

## CHAPTER FIVE - PART SEVEN

### SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION

The Apostle John wrote five books in the New Testament: the Gospel of **John**, the three Epistles of **John** and the Book of **Revelation** — all of which are quite unique in comparison to any other Book in the New Testament. The Gospel and the first Epistle of **John** address the beginning of creation parallel to **Genesis one** and covers the beginning of the Church period; whereas the Book of **Revelation** begins at the near end of this dispensation, beginning with the removal of the Church, covering through to the Messianic Era (the 7th one thousand-year period) and ending with the Eternal Ages beyond.

The Book of **Revelation** deals with both the Church and Israel with respect to judgment and redemption. God deals with the Church first for a revealed purpose, to remove and separate them from His dealings with Israel. Just as Enoch, a type of the Church, was removed before the Flood (type of the Tribulation), so also will the Church be removed before the Tribulation begins. Christ chose John to be an eyewitness to matters surrounding the Church and Israel, so that man would understand the purpose for his creation, and the amazing future that God has in store for His firstborn sons — all having to do with regality.

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. (Revelation 1:1-3)*

The word “revelation” is the Greek translation for *apokalupsis* (“apocalypse”), which means to “reveal, disclose, uncover, unveil.” The Book of **Revelation** is an unveiling of things yet future through God’s Son. Jesus Christ is *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14)*. Christ came the first time to deliver the message of the kingdom and to reveal all that is spoken by God within the Old Testament Scriptures. This is the manner in which God set forth to make known His

plans and His purposes to man. Furthermore, God “signified” (with “signs”) this revelation to John by His angel (**Revelation 1:1b**) — knowing that *angels are ministering spirits sent forth by God for those who will inherit salvation* (**Hebrews 1:14**).

Blessings await all believers that read, hear and keep the things written in this book. *All* of Scripture leads to these end time events; it is where *all* of God’s Word points to — the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. The Book of **Revelation** is a revealing of this very thing. It is proper then to place the Book of **Revelation** at the end of God’s Word, to show us the end of things to come. And the reason for the importance of keeping these last words is this: “*for the