. Even in the life of Christ, Jesus experienced trouble. The Sea of Galilee, though beautiful, was also treacherous. Many times in the Gospels, we see the disciples facing danger

on the sea. A strong wind would blow, the waters would become rough, and the fear of drowning was real. In their panic, they cried out, “Lord, save us!”

Then Jesus, with just one word, said, *“Peace, be still,”* and the waters became calm. This teaches us that in our troubled sea—in a world full of turmoil—only the Lord Jesus and His word can give us peace. One day, when Jesus returns, the Prince of Peace will come back and say, *“Peace, be still,”* and there will be peace forevermore. It will be a time of rest and quiet. How we long for that time!

Revelation 21:4 declares, *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death.”*

No more death! We know that death is associated with sin. God, the author of life, originally created all things good. After He created the world, He declared it *“very good.”* So how did death enter this world?

We are to blame. We sinned against God, disobeyed His word, and rebelled against Him. When sin entered, death followed. In Genesis 2, God commanded Adam, *“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* God warned them, but they disobeyed.

Instead of eating from the tree of life, they succumbed to temptation and ate from the forbidden tree. As a result, they experienced sin and its consequences—death. From that day, suffering, pain, and hardship entered the world. Women would experience pain in childbirth, and thorns and thistles would plague the ground.

“For the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23).

But we thank God that one day, death will be no more. And even now, we can escape eternal death through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He conquered death so that we may have eternal life in Him.

What a glorious hope we have! One day, there will be no more sea of trouble, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain, no more curse, and no more darkness. When Jesus returns, all these former things will pass away, and we will enjoy eternal peace and live joyfully with Him.

In John 5:24, we read that Jesus said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation or judgement but is passed from death unto life.”*

So, we live if we believe in the Lord Jesus. We have eternal life, and I trust that all of us here have believed and have tasted the goodness of the Lord Jesus through the gospel, through the good news, and we are living this life right now.

The Lord has forgiven us of our sins, and we have been delivered from guilt, with God having declared us righteous on account of Christ. We look forward to the day when we will see the Lord face to face. Indeed, we have passed from death unto life; we already have eternal life, which is a gift of God.

Nonetheless, we still see death, don't we? Many of us might even experience death if the Lord tarries and does not return while we are still alive. We may be struck with disease, meet with an accident, or die of old age. Although we have passed from death unto life, we still face and witness death today.

This reality brings much sadness and sorrow. Just a few days ago, I received news of a young boy at New Life Student Centre. This very sick boy was sent to the hospital for the doctors to save him. He went to three hospitals, but to no avail. His fever was so high that he fell into unconsciousness and finally died.

This is very sobering and brings much sorrow. When we see death—whether it is the death of our loved ones, family, friends, or even fellow believers taken home—it causes grief and pain. Although we know where they are, we still mourn their loss.

Sometimes, we ask, “Lord, won’t you take all this away? When will we see the end of sickness, pain, and death?” Just this past week, I was thinking about my teacher back in the States, my professor of theology and thesis advisor. I wondered how he was doing. Today, with the internet, you can search for people. When I googled him, an obituary appeared—he had gone home to be with the Lord just a few months ago.

He died in a road accident. He was driving home when his car veered onto the other side of the road and collided head-on with a large truck. The authorities had to extricate him from the wreckage, cutting through the metal to get him out. He was pronounced dead at the hospital.

Such tragedies happen even to God’s people, bringing much pain and sorrow.

“Lord, why must we see these things? Why must we go through such trials?” The Lord allows us to experience these things for a reason—He has a purpose. One reason, I believe, is to sanctify us, to remind us not to love this life or this world but to long for the life hereafter. We are to look forward to the kingdom of God to come.

Death brings great sorrow, but one day, it will be no more. We thank God for the comfort found in Revelation 21:4: “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow...*”. The sea of humanity that brings so much trouble and evil, when we witness death and suffering, will one day be no more.

These things bring us great sorrow, but the Lord promises that one day, there will be no more sorrow, no more mourning, no more grief, and no more funerals to attend. How we long for that day!

Sorrow is an evil because if unchecked, it can lead to depression, and depression can render us unable to function. That is not good. So how do we cope with such evils in our lives right now? Although we are believers—Christians who have passed from darkness into God’s marvellous light—we still face trials, sorrow, and suffering. Sometimes, these burdens can weigh us down.

We want to live for the Lord, but it can be difficult. That is why God gives us His Word. We have the Scriptures in our hands; we must open them, read, study, and meditate on the comforting truths within.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, we read: “*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*”

We do not live our lives in vain.

Similarly, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul encourages us not to grieve as those who have no hope. “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are*

alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

No more death. No more sorrow. We have this hope.

Let us look forward to that blessed hope. The Lord tells us that our affliction in this world is only for a short time, but what we will enjoy when His kingdom comes is forever. So, persevere. When we face trials, when death and sorrow come, when we endure pain, how do we help ourselves? We help ourselves by hoping in the Lord and looking toward the future that He has already revealed to us. Look up, look on, and look ahead, and we will find comfort and strength.

With death comes sorrow, and with sorrow comes weeping. But one day, God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. There will be no more sorrow, no more crying. The sea of trouble in this life will be gone, and one of the greatest troubles—death—will be no more.

Some say that weeping is therapeutic, but it is painful. We do not want to weep; we do not want sorrow. But as human beings, we weep. Even Jesus wept. It is part of human life and experience. Yet one day, there will be no more tears, no more sorrow, only perfect happiness and joy.

No more pain. Pain, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, is another evil we face in this world. Physical pain can sometimes be alleviated with medicine, but what about emotional or spiritual pain? Betrayal, loss, grief—these cause deep anguish.

Job experienced immense suffering, both physically and emotionally. His friends, who were meant to comfort him, only added to his misery. "Miserable comforters are ye all," he said. Human words often fail to comfort a broken heart.

That is why, when visiting those in pain, whether in the hospital or at funerals, I always pray, "Lord, I have no words. Please give me the words. Only your word can bring comfort." The Psalms and other passages of Scripture provide true consolation.

How we long for the day when all these evils will be no more! But the Lord says, "Not yet." The time will come when He will say, "No more," but until then, we trust in Him and find our hope in His promises.

But we can find grace to help in our time of need. The Lord Jesus Himself went through all these things—all the pain and suffering. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and He suffered all alone. *We were the ones who nailed Him to the cross.*

Isaiah 53:3-4 says, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

The Lord went through all these things for you and for me. *"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Yes, medical doctors can give you painkillers, but it is only the Doctor of doctors, the Lord Jesus Himself, who knows how to give you comfort, relief, and help. He strengthens you in

your mental, emotional, and spiritual distresses, in the pain and sufferings you are going through within. The Lord knows, and He understands.

Do we go to Him? Sometimes we fail to go to Him, and then we keep sinking—sinking deeper and deeper into our sorrow, our pain, our depression, our anguish, our worries, and our anxieties.

Sometimes we so easily forget that we must cast all our cares and burdens on the Lord. Look to Him, seek His face, and pray to Him. Pray without ceasing, as the Lord says. We ought not to faint; *“men ought always to pray, and not to faint”* (Luke 18:1). But one day, all this will pass away—no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

Why will there be no more pain? The next evil, the sixth evil, is found in the next chapter. In chapter 22, verse 3, it says: *“And there shall be no more curse.”* No more curse! That is the sixth evil—the curse because of sin. One day, the curse of sin will be gone. We who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ—yes, we are sinners saved by grace—but we still have a sin nature within us. We still struggle with sin, and sometimes we fall into sin. When we fall into sin, we suffer the trouble that comes with it.

We are still living with our sinful nature, even though we are saved. We struggle, but it is a good struggle. How we wish the struggle would be no more! It is not sinless perfection right now; we struggle with sin. But it is a good struggle because we are striving toward holiness and perfection. The Lord says, “I will help you. I will be with you. I will not forsake you. Trust in Me. Read My Word, pray, and you will see yourself changing from glory to glory.”

However, we will never fully escape from the sin that is within us right now. We struggle a great deal. How we wish this curse of sin could be removed from us immediately! We can be sure it will one day be finally removed. This thorn in the flesh will be plucked out once and for all when the Lord comes. As we read in Revelation 22, *“No more curse.”* On that day, sin will be totally eradicated.

For now, though there is a curse, there is also a blessing—the blessing of salvation for all who trust in Christ. For Jesus Christ was cursed for us on the cross. The cross is a symbol of death. It was a tree of death for Christ, but for us, it is a tree of life. Our Saviour was crucified on that tree so that we might live. That is why the tree of life is mentioned in Revelation 22. There will be no more curse because God will restore the tree of life. It will be there in paradise, in heaven, on that final day.

The tree of life was in the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve to eat from, but they were forbidden from eating it after they sinned. However, one day, we will eat from it. Those of us who are saved and born again will partake of the tree of life and enjoy it. The Lord will restore it, and we will eat the good fruit of the tree of life together. When we eat of the tree of life, there will be no more death. We will experience life every time we eat, month after month. The tree will yield twelve kinds of fruit, and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations—perfect healing.

The Lord says, *“With His stripes, we are healed.”* Yet, when we get sick, we are not always healed. We thank God for doctors and medicine, which He provides by His common grace. But where is perfect healing?

We pray for our brethren who are sick, even those with terminal diseases. We pray that the Lord will heal them, but He does not always heal. Despite all the prayers, fasting, pleading, and crying, the Lord may say, “No, it is time to go.” We must submit to Him and say, “Lord, not my will, but thine be done.” Did we not pray? Did we not pray in faith, believing that He can

heal? Yes, we did. But the Lord says, “No.” And so, we go through these things, sometimes not understanding why.

But we thank God for the cross. The cross was a tree of death for our Saviour but a tree of life for us. We cling to the cross, drawing nearer and nearer, for it is our hope. One day, this curse will be lifted entirely when we receive our new bodies—immortal and incorruptible. There will be no more death and no more pain. How we long for that day!

One day, we will partake of the tree of life and eat freely. Today, we eat food to sustain ourselves, but the food we eat can also bring us harm. We give thanks for what we have, but we know that what we eat now may not be entirely good or pure. One day, however, all food will be clean, healthy, and life-giving. The tree of life will provide perfect sustenance. We will eat freely and joyfully, receiving perfect healing.

Another promise in Revelation 22:5 is that there will be no more night. Finally, in heaven and in the New Jerusalem, there will be no more darkness—only light. *“And there shall be no night there. They need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.”*

Night and darkness in Scripture symbolise blindness and ignorance. But in heaven, we will be in the presence of the Lord, the Light of the world. There will be clarity, certainty, and full understanding. We will no longer have doubts or confusion. We will see the Lord face to face and know all things fully.

As 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, *“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”* Many questions fill our minds now, but in that day, the Lord will explain everything, and we will glorify Him.

Until then, we must apply these truths by faith. If we do not, we will sink into despair. Instead, we must stand upon the Rock, Jesus Christ. It is not easy, but we must surrender our minds, hearts, and hopes to Him. Then, we will not quit. Instead of saying, “I resign,” we say, “I resign,” and press on.

SEVEN EVILS NO MORE

- (1) **No More Sea** (of Troubles): *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”* (Revelation 21:1).
- (2) **No More Death**: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death...”* (Revelation 21:4).
- (3) **No More Sorrow**: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow...”* (Revelation 21:4).
- (4) **No More Crying**: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying...”* (Revelation 21:4).
- (5) **No More Pain**: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain”* (Revelation 21:4).
- (6) **No More Curse**: *“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him”* (Revelation 22:3).
- (7) **No More Night**: *“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 22:5).

XL
ALL THINGS NEW
Revelation 21:5-8

In verse 5, we read Jesus saying: *“I make all things new.”*

I’m sure we all like new things, right? Every Chinese New Year, we do our spring cleaning—we clear out and throw away our old things, and then we bring in or buy new things.

Well, there will be a future spring cleaning. The Lord Jesus Himself, when He returns, will cleanse this world. He will then rule for a thousand years. And after the millennium, this present heaven and earth will be no more. Then, there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

So, when Jesus says, *“Behold, I make all things new,”* what are the things that will be thrown away? And what are the things that will be new?

In verse 1, we read: *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and were no more.”*

The first heaven and the first earth refer to what we have right now. We are living in this world, on this earth. We see the sky, and beyond the sky is outer space. Then, there are the third heavens, where the angels are and where God dwells.

One day, this present universe—earth and heaven—will all disappear and be no more. Then, God will create a new heaven and a new earth.

Verse 4 also tells us, *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”*

These are the old things that will be thrown out—this present heaven and earth, along with the evils of this world, will all pass away. Then, new things will enter—good, perfect things. The new heaven, the new earth, new living conditions, and a new city called the New Jerusalem.

How will the old things pass away? How will the present heaven and earth be destroyed? They will pass away by fire—they will be burned to nothing.

In 2 Peter 3:7, we read: *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men.”*

And in verse 10 to 12: *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”*

So, this world will be burned up with fire and destroyed—even the heavens.

When will this happen? Not at the end of the Great Tribulation. Not at the end of the seven years of tribulation. All these things will happen at the end of the millennium, before God creates a new heaven and a new earth.

God has stopped creating after He created this present heaven and earth. We read in Genesis that He took six days to create the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day, He rested. He stopped creating. But one day, God will work again—He will create again. That will be after the millennium.

Then, this present heaven and earth will be destroyed, and He will make all things new. He will start creating again—things most beautiful, wonderful, perfect, and very good. No one will be able to disturb or destroy them anymore. Then, there will be eternity.

This will happen, and we look forward to that day, don't we?

Here, the Lord tells us not to doubt. He says in verse 5: "*Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*"

This gives us assurance that these things will surely happen. Every single one of these words is true. The Lord is saying: "You mock my words, but what I have prophesied will come to pass. What I have promised to do, I will accomplish."

If anyone needs proof of this, he needs only to study the Bible. Look at the prophecies and promises made in the past—have they not come to pass? Have they not been fulfilled one after another?

God promised a Saviour, and He has come. God promised salvation to those who believe, and we have experienced and received it. Moreover, many prophecies concerning Israel have been fulfilled.

The succession of world empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome—has happened exactly as foretold. Today, we see the revived Roman Empire forming, and one day, the Antichrist will come.

So, what God says about the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem will also come to pass.

We believe in the jot and tittle inspiration and preservation of the Scriptures. Jesus said, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*"

Do you believe this truth? I believe it with all my heart, simply because God says it. The Bible says it, that settles it, and we believe it.

When we believe, we become wise unto salvation. We gain clear thinking about how God will work for His glory and our good. We see things clearly—our vision is not blurred by the world's distractions.

The Word of God cleanses our minds and hearts. Just believe in the Lord, and you will begin to see. It is a matter of faith—whether you believe or not.

I believe. And I'm sure you believe too. That's why we are here.

We thank God for the doctrine of the verbal and plenary preservation of the Scriptures. What a vital doctrine it is! We are sure that we have an authentic and authoritative Scripture in our hands today. We don't have to doubt that we have all the words of God.

Some may call this "foolish faith." Some may mock us. But we are no fools to believe in God and His Word.

The foolishness of God is wiser than men.

By and by, the Lord will vindicate His truth. Today, more and more believers, pastors, theologians, colleges, seminaries, and churches are taking this stand. The battle for the faith and the Word of God is growing.

We thought we were alone, but we are not. There is always a remnant that has not bowed the knee to Baal.

Our position may be unpopular. We may be in the minority. But truth is not measured by numbers. *“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* (Matthew 7:14).

Just stick with the Lord and His Word, and we will be fine. That is what matters most—because His words are true and faithful.

We cannot trust in the intelligence of men, nor even their good intentions. Some may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong because they do not follow the truth.

We must depend on the Lord and His Word alone. His Word is our sole, supreme, and final authority in faith and practice—because His words are true and altogether faithful.

And God is faithful to keep His words. The inspired words have been kept pure in all ages—from the beginning until now.

So, we are not alone. I urge you to read the Word and be encouraged.

Why are the words of Scripture true and faithful? Because of the Author Himself. The Author is true and faithful. He is the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end.

So, God is going to restore, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not only fully God but also fully man—the greater Adam—must one day come back and restore creation. He will rule perfectly, and creation will also be rejuvenated.

The earth will be fertile again and will once more be a wonderful place to live in during the Millennium, which will last for 1,000 years. But even better will be the new heaven and the new earth to come, and we, His saints, will rule with the Lord Jesus.

You see, the Lord meant for us to have dominion and to enjoy His creation, but we have spoiled it. We are not enjoying it as we should. However, God is going to remake and restore all things.

Being both fully God and fully man, the Lord Jesus will rule, and we will rule with Him. This tells us that what God created in the very beginning, He, as the Alpha and Omega, will restore. He can make all things well again.

This is our God—no man can defeat Him, no man can usurp Him, and no man can thwart His good purpose and plan. That is why we believe that *“all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28).

“It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Revelation 21:6).

The word “thirst” here speaks of an earnest craving. Have you ever craved something so much that you felt you could not do without it? Have you ever suffered real thirst?

I have. In my scouting days, we were hiking in Pulau Ubin, and we ran out of water. We walked and walked under the hot sun, and I was almost getting a heat stroke. The thirst was so intense that I would have been glad for just one drop of water. We searched everywhere, but there was none. Finally, we found a drink stall, and we rushed there to buy a can of Coke. When I drank it, I felt like I was in heaven!

That kind of thirst—that desperation—drives one to spare no effort in seeking what is needed.

Many of us are thirsty, aren't we? Thirsty for answers—what is the meaning of life? Why are we here? Where will we go? If you are thirsty for answers, Jesus is the answer. The Lord says, *“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”*

If you are spiritually thirsty—if you desire eternal life, if you want to live forever, if you know you have sinned and your conscience is stricken with guilt, if you want to be freed from the judgement to come—Jesus offers you the living water.

You do not want to go to hell. You want answers in life. You search for wisdom among philosophers, but their words leave you confused. You turn to religion, which tells you to do good works, yet the more good things you do, the more you feel unworthy because of the many sins you have committed. Even if you do good things, you still feel that you are not good enough.

That is because sin is within us.

So, what can wash away all our sins and take them away completely? Jesus is the answer. He says, *“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”* It is free of charge—not based on what you can do for yourself, but on what Christ has done for you.

This is clearly taught in Isaiah 55:1-3: *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”*

Jesus is that life-giving water. He told the Samaritan woman in John 4:10, *“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”*

And in John 4:14, Jesus says, *“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”*

Again, in John 6:68, after many disciples left Jesus because of their carnal desires, He asked the twelve if they would also go away. Peter answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

That is why we are here not for health, wealth, or prosperity, which God may or may not give. We are here because of God’s Word and because of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”*

I had come across people who once had many doubts and questions about Jesus. They would ask one question after another, never satisfied. But one day, by God’s grace, they were convicted of their sin and converted. Then, they came to me and said, “Pastor, I have no more questions. I now understand. I was thirsty for answers, but now, having believed in the Lord Jesus, I have all the answers. All my doubts have disappeared.”

Why? Because now they believe in Jesus and His Word. Their thirst has been quenched. They know the meaning of life. They see with spiritual eyes.

Jesus is the living water. His Word is the Word of life.

Just as we need physical food and water to survive, we need spiritual nourishment even more. That is why we must not neglect God’s Word.

Make sure to read the Bible daily—morning, noon, and night. Meditate on His Word. Keep your daily devotions and Quiet Time. Carry a Bible with you, and when you have free time, open it, read it, and pray.

That was what I did when I was in national service. Temptations were everywhere, but I carried a small pocket Bible with me wherever I went. I wrapped it in plastic and kept it in my pouch. During breaks, I would take it out and read, finding strength both physically and spiritually.

How about you? Students, when you go to school, do you bring your Bible and read it during free time? Workers, do you have a Bible on your desk? Do you take time to feed on God's Word?

We must have a continuous hunger and thirst for righteousness. Not only do we thirst for salvation, but after we are saved, we must thirst for sanctification—to grow more and more like Christ. *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17).

How can we grow in sanctification if we neglect the Word?

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

And verse 7 of Revelation 21 says, *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*

The word *“overcometh”* comes from the Greek *nikao*, which means *to conquer, to be victorious, to overcome*. This is where the brand name “Nike” comes from, though I am not recommending their shoes!

More importantly, we are called to have an overcoming, victorious faith.

What about those who keep away, or stay away from church? By and by, I they will backslide. They will lose touch, and then they will have less and less spiritual interest or hunger and thirst for God's Word. So, coming together is important.

Just like coals of fire burn more brightly when placed together, but when scattered, they lose their flame and become cold again, we too must come together. That is why I am glad you are here. We need to gather together to provoke one another unto love and good works.

The overcomers are true believers. Let us make sure we are among them. *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*

But verse 8 speaks of the non-overcomers: *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

This verse describes those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. If you are an overcomer, you will not be like them. How do you know you are an overcomer, a true believer who will persevere to the end and reach heaven? Positively, it is because you have believed in the Lord Jesus, and your life has been changed. You are not only justified by faith but also being sanctified, becoming more and more like Christ. The Spirit within you causes you to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Negatively, you must ensure you are not like the fearful and unbelieving. These are the non-overcomers, the non-believers, or the false believers. They will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The “fearful” here does not refer to fearing God but rather to fearing men. They refuse to believe because they are cowardly. They think, “If I believe in Jesus, people will laugh at me. If I believe in Jesus, I will be persecuted. If I believe in Jesus, I may be put to death.” And so, they reject the faith. The fearful, the cowardly, are lost.

The “unbelieving” here literally means “without faith.” And without faith, it is impossible to please God. These faithless ones will not inherit the kingdom of God.

How about the “abominable”? This word refers to those whom God utterly abhors. It comes from a root word meaning “to pollute.” Just as we hate pollution, so does God hate sin. The world, in its sinfulness, is like a polluted river—filthy, stinking, and utterly repulsive. In the same way, the abominable will not enter the kingdom of God.

Murderers, too, will not enter. Judas, who betrayed the Lord; the chief priests, who falsely accused Him; Pilate, who condemned Him despite knowing He was innocent; the unbelieving crowd, who mocked and reviled Him—these were all murderers. Even false believers who creep into the church to destroy and deceive are counted among them.

Whoremongers, or fornicators, will not inherit the kingdom of God. The Greek word *pornoi* from which we get *pornography* speaks of sexual immorality. Those who produce or participate in such things, those addicted to them, who are adulterers will not enter God’s kingdom.

Sorcerers, too, will be cast out. The Greek word *pharmakos* (from which we get *pharmacy*) refers to the use of drugs in witchcraft, sorcery, and deception. Deceivers—whether witches, magicians, or those who manipulate others through lies—will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Idolaters, those who worship false gods or bow to the Antichrist, will likewise be excluded.

And finally, liars. False speakers, false accusers, and those who twist the truth and make it into a lie will not enter the kingdom of God. The heretics—those who take the truth and distort it, leading others astray—are condemned.

All these have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone—the second death.

I trust that none of us belong to this category. These should not be the characteristics of our lives, our conduct. Once, we may have been like this, but now, no more. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”*

Can you say this of yourself? “I was once like this, but now no more.” As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

Are you a new person in Christ? Are you experiencing His power in your life? Has He changed you? Do you think differently, feel differently, and no longer find pleasure in sin? Do you now desire the things of God—better things, good things, holy things? Do you have a sincere longing for holiness and righteousness?

We look forward to the kingdom of God. Our treasures are not in this world. Our hope is not on this earth. All we have—our possessions, money, properties—will one day be burned up. What are we doing with them now? Are we being good stewards, using what God has given us for His glory?

The Lord has entrusted you with talents. What are you doing with them? If He has given you ten talents, use them for Him. If He has given you five, be faithful with them. If He has given you one, do not hide it! Even a small effort done faithfully for the Lord will be rewarded a hundredfold when He returns.

Be faithful until the end. Let us be overcomers.

XLI
THE NEW JERUSALEM
Revelation 21:9-27



What a wonderful picture of the glory and the coming kingdom of God!

And you know, this is what Jesus said when He was on earth. In John 14:1-2, we read: *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”*

So, the Lord says that when He goes to heaven, He will be working—preparing a mansion for us. There will be many mansions in the New Jerusalem to come, and He will dwell with us, and we with Him.

Here in Revelation 21, He gives us a glimpse—a further revelation—of the new city in which we will reside.

With all these details, I am sure it will be a physical, literal, and actual city. We will dwell and live in it because, in time to come, we will have resurrected bodies—physical, immortal, and incorruptible—never aging, never perishing. Likewise, this city will reflect our nature.

That is why Revelation 21 likens the New Jerusalem to a bride. As we read in verse 2: *“And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

The holy city, the New Jerusalem, is likened to a bride. If you have attended a wedding, you know that the highlight is when the bride walks in—beautiful, bright, and brilliant. Likewise, the New Jerusalem is described as bright, beautiful, and brilliant.

However, the city itself is not the bride. Some spiritualise this passage and claim that the city is not an actual, literal city but merely a representation of the Bride of Christ, the Church. Yet, the passage states that the *holy city* comes down from God out of heaven, *prepared as a bride*. It is as or like a bride, it is not the bride. The Bride of Christ is the Church.

Thus, the New Jerusalem is a magnificent depiction of the bride—glorious and radiant—but not the bride. We, the saints, the children of God, the Church, are the bride. The city reflects the beauty and brilliance of the bride, just as our homes often reflect who we are.

Our homes—where we live—express our character and preferences. Each of us furnishes and designs our homes according to our tastes. In the same way, the New Jerusalem, the holy city, will reflect the Bride of Christ.

The bride—God’s people—will be perfect and pure, as seen in the glory of the New Jerusalem. Though the Church today is not yet completely pure, we are striving toward perfect purity. We are pilgrims on this journey, and one day, we will arrive at perfection. The struggle for purity and perfection will cease, and the Lord will make us completely pure and perfect—so beautiful, so bright, so brilliant.

We will dwell in that city to come. So, what will the New Jerusalem be like?

Here in Revelation 21, we have a glimpse, though it is not exhaustive. While God provides many details, I believe He has only revealed *one percent* of what heaven will truly be like. The full splendour of the new heavens, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem remains beyond our understanding. If God were to describe everything, the books of the world would not be able to contain all the details!

Instead, He gives us a glimpse—a small preview—just enough to stir our anticipation and longing for that eternal home.

Jesus said, *“I go to prepare a place for you.”* Not a small apartment or a cramped flat, but a grand mansion. God is preparing a glorious home for each of us.

Now, let’s consider what the New Jerusalem will be like.

Revelation 21:10-11 tells us: *“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”*

This will be a great and glorious city. The word “great” in the original Greek is *mega*. So, you could call it the mega city! In the world today, a *mega city* is defined as a city with a population of over 10 million. Singapore does not qualify as a mega city by this standard. It is just about 6 million.

However, the New Jerusalem will far surpass any earthly city. It will be home to all believers—from Genesis to Revelation, from Adam and Eve to the last saint in history. The Church Triumphant, the universal Church, all the elect of God—will dwell there.

The first couple, Adam and Eve, will be there because they believed in the first gospel preached to them. God revealed the coming of the virgin-born Son, the promised Seed who would be bruised for our sins. He demonstrated this through the sacrifice of a lamb, covering Adam and Eve with its skin—a foreshadowing of Christ. They believed, and thus, they will be in heaven.

All the faithful—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets, the apostles, and all true believers—will be in this city. It will be the ultimate *mega city*, far greater than any city in the world.

Revelation 21:15-16 describes the shape and size: *And he who talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city lies foursquare; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.*

The New Jerusalem is a perfect cube. How big is it? The measurement given—twelve thousand furlongs—equals 1,500 miles (about 2,400 km). Thus, the city is 1,500 miles long, 1,500 miles wide, and 1,500 miles high.

To put this into perspective: The width of the United States, from Los Angeles to New York, is about 3,000 miles. This means the New Jerusalem would cover half the U.S. The distance from Singapore to Myanmar is about 1,500 miles—this is the size of the city in every direction! If you were to fly across this city, it would take around three hours by plane!

What a gigantic, humongous, enormous city!

Some may wonder if heaven will have enough space for all believers. The answer? More than enough! Even with billions of saints, there will be room to spare. Jesus is not preparing a mere hut or apartment for us. He is building mansions—grand, palatial dwellings for each one of us.

Revelation 21:12 states: *“And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel”*.

The city will have a great and high wall with twelve gates, each named after the tribes of Israel. This signifies the unity of God’s people—both Israel and the Church—in this eternal city.

The foundations are made of 12 precious, colourful stones. On these stones, you will find certain names. What names? Whose names? Look at verse 14. In verse 14, we read: *“And the wall of the city had 12 foundations, and in them the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb.”*

The 12 apostles of Jesus Christ have their names inscribed there. The term “12 apostles of the Lamb” or “12 apostles of Jesus Christ” is a technical term in the Bible referring to the 12 disciples—Peter, James, John, and the others, minus Judas Iscariot, and someone else took his place. Only these 12 names are inscribed—no more, no less. The apostles of Jesus Christ number exactly 12—no more and no less. The number is fixed. Your name and my name will not be among them. I am content and happy if my name is simply found in the Lamb’s Book of Life. That is enough for me.

The 12 apostles of Jesus Christ have a special place of honour in the New Jerusalem. They deserve this recognition. God is rewarding them for their testimony and ministry. If you study the lives of the apostles of Jesus Christ, you will see the hardships, sufferings, and pain they endured.

Just yesterday, at the Young Adults Fellowship, we were studying the book of 2 Corinthians. In chapter 6, the apostle Paul described his life and ministry—so difficult, so full of suffering. He essentially provided his job description, listing the kinds of sufferings he endured: Five times, he was whipped by the Jews, each whipping consisting of 39 strokes—40 minus one. Three times, he was beaten with rods by the Gentiles. If Paul were to show us his body, it would be covered with scars. He went through all this suffering.

The other apostles also endured tremendous pain just to bring the good news of Christ to others. They remained faithful to the very end, with all of them dying a martyr’s death. The Lord did not forget their labour of love. Their names are inscribed on the foundation stones—only these 12 names.

The names of the 12 apostles also represent all New Testament believers. Who will dwell in the New Jerusalem? All of us who have believed in the Lord Jesus after His death and resurrection—all New Testament believers. You and I will be there.

The 12 apostles of Jesus Christ represent New Testament believers. But what about the Old Testament saints? What about the 12 patriarchs, the 12 tribes of Israel? Their names will also be there—on the gates.

The city has gates—every city has gates. This city has 12 gates, as we read in verses 12 and 13: *“And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.”*

Each gate has an angel stationed at it, welcoming the saints into the city. The gates are always open. Verses 25–27 tell us: *“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* Make sure your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

The 12 gates bear the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, representing the Old Testament saints. The city will be inhabited by both New Testament and Old Testament believers. Those who lived before Jesus came and looked forward in faith to His coming—like Abraham—will also dwell there. Jesus said, *“Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.”*

Like Abraham, we, too, have faith. None of us were present to see Jesus hanging on the cross, rising from the tomb, or performing miracles. Yet, we read about Him in His Word, which is truth, and by faith, we believe. Just as we trust in His first coming, we must also trust in His second coming.

One day, we will be gathered together in the Holy City of the New Jerusalem, surrounded by wonderful neighbours—the saints of old and new. The Lord has made it easy for us—12 gates, three on each side, welcoming all who are redeemed.

If we enjoy coming together for worship and fellowship on the Lord’s Day, it is but a taste, a glimpse of heaven to come. The gathering of the saints is a foretaste of our eternal joy in the presence of the Lord.

The streets of the city are also described in verse 21: *“And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”* Unlike our roads made of black asphalt, the streets of heaven will be pure gold, clear as crystal—clean and glorious.

There will be no need for streetlamps, for verse 23 tells us: *“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”*

Jesus Himself will be the everlasting light. There will be no night, only eternal day.

Will we need to sleep? No, for we will have unlimited energy and strength. There will be so much to do, see, and experience. Heaven will not be a boring place—it will be a place of excitement, joy, and wonder beyond imagination.

In that city, there will be a river of life. Chapter 22, verse 1, tells us: *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”*

What a glorious place awaits those who trust in the Lord! Let us look forward in faith, knowing that God has prepared an eternal home for His people.

XLII

THE RIVER OF LIFE

Revelation 22:1-6

Here is a further description of the Holy City—the New Jerusalem—our eternal place of residence.

I'm sure that when you go looking for a house to buy or live in, you not only want to see the house from the outside, but you also want to see it from the inside. Here, we find the Lord showing us the house in which we will live—from the inside.

In the previous chapter, chapter 21, we see the New Jerusalem from the outside—its shape, size, foundations, walls, and gates. We see it from the outside. But now, in this chapter, the Lord leads us inside and gives us a glimpse of the New Jerusalem from within.

Inside, we find this river. Inside, we find the tree of life. Inside, we see the streets. And we see many, many other things—the throne of God.

So, let us now go inside and take a closer look at what is within this city.

In verse 1, we read: *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”* The first thing mentioned is this river. And this river is very clean and very clear—clear as crystal. It is pure and not polluted at all.

That is what a river ought to be, right? It should be clean because a river is a place where life is found. It is a source of life. Without water—without clean water—we cannot live or survive. Water is essential for life. And here, we find this river of life—a pure river of the water of life. It is said here that rivers give life to otherwise dead and empty places.

If you have studied geography or history, you would know that many great cities in the world were built at river mouths or riverheads. That is where life is found. Just like our own country—Singapore. One of the reasons Singapore is a great city today is because of the Singapore River. You may remember the National Day song, which is quite popular and titled *Home*. There is a line that says, *“There's a river that brings us life, winding through my Singapore.”* That refers to the Singapore River.

And this is home. This home, truly, is where we must be.

We thank God for the Singapore River, but this is not our true home. Our true home is above—where there is *this* river, the true river, which is utterly pure. And this river is none other than our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. That is the river we must have—the water of life that flows from this river and from the Lord Jesus Himself.

Our home is not here—our home is above.

Do we have this river? Do we have this water of life flowing within us? That is the question all of us must answer. I pray that each one of us here has the Lord Jesus—the true river and the pure water of life that gives us life everlasting.

The true river of life—the Lord Jesus Christ—is eternally and totally pure, clean, and never polluted.

The Singapore River, which once brought life, later became a river of death. I'm sure we all know this. In fact, I came across a book that caught my attention—*The River That Brings Us Life*. It is very instructive and illustrative of the Singapore River that we have. It is written by Sarah Ang.

In the book, it says something illustrative of our journey. On page 7, it states: *“The river was a source of life to the early settlers of the Singapore River. Living in stilt houses on its banks, villagers drank from the river water, washed on its shallow banks, and cooked by the river shores. But toilets and garbage waste were emptied into the river, and the river swallowed it all.”*

This river, instead of remaining a river of life, became a river of death. The book narrates: *“The river moaned in pain because of all the garbage and rubbish thrown into it. Its once clear waters were now foul and murky. The fish and water birds disappeared. Children smelled the foul river and ran away. The river that once brought life now lay lifeless, choking on everything it had swallowed.”*

Thankfully, the Singapore River was later cleaned up, and it became alive again, as we see today. This is an illustration of our lives as well. We, too, must be cleaned up.

Thank God for the Lord Jesus, who is the river of life. When we believe in Him, we receive life everlasting. We are justified by faith—by believing in the Lord Jesus—and our sins are washed away.

Positionally, we are pure and righteous before God—on account of the purity and righteousness of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. However, as we live our lives here on earth, we must make sure we keep our lives pure. Our lives must not be choked by all the sins, dirt, and filth of this world. We can so easily be choked by these things when we neglect the work of sanctification.

The Lord desires to keep us clean, which is why He has given us the Holy Spirit and His Word—to sanctify us, to cleanse us day by day. Though we are positionally pure, we must strive to remain pure throughout our lives. By doing so, we will live a life that is most glorious and pleasing to God. Not only will we receive the Lord’s blessing when we keep ourselves pure, but we will also become more and more like the Lord Jesus and be a blessing to others.

This is something we must teach our children as well. We want them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. So I pray that parents will teach this to their children. Teach them that they must have this river of life. They must drink of this pure water. They must be obedient children—obedient to the Lord and to their parents as well.

When John recorded this verse, he must have remembered what he wrote in John chapter 4. In John 4:13-14, Jesus said: *“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”*

And in John 7:38, Jesus said: *“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”*

If we want to live, we must believe in the Lord Jesus. Faith in Him gives us life.

In Revelation 22:17, we read: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* It is free of charge—you don’t have to pay a cent.

This river will be in the New Jerusalem, and we will drink from it. But the question is: Can we have this river or drink this water now, or must we wait until then? The answer is—most definitely—yes! We can have this river and drink this water even now. We can enjoy eternal life right now.

So how do we receive this water? Repent of our sins—our old lives, our old ways, our false beliefs. We must turn away and follow the Lord Jesus. Believe in Him. And after we are saved,

we must continue believing and growing in faith—repenting and believing until the day we see Him. Thus, we go through the process of sanctification—becoming more and more like Christ. If we truly want to believe, we must change. We must say no to our past life and yes to our new life in Christ.

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman in John 4, He said: “*Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*” The woman responded: “*Sir, give me this water; that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*” She desired this water so that she would never thirst again.

But what did Jesus say to her? He told her: “*Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*” Why didn’t Jesus simply say, “Believe in Me, and you will have this water”? This drinking is, of course, spiritual—believing in Him, accepting His words, and receiving eternal life. So why didn’t Jesus go straight to that point? Instead, He told her to call her husband.

The reason is that this woman needed to realise that she must repent of her sins. She did not have just one husband but many. When she answered, “*I have no husband,*” she was not telling the full truth. Jesus replied: “*Thou hast well said, I have no husband, for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly.*” She was living in adultery. How could she continue in such a sinful way and expect to receive the water of life? If she truly wanted to live, she had to repent.

Repentance means being deeply sorry for our sins and turning away from them. Sin is what leads to death. If we want life, we must turn to Jesus, but we cannot do so while still clinging to our sinful ways. We must say no to our past life of sin and yes to the Lord Jesus. “Lord, please forgive me of my sins. Cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I hate my former life, and I desire the true life that only You can give me. From this moment forward, I want to believe in You and follow You. Be my Saviour and my Lord. Govern and take control of my life.”

That is what the Lord wants to hear from us. Repent and believe. And after believing, continue to repent. This is why, when Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery, He said to her: “*Go, and sin no more.*” After we have repented and placed our faith in Christ, receiving the forgiveness of sins and becoming children of God, how should we continue to live? Jesus tells us: “*Go, and sin no more.*”

Continue believing in Him. Continue repenting. When we make a U-turn away from sin, we must not make another U-turn back to it. Instead, we must walk with Christ, journeying toward heaven, guided by His holy Word. As we obey it, we are sanctified and cleansed by it. And finally, when we reach heaven, we will be perfected, made sinlessly pure, and our salvation will be fully realised.

The Lord offers us the water of life, but we must understand what it means and what it requires of us: Repent. Believe. And after believing, continue to repent.

Revelation 22:1 describes the ever-flowing river of life: “*A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*” The word “proceeding” in the original language can also be rendered as “pouring out.” This water is ever-flowing, never ceasing, never shut off. It is always available and always accessible. Imagine the distress of suddenly having no water in your home—whether while cooking, washing, or taking a shower. Yet, the water of life that Jesus gives is never cut off. It always flows.

Recently, the Bible College of East Africa in Kenya experienced a lack of water. Their borehole, which had supplied water for two or three decades, suddenly dried up. They had to buy water. It costs \$200 per week, and students had to ration their usage. Eventually, they dug a deeper

borehole—250 meters underground—and found better-quality water. Now, they can freely provide water to the surrounding villages.

Outside the college, they have placed a tap with a verse from John 4: *“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”* The hope is that as people come for water, they will read the Scripture, seek the Lord, and drink of the water of life that leads to eternal salvation. This teaches us about God’s generosity. Since He is ever-giving, we too must be giving. Jesus said: “Freely ye have received, freely give.” Are we a giving people? Do we live by Jesus’ words: *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”*?

Are we also forgiving? As much as the Lord has forgiven us, He commands us to forgive others. But do we harbour hatred and bitterness, seeking revenge against those who have wronged us? If we have truly drunk from the river of life, then our hearts should overflow with the same love, joy, and peace that come from God. If we find ourselves unable to forgive, if we say, “I can never forgive that person,” then we must question whether we have truly received this water of life.

Are we giving? Are we forgiving?

Sometimes, we cannot give or forgive because our spiritual lives are choked with the garbage of the world. When we indulge in sin and disobedience, the flow of God’s life within us becomes blocked. Our lives become a mess, and we are not blessed—nor are we a blessing to others. We must clean ourselves up.

Consider the difference between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of life because it receives water and gives it away. The Dead Sea, by contrast, only takes in water but never gives, which is why it is lifeless. We must not be like the Dead Sea—receiving but never giving. Instead, we should be like the Sea of Galilee, receiving and then freely sharing with others.

The river of the water of life is always flowing. Let us drink deeply, live righteously, give generously, and forgive freely.

In the New Jerusalem, we see another significant element here in verse 2: *“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life.”* Not only do we have the river of life, or the river of the water of life, but we also have the tree of life. This tree bears twelve kinds of fruit and yields its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

The tree of life is not mentioned here for the first time. We know it appears in the very first book of the Bible. It was present in the Garden of Eden, and it is called the tree of life because it symbolises eternal life. If we go back to Genesis 2, we see that Adam and his wife were told: *“Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat.”* Genesis 2:9 states: *“And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

Later, the Lord commanded Adam: *“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”* (Genesis 2:16-17). This was a solemn warning: *“Thou shalt surely die”*—a double death, both physical and spiritual.

We know the tragic story. The first couple was tempted by the devil and chose to disobey God, rebelling against Him. Eve saw that the fruit was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life led

to their downfall. They ate, and as a result, they died—both spiritually and eventually physically.

After sin entered the world, Genesis 3:22 tells us: “*And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever—*”. Because of this, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden, placing cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:23-24).

This passage presents a deep theological truth. Why was the tree of life, a symbol of eternal life, now forbidden to Adam and Eve? Because Adam and Eve had fallen, they were no longer fit to partake of the tree of life. Salvation could no longer be by works. Before the fall, when they were sinless, they could have eaten of the tree of life and lived forever. But after sin entered, they were corrupted and could no longer earn eternal life through their own efforts.

The only way to partake of the tree of life again is through faith in the Saviour, Jesus Christ. The cross, often called a tree, was a tree of death, but it became the tree of life when Jesus shed His precious blood upon it. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and His resurrection will live forever.

God desires us to partake of the tree of life, but to do so, we must first be cleansed. How can we be made clean? Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Right now, we are in the process of sanctification—being cleansed from sin. But one day, we will be completely and perfectly purified.

Only then will we be able to eat of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem. Revelation 22 tells us that the tree of life will be on both sides of the river of life, easily accessible to all who are redeemed. It will always be available, and we will be able to enjoy it at any time.

Those who reject Christ, however, will never partake of the tree of life. Only those who have been washed, made pure and clean through Christ, will be able to enter into this eternal blessing.

What God originally intended for man to enjoy was lost because of sin, but God’s plan will not be thwarted. He desires us to glorify and enjoy Him forever. One of the blessings He has prepared for us is the tree of life, which He will restore to His redeemed people.

How can we partake of it? Through Jesus Christ alone. Believe in Him, and you will be justified by faith. Right now, God is sanctifying you, and one day, He will glorify you. You will be completely perfect, sinless in every way, just as He is holy. Then, you will enjoy the fruit of the tree of life forever.

Right now, what we read in Revelation 21-22 is just a glimpse—a mere fraction of what awaits us. God has revealed only a small portion of the wonders of heaven. But even this glimpse should excite us and make us long for our eternal home.

This world is full of corruption, but our hearts should yearn for the purity of heaven. We should be looking forward to it with eager anticipation.

In heaven, there will be no more curse, no more sin, and no more death. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and His servants—believers—will serve and worship Him forever. Worship is service, and when we worship now with clean hands and pure hearts, we are already experiencing a foretaste of heaven.

One day, we will see God face to face. While God is spirit and invisible, we will see Him in the person of Jesus Christ, who remains fully God and fully man in His resurrected form. His

name will be upon our foreheads, signifying that we belong to Him. There will be no night, no need for the sun, for the Lord Himself will be our light. And we will reign with Him forever.

How we long for that day! But to see God, we must be pure in heart. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* If we desire to see God more clearly now, we must strive for holiness. The purer our hearts, the more we will understand His truth.

How do we become pure? By being sanctified through His Word. *“Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.”* Reading and meditating on Scripture daily, attending fellowship meetings, studying God’s Word, and hearing it preached—all these things cleanse and sanctify us. Even partaking in the Lord’s Supper has a sanctifying effect. Each time we come to the Lord’s Table, we examine ourselves, confess our sins, and receive His cleansing.

As we look forward to eternity, let us strive to be pure, preparing our hearts for the day when we will see God face to face and partake of the tree of life forever.

XLIII

HOW SURE? HOW LONG?

Revelation 22:6-11

We have learned from the book of Revelation who God is, what He is, who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and what He has done for us.

We have also learned who we are—sinful, evil, and wicked to the core—deserving condemnation because we have sinned against God. This entire world is cursed by sin and awaits the coming judgement of God.

Furthermore, we have learned that there will indeed be judgement: the Great Tribulation and the Great White Throne Judgement. All unbelievers will be judged, the books will be opened, and those not found in the Book of Life will be cast forever into the lake of fire.

Yet, we have also learned that there is a way out. If we ask, “Can I be saved from my sin and from the coming judgement?” the answer is a resounding “Yes!” This is what God desires to do. He does not want us to perish; He wants us to live. And there is a way—Jesus is that way. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Thus, we have learned all these things, which deal with the most important issues of life: life itself, death, and the life hereafter.

As believers, we know where we come from, why we are here, and where we are going. We also know the chief end of man. I am sure you know the answer from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1: “What is the chief end of man?” It is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

God has made us for Himself, and our souls are restless until we find rest in Him. When we believe and find rest in Him, we experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. We will enjoy Him forever.

What a good God we have! He has given us the greatest gift—the forgiveness of sins and the promise of heaven.

Why would we not believe and trust in Him? There is no reason for us not to believe.

Having learned and heard all these things, what will your response be?

Are you still doubting? Are you still questioning? Some may still wonder, “Can this really be true?” Others may ask, “Jesus said He is coming back, but why hasn’t He returned yet? How long must we wait? How can we be sure?”

From the passage, we seek to answer two questions: (1) How can we be sure? (2) How much longer must we wait until Jesus returns?

First, how can we be sure of what we have heard and learned? The Lord tells us that we can be absolutely sure.

In Revelation 22:6, it is written: “*And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true.*”

The words of Scripture—the words of God—are faithful and true. We find this truth affirmed at the beginning of Revelation. Turn to Revelation 1:5, where it says: “*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*” The Lord Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. As a faithful witness, He speaks the truth, and His truth is reflected in His life and work of salvation. He is the first to rise from the dead, never to die again. He is

the King of kings and Lord of lords. He loved us so much that He gave His life for us, shedding His precious blood so that we may be forgiven.

The Scriptures affirm this truth again in Revelation 3:14: *“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”* “Amen” means “so shall it be.” The faithful and true witness—Jesus Christ—speaks words that are yes and amen. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. His word is faithful and true.

We can trust these words without doubt or question because God cannot lie. God speaks the truth—the whole truth and nothing but the truth. *“Let God be true, but every man a liar.”* (Romans 3:4).

On the other hand, Satan is a liar and deceiver, and mankind, being sinful and wicked, is also full of lies.

Where is the truth? Who is the truth? God is truth, and His Word is truth. We can be sure because the Scriptures prove their own faithfulness and truthfulness through fulfilled prophecy.

Revelation 22:6 also states: *“And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”* God, who knows all things, speaks ahead of time, revealing the future through His prophets. His prophecies have been fulfilled with perfect accuracy.

Consider the prophecies concerning Christ’s first coming. His birth, life, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection were all foretold long before they happened. Over 300 prophecies concerning His first coming were fulfilled to the smallest detail.

For example, Isaiah 7:14 prophesied His virgin birth: *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”* Micah 5:2 foretold the exact place of His birth: *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.”* These prophecies were recorded 700 years before Christ was born.

His crucifixion was also prophesied in Isaiah 53:5: *“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”* Psalm 22 vividly describes His suffering: *“They pierced my hands and my feet.”*

And His resurrection was foretold in Psalm 16:10: *“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”* Jesus Himself predicted His death and resurrection: *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* (John 2:19). He specified the time: *“On the third day, I will rise again”*—and He did.

The resurrection of Christ is historically indisputable. Acts 1:3 tells us: *“To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”* Jesus appeared for 40 days after His resurrection, proving He was alive. He ate with His disciples, spoke with them, and taught them about the kingdom of God.

Even secular historians acknowledge Jesus’ existence. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century, mentions Jesus three times, affirming that He lived, had a brother named James, and was crucified. Tacitus, a Roman historian writing in AD 110, also recorded that Jesus was executed under Pontius Pilate. No historian denies Jesus’ existence, His crucifixion, or the movement that followed.

But the greatest proof of all is His resurrection. Jesus is alive!

Since all prophecies concerning His first coming were fulfilled exactly, we can be certain that the prophecies about His second coming will also be fulfilled.

We know He is coming back. So, how can we be sure? Because God's Word is faithful and true.

And how much longer must we wait? That answer is found in His Word as well.

Just as historians take historical documents at face value—documents written by secular historians—we, as believers, have God's Word, which is far superior to all human writings. Secular historians accept the words of Josephus and Tacitus as fact. We as Christians believe God's Word and take it by faith. Our faith in God's Word is not unfounded, for in God's Word we have "*a more sure word of prophecy*". Secular historians can make mistakes because they are human, but here we have God as the author and speaker—He makes no mistakes. And we believe in His Word, in His truth.

How we thank God for this! He has not left us without witness, and His Word is truth.

One of the most powerful evidences that the resurrection truly happened is the transformed lives of the apostles of Jesus Christ. They were once afraid, hiding in fear, and even deserted Him—Peter himself denied the Lord three times. But after the resurrection, after Jesus appeared to them and taught them about the kingdom of God, they were completely changed. Suddenly, they became fearless. They became apostles, evangelists, missionaries—willing even to lay down their lives for the Lord because they knew the truth. Jesus is faithful and true, and His words are faithful and true.

So, what is stopping us from believing? Nothing—except our own unbelief, the pride of our intellect, the blindness of our sin, and the corruption of our minds and hearts, which blind us to the truth.

How do we see? If we repent of our sin, fear God, and humble ourselves before Him, then we will see. "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*" (Proverbs 1:7). "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (Proverbs 9:10).

We must take that step of faith. And how does faith come? "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:17). Right now, you are hearing God's Word read, expounded, and taught. These words are faithful and true because Jesus is faithful and true. He died for us and rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.

When you believe, you will be free—free from Satan, free from sin, and free from the bondage of this world.

Jesus is faithful and true. Not only are His words faithful and true, but He Himself is the faithful and true witness. He is the Creator.

Revelation 22:6 says, "*And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*"

The Lord God of the holy prophets—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of the Judeo-Christian faith is in control. He is sovereign. Nothing happens by chance. He is God—the Creator—who is all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present. He knows the beginning from the end and the end from the beginning. That is why He can be trusted.

So why wouldn't we trust Him? It is foolish not to trust Him. It is foolish to trust in ourselves, for we are sinful and finite. Shouldn't we trust in someone who is holy and infinite, who knows all things?

We must go to Him for answers. We are blind, and a blind man cannot operate on his own eyes. He needs someone who can see. Only God has the ability—He is all-powerful, He sees all things, and He knows all things. If we want answers, we must go to Him, for He was there from the beginning. We were not. He was there, and He has revealed to us how He created the world, how He created us, what we have become, and how we can be restored and become His children once again.

So how sure can we be? Very sure. If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can be certain that if the Lord were to return today or if He were to call you home, you know where you will be—you will be with Him in heaven.

Consider the thief on the cross. At first, he reviled Jesus, but then, hearing the gracious words spoken by Christ—*"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"*—he repented and said, *"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."* He believed that Jesus would die and be raised again. And in that short moment, his simple confession of faith saved him. Jesus told him, *"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."*

Salvation is not by works of righteousness or anything good in us, but by God's mercy. How can we be saved? By faith—simply believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus.

So how sure can we be? Very sure.

When will the Lord Jesus return? Some may scoff, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? It has been 2,000 years since!" But what Jesus says is faithful and true. He will return. Do not scoff or doubt. 2 Peter 3:3-7 warns, *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."*

The Apostle Peter encourages all believers, *"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* (2 Peter 3:8). It has been 2,000 years, but to God, it is like two days.

Why is the Lord waiting? It is because He is longsuffering. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

God desires people to repent. He gives them time to turn from the world, from sin, and to believe in Him.

God takes no pleasure in sending people to hell. He wants all to be saved. But one day, judgement will come. *"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night"* (2 Peter 3:10). It can happen at any moment. We do not know the exact day or hour of His coming because He wants us to be ready at all times.

Looking at the world today, we see signs that indicate the end is near. We may very well be the generation that witnesses the Lord's return. When He comes, believers who are still alive will be caught up to meet Him in the air. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we will receive glorified bodies—the same kind that Jesus has.

He is the firstfruits of the resurrection, and we who believe in Him will also be raised.

So do not doubt. It will happen soon. We must be ready.

Some may think, “It has been 2,000 years, maybe it won’t happen for another thousand or ten thousand years.” But no—it can happen at any moment. We must always be ready. If the Lord calls us today, we must be prepared to go, and we must be found faithful.

When we see Him, may we not be ashamed, but may we hear Him say, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”*

How to be ready?

In Revelation 22:7, we are given a beatitude: *“Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”*

Blessed—truly happy—are those who keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book. To keep them means to hold fast to the faithful and true words of the Holy Scriptures.

The word “keep” here conveys the idea of watching, guarding, and preserving. You guard and watch over things that are precious, and these are the precious words of life from God. Keeping them means having the highest regard for God’s Word, esteeming it as 100% perfect and without error—because it comes from a God who is 100% perfect and without error.

Because He is the faithful and true God, you must believe every word. His words have the power to save you. Keeping them means treasuring them, hiding them in your heart so that you will not sin against God (Psalm 119:11).

To be ready, you must keep His words. But how? By Believing – Keeping begins with faith. Believe in the Gospel! The Gospel is proclaimed throughout the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says: *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* He knocks on the door of your heart. If you hear His voice and open the door by faith, He will enter, have fellowship with you, and save you. Faith in Christ is the only way to eternal life (John 14:6).

Keeping God’s words means more than just believing; it means obeying them. Obey the faithful and true sayings of Christ: Believe in all the prophecies, obey all His commands, repent of sin, vain thoughts, false philosophies, and worldly methodologies, and follow God’s way, which leads to true life and freedom.

Jesus said: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). There is no other way to salvation. Acts 4:12 affirms: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

Jesus also said in John 11:25–26: *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”*

The question remains—do you believe? If you believe, you will live. If you do not believe, you will perish. There is no middle ground.

The right response to God’s truth is worship. In Revelation 22:8–9, John, overwhelmed by what he saw and heard, fell down to worship. However, he mistakenly worshiped the angel. The angel quickly corrected him: *“See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant... Worship God”* (Revelation 22:9).

We do not worship angels or pray to them. Worship belongs only to God. True worship is humble submission before Him, acknowledging His Lordship and mercy.

If you refuse to believe and obey, judgement will come. Revelation 22:11 warns: *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still...”*

This speaks of judicial hardening—if a person repeatedly rejects God, there comes a point where God gives them over to their own rebellion. Romans 1:18–32 describes this tragic reality: “*God gave them up to uncleanness... God gave them up unto vile affections... God gave them over to a reprobate mind...*”.

When people persist in unbelief, idolatry, and sin, they face God’s judgement. They knew God but refused to glorify Him. Their foolish hearts were darkened. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie. “*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*” (Romans 1:22).

Rejecting God leads to moral and spiritual decay. Those who do not want to retain God in their knowledge will ultimately be left to their own destruction.

The time is at hand! Life is fleeting. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). If you refuse Christ now, there may come a time when it is too late.

Jesus is still knocking. Will you open the door? Will you believe and be saved?

The only way to be ready for His coming is to keep His words—by believing, obeying, and worshiping Him alone.

“Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.”

XLIV

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE

Revelation 22:12-15

“One door and only one, and yet its sides are two. Inside and outside, on which side are you?” We have sung this children’s song. The question is: Are we on the inside or the outside? All of us must want to be on the inside and not outside of salvation’s door.

In verses 14-15, it says, *“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”*

Take note: to be on the inside is not merely to be inside the church. You may be inside the church but still be outside of God’s Kingdom. Those who truly belong to God’s Kingdom are saved, but if you’re only in the church, it is not a guarantee of salvation.

Right now, in the local church, it is a mixed multitude. We want to ensure that not only are we inside the church, we are also inside God’s Kingdom.

So how do we make sure of this—that we are on the inside and not the outside?

First, we must be ready. We must be ready for the Lord’s coming if we want to be on the inside.

Now, verse 12 says, *“And behold, I come quickly.”* The Lord says, “I’m coming.” When He says, “I’m coming,” you can be very sure He is coming, and He will come. He says, “Here I come quickly”—in other words, His coming is going to be very soon. When the time is up, when the time comes, He will not delay; He will come back.

Now the Book of Revelation is opened—it is an open book given to us to understand.

Nowadays, we can understand more and more of this book because we see so many things happening today that point to the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust that after all the study—from chapter one until this last chapter—you have gained a better grasp and understanding of both our present time and the future.

What will happen? Are we on the inside or on the outside? If we are on the inside, when the Great Tribulation comes, we’ll be up there, not still down here.

So make sure you’re on the inside, so that when the Great Tribulation comes, when God finally judges this world in the last seven years of its history, you’re not here—you’re up there when the trumpet is sounded. We must make sure of that.

The Lord says, *“I’m coming soon, and I come quickly.”* When people proclaim, “Peace and safety,” sudden destruction comes. It is imminent—it can be at any time.

And from what we read in the scriptures, understanding the times, we know it is very near, very soon—nearer than we think. But God, by His grace, is still waiting; the waiting period is about to end.

The gospel is still going out, and I thank God that the Lord is still using us to share the gospel with others.

I know there are those among you who are active in sharing the gospel with your friends at school or at work—inviting them to church, giving them tracts or books, or sending them the messages of our church that are now online. Get them to hear and know the truth. Please, keep on doing personal evangelism, because I believe it is the way to reach the lost.

We also thank the Lord that He has given us mission stations overseas to help, support, and extend His kingdom. By the grace of God, more and more are getting saved in our missionary churches overseas.

People are coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ—baptised, growing in the faith—and those found in false churches have come out, separated themselves, and are now in true churches.

These churches preach the infallible and inerrant Word of God, teaching the whole counsel of God without fear or favour of men, and providing great encouragement and edification through the Word.

Thank God that many of our churches and mission stations—helmed and served by the graduates of the Far Eastern Bible College—are receiving the truth. We have the means and the resources to help in the work. Let us not shun or shy away from the good that we have been doing; we should do much more. I feel we have not done enough.

The church is not made of bricks and stones—it is flesh and blood. It has to do with people's minds and hearts. We need to pray for their salvation and, when they are saved, to build them up in the faith. That is the work we must do today.

God is saving people, not buildings. All these buildings we see today will tumble down, be destroyed, burned with fire, and all that we possess—the money in our banks—will be turned to ashes.

But what will last are our lives—the lives of people whom the Lord will save and use to reach out, touch lives, and build up lives. And the talents and financial resources the Lord has given us can be used for good spiritual work. Please, think spiritually.

We must be ready for the Lord's return, for we have to give an account to Him, and the end is near.

Right now the Lord is waiting, and as we know, He is very patient and longsuffering with people. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The gospel is going out, and the Lord says in Matthew 24:14, "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*"

In fact, I can hardly wait to depart. Paul says it's better to depart, but we are constrained to remain because of the need right now to save souls, build up lives in the church, and serve in many areas.

Surely our heart's desire is to be with the Lord. I'm sure the Lord also wants to take us home, away from all this, so that we may enjoy the fullness of our salvation.

But He allows us to go through life here on Earth—with its many sufferings, pains, stresses, and distresses. He tells us to wait and do His work, to do His will, and to endure the sufferings for the sake of the people out there.

Consider Noah. God told Noah that He would destroy the world by water because the wickedness and evil on the earth at that time were unimaginable.

Although God said he would destroy the whole world, He did not do so immediately. Instead, He told Noah to build an ark to save his family and all who would believe in the gospel which Noah would preach.

As the Bible says, Noah was "*a preacher of righteousness*". He preached righteousness: "*Repent, get right with God, or else God will punish and destroy, and you all will be destroyed by water.*" He kept preaching the good news as he was building the ark. And how long did the Lord wait?

Noah spent 120 years building the ark, and every day while he was building, he was preaching. For 120 years, he suffered great scorn; they mocked, laughed, and scoffed at him, saying, “You foolish old man, building this thing—rain will come and we will all be destroyed by a flood! What nonsense! We have not seen any rain; nothing of this sort will happen.”

And they continued living their lives in sinfulness until finally, when God closed the door, sudden destruction came.

So we also face these challenges today. When the truth is preached, people ridicule, laugh, scoff, and scorn it. We readily suffer these things. But we can be sure of this: the Lord says, “I am coming and I’m coming quickly.” When He comes and shuts the door, that’s it.

We know we are near the end for sure because we are at the fifth stage of world empires. Four world empires—Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome—have already passed. Now, we are at the fifth stage: a revived Roman Empire, which will produce the Antichrist,

The Lord will come to judge the world and set up His millennial Kingdom—His Diamond Kingdom that must come.

The end is very, very near. We must be ready.

If we are not ready, it means we love this world and the things of this world too much. Are we ready? Or are we saying, “Lord, not so soon—I’m enjoying life right now; let me enjoy life here first, don’t come back yet”?

Sometimes I thank the Lord for the trials, troubles, and tests that come our way—the difficulties, pain, and suffering—because when we go through these things, we long to leave this place; we look forward to heaven.

I know of an elderly lady in our church who has suffered for many years—enduring physical pain and painful procedures. Each time she goes through such experiences, she remembers the gospel and the resurrection. She prays to the Lord, telling her loved ones, “I’m waiting—I want my new body. The resurrection body.” Her constant desire is for that new, resurrected body. I believe all of us should have that same desire; we should look forward to the resurrection.

The Lord tells us, *“I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give every man according to his work.”*

The word “reward” in the original means “payment.” Sometimes we think of reward merely as a bonus for good work, but here it applies not only for the good but also for the bad that is done.

Payment and wages. You pay someone what he deserves for the work he has performed. That is the idea. It is payment time when He comes.

He will pay what sinners deserve. All the sinfulness and all the sinful deeds will be repaid. And what will be paid to them? The wages of sin, which we know is death. So, the Lord will come with His reward and will repay all sinners with death, for that is what they deserve—*“the wages of sin is death”*.

He will also come with His reward for His saints, for those of us whose sins are forgiven by the Lord Jesus because we believe in Him. The Lord will come with this reward, and if we have been serving Him and performing good service, He will reward us accordingly.

Our good works will all be tested—some may be like gold, silver, or precious stones and will be rewarded; others, like wood or stubble, will be burnt up and suffer loss.

What kind of work have we done for the Lord? Is it of good quality? Are we really serving the Lord, or are we serving ourselves? Only the Lord knows the intents and motives of our hearts, and on that day He will examine every heart and every deed and reward accordingly.

He will come with His reward. We want to ensure we belong to the Bema of Christ—the Judgement Seat of Christ, where rewards are given for services rendered—rather than coming under the judgement of the great white throne, where sinners receive the wages of sin, which is death; eternal condemnation in the Lake of Fire.

So the first thing is to ensure we are on the inside—and to be on the inside, we must be ready. You must be ready for the Lord to come back.

The second requirement to be ready is that we must believe. To be ready, we must get ourselves right with God.

Verse 13 tells us that Jesus says, *“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”*

We all have to answer to Him; we all have to be accountable to God and our Saviour, who is Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end, the first and the last. We must believe—not in anyone but in Him alone: the one who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last—because He is both judge and rewarder.

Make sure you believe in Him, who is Alpha and Omega. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

When Jesus says, “I am Alpha and Omega,” He is saying, “You must believe in my words.” The first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet give us words, and you must believe in my words if you are going to be saved.

So, believe My word—from the beginning to the end, from Genesis to Revelation. Believe in the whole of Scripture; all 66 books of the Bible are important, infallible, inerrant—our sole, supreme, and final authority of faith and practice.

Do we believe in every book? We must believe in all 66 books. We must believe in the whole Word of God—from beginning to end, from Alpha to Omega, from Genesis to Revelation. Every book, every chapter, every verse, every syllable, every letter is life-giving.

Do we believe this? I’m sure we do. We believe in the 100% inspiration and 100% preservation of the Scriptures, down to the jot and tittle. We must be ready; we must believe in God’s word, every word.

Secondly, we must believe in Him who is the beginning and the end.

Jesus says, *“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”* What does He mean by this? He is saying, “I am the Creator. I am the One who started all things. I made all things. I created all things. I was there in the very beginning. I made everything.”

And He is also the end. He will be the One to bring all things to completion. He will return as Judge at the end. He is both Creator and Judge. What He has begun, He can also bring to an end. Jesus says, *“I am the beginning and I am the end.”* One day, the Lord will put an end to all pain and suffering and wipe away all tears. Revelation 21:1 states: *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”* The Lord will bring an end to this present world.

Then in verse 4: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”* He will put an end to all pain and suffering.

Those of us who have believed and trusted in Him know that He is the author and finisher of our faith. Philippians 1:6 says: *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* Once saved, always saved.

Jesus is not someone who does things halfway. His work is not half-done. What He has done for us is not done half-heartedly. He is our perfect and complete Saviour. Ephesians 2:8-9 says: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”* Even the faith by which we say, “I believe,” is a gift from God. The Lord will perfect our faith and our trust in Him. He is the author and finisher of our faith. And He says, *“I am with you always...”* (Matthew 28:20). *“Always”* means all the way, *“even unto the end of the world.”*

Have we believed in this God and Saviour who is Alpha and Omega? Have we believed His words? Do we believe that He is the Creator and that at the end He will judge and return? Do we believe that He is the author and finisher of our faith? We must believe all these things to be assured that we are inside the kingdom and not outside.

Thirdly, we must not only believe, we must keep on believing. Verse 14 says: *“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”* We know that we are blessed salvifically and spiritually. Salvation comes by faith—by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. We must believe.

But why does the Lord also say that we must do? *“Blessed are they that do...”*. Is salvation by works? No, not at all. Salvation is purely by the grace of God through faith alone in Christ alone. So why does the Lord say we must do? He says this because He wants us to be sure that we have true faith and not false faith.

James tells us, *“Faith without works is dead.”* Our faith must be alive—a faith that works. Not a faith that is dead. A dead faith is useless. Some say, “I believe, I believe,” but there is no change in their lives. No change in their conduct. No good works. No good speech. Their lips are deadly. There is no fruit of the Spirit. No marks of grace. Yet they say, “I believe.” But they do not do His commandments.

There are those today who say, “I believe in Jesus as my Saviour,” but when you tell them, “You must also believe in Jesus as your Lord—He must govern your life, and you must obey what He commands you,” they get offended. They become angry. Have they truly believed?

We cannot separate Christ’s role as Saviour from His role as Lord. Romans 10:9 says: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

Note that It does not just say “Jesus”—it says “the Lord Jesus.” Jesus means Saviour, but He must also be Lord over our life. He must rule our heart. We must enthrone Him as Lord. And what He says, we must obey.

Jesus said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”* If you truly love the Lord, you will obey Him. To be blessed, you must not only believe in Him, but also do His commandments. This proves that you have truly believed. Faith devoid of works is dead.

“Blessed are they that do His commandments.” And it is not just to do once, but to keep on doing. Some may say, “I did it once, so I’m done.” No. You must keep doing His commandments. We are only done when we arrive in heaven. When we receive our new bodies, then there will be no more work—only rest. But for now, blessed are they that believe, do, and keep on doing—to show that we have truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you have true faith—a genuine faith—you have this right: The right to the tree of life. This means you truly have eternal life. You will be in heaven. The tree of life will be in the New Jerusalem. If you want to partake of its fruit, if you want to be in the New Jerusalem, not outside of it, then make sure your faith is real.

Make sure you are on the inside, not on the outside. Verse 15 warns: *“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”* Who are these people?

The Dogs—Paul warns in Philippians 3:2: *“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.”* These are not pet dogs but wild, vicious, aggressive street dogs. They tear apart. They represent false preachers, false teachers, false prophets—those who seek to deceive and tear believers away from Christ. They are also false brethren—those in the church who cause division. The word “concision” means mutilation—they seek to divide the church. God hates those who sow discord. Proverbs 6:16-19 calls it an abomination. May the Lord keep the dogs outside, not inside His church.

As believers we are not dogs. We are His sheep. Make sure we remain His sheep.

The Sorcerers—False miracle workers, deceivers, tricksters, charlatans. Matthew 24 warns that false Christs and prophets will perform counterfeit miracles to deceive many.

The Whoremongers—Fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals. Hebrews 13:4 warns that *“whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”*

The Murderers—Those who killed God’s prophets and ultimately crucified Christ.

The Idolaters—Those who worship false gods or place anything above God.

The Liars—Those who follow the devil, the father of lies (John 8:44). False accusers, deceivers.

Let us not be like them.

Let us remain faithful, believing, obeying, and persevering—inside the kingdom, not outside.

XLV

TRUE BIBLE, TRUE LIFE

Revelation 22:16-21

The Bible is the Word of Life, and if we do not believe the Bible, then we have no life. No Bible, no life.

But if we have the Bible, the Word of Life, then we have true life. We must ensure that we believe the Bible totally and fully. The Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, is 100 percent perfect, infallible, and inerrant, without any mistake.

Jesus Himself said in verse 6, *“These sayings are faithful and true.”* God’s Word is always faithful and true. The world may change, and people may change, but our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. His words also remain the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We must make sure that we do not add to or subtract from the Scriptures. We must believe in all of the Scriptures—every single part of it. That is why the Lord Jesus gives us a solemn warning in verses 18 and 19: *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”*

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Word of Life, we must not add to the Bible. Today, there are those who add to the Bible by claiming that God still speaks through visions, dreams, and prophecies, or that He still speaks audibly. This is adding to the Scriptures. They claim that the Bible is not sufficient and that we must hear God’s voice through visions, dreams, and modern-day prophecies. Some even say that these revelations are equal to the Scriptures.

But what does the Bible say about such things? The Bible is very clear that the final revelation has already come in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the last book of the Bible has already been written—the Book of Revelation. Once God put a full stop to this book, any so-called revelations through visions, dreams, and prophecies ceased because the Bible is now complete. The canon of Scripture is closed, and this perfect standard is now our sole, supreme, and final authority for faith and practice. We do not need anything more.

God no longer speaks to His people through new visions, dreams, or prophecies that become Scripture. The Scriptures are already completed, as we see in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10: *“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”*

What is “that which is perfect” in verse 10? The word “perfect” here refers to the perfect Word of God—the Holy Scriptures. Once God gave us the last book, the last chapter, the last verse, and the last word—the Book of Revelation—all these partial means of revelation, such as visions, dreams, and prophecies, ceased. We now have the complete Word of God—all 66 books of the Holy Scriptures: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. We do not need anything more. This is our full, complete, and perfect Bible—our sole, supreme, and final authority for faith and practice. We cannot add anything more to it.

Do not seek visions and dreams or try to hear God’s voice audibly. If you need wisdom and want to know God’s will, go straight to His Word. Meditate on it, read and study it devotionally,

faithfully, reverently, and prayerfully. God will reveal His Word and His will to you, giving you understanding and faith to believe and obey. We do not need new visions, dreams, or prophecies today—everything we need is right here in God’s holy and perfect Book, the 66 books of canonical Scripture.

There are also those who add to God’s Word by claiming that the Bible is not just 66 books. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, adds seven more books, making a total of 73. These additional books are called the Apocrypha—hidden or secret books that are false writings. They were written during the 400 silent years between the Old and New Testaments, when there were no prophets. These books were written by men and are not inspired, not authoritative, and not the Word of God. The Jews never recognised them as Scripture, yet the Roman Catholic Church added them.

From these added books, the Roman Catholic Church developed unbiblical doctrines such as purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory teaches that after believers die, they must go to purgatory to have their sins purged. This means that Jesus’ death on the cross and the shedding of His blood are not enough to cleanse them from all their sins. The Catholic Church also teach that those in purgatory can get out of purgatory faster through indulgences. This is done through their loved ones who can purchase these forgiveness tickets for them so that they can get out faster. This contradicts the Bible, which teaches that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, based on Scripture alone. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is perfect and complete; we do not need to do anything more or pay anything to be saved.

This is why the 16th-century Protestant Reformation was necessary. God raised up a Roman Catholic monk who saw the truth of salvation in Christ: *“The just shall live by faith”* (Romans 1:17). The Reformation of 1517 affirmed that salvation is by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone. We do not have to pay a cent or do anything to earn salvation—it is a free gift. Once we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, our sins are totally forgiven, and we have eternal life.

As Bible-Presbyterians, we are neither charismatic nor Catholic. We are Bible believers and Bible defenders. We must believe all 66 books of the canonical Scriptures—no more and no less.

We must not add to God’s Word, nor must we subtract from it. Some people deny that certain parts of the Bible are God’s Word at all. These are the modernists and liberals who claim to be Christians, believers, and Bible students, yet they do not believe the Bible is God’s infallible, inerrant Word. By denying God’s inspiration of Scripture, they subtract from the Bible.

Modernists and liberals deny fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the Virgin Birth of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, and the resurrection. By doing so, they take away God and the life found in His Word, bringing only death upon themselves.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a group of liberal scholars known as the Jesus Seminar evaluated the words of Jesus in the Gospels by casting votes. They claimed that 80 percent of Jesus’ words recorded in the Gospels were not actually spoken by Him. For instance, they claimed that only the first two words of the Lord’s Prayer—*“Our Father”*—were genuinely spoken by Jesus, and that the rest was invented by others. This is a dangerous subtraction from God’s Word.

We must believe, like the Apostle Peter, who said to Jesus, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). Where else can we turn? Only Christ has the words of eternal life. If we believe every word of the Scriptures, we will have life. If we do not believe, we will have no life.

Let us, therefore, hold fast to the Bible—the complete, inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. Let us not add to it or take away from it, but believe and obey it fully. Amen.

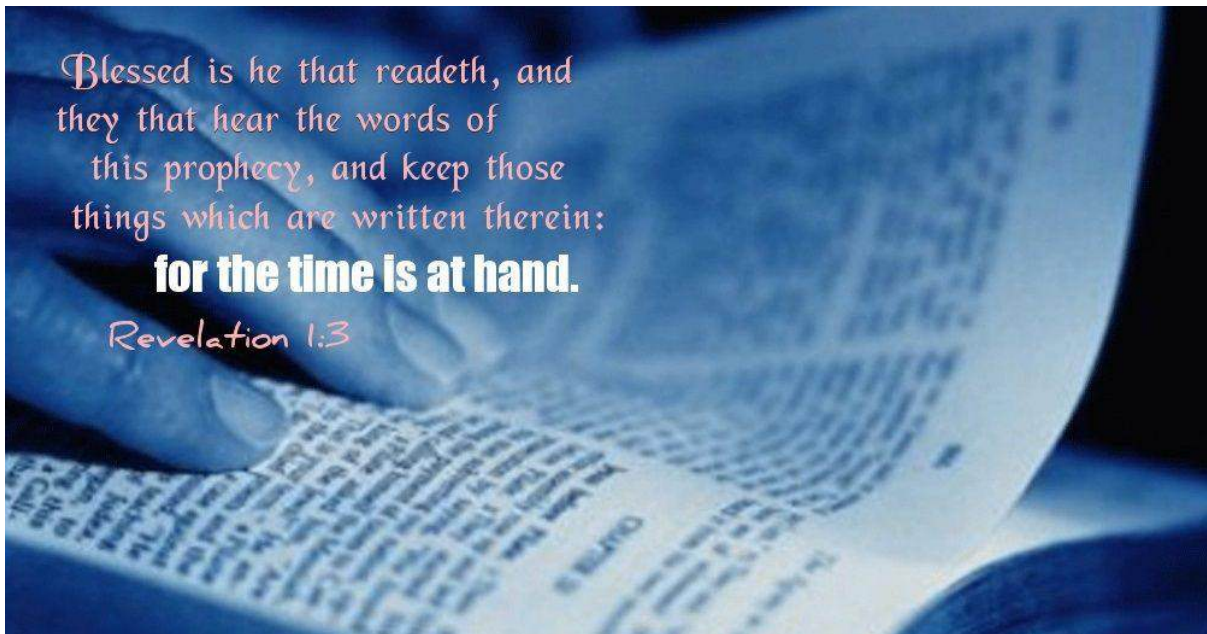
DEAN BURGON OATH

Of Allegiance to the Word of God

I swear in the Name of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—that I believe “the Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme.” So help me God. Amen.



XLVI
THE TIME IS NEAR



According to the Bible, the time is near,
The signs of the end are becoming clear.
As Jesus taught and prophets foretold,
These warnings of old are now taking hold.

*There are floods and fires, droughts and despair,
Calamities striking from here to there.
Storms are stronger, disasters grow,
The earth groans deeply, and still we sow.*

Nations rise in ruthless strife,
With war and terror claiming life.
Earthquakes rumble beneath the land,
Bringing ruin none can withstand.

*Morals crumble in broad daylight,
Wrong is called good, and dark is called light.
Men with men, and women too,
Forsake God's plan for what is new.*

False Christs appear with words so sly,
Deceiving hearts that know not why.
They gather crowds who do not see,
They follow lies, and think they're free.

*The climate shifts, the heat won't cease,
The world now pleads for calm and peace.
But sin still reigns, and hearts grow cold,
Though prophets' warnings have been told.*

Tech explodes with rapid pace,
While truth is lost without a trace.

Lies and rumours cloud the sky,
And justice falters, passing by.

*Trade wars stir and nations reel,
The pain is sharp, the wounds are real.
Greed and pride bring misery,
While few will turn and bend the knee.*

Lovers of self and money rise,
Ignoring truth and feeding lies.
Rejecting God, they scoff His might,
And stumble blindly through the night.

*Apostasy spreads like deadly flame,
While scoffers mock the Saviour's name.
They dream of peace and soul's reprieve,
Yet in their hearts, they don't believe.*

But Christ will come, the time is short,
His people wait at heaven's port.
O turn to Him and heed His call,
Before the judgement starts to fall.

*No man knows the day or hour;
But we must live by grace and power.
So come to Jesus, now don't delay—
Be ready for that final day.*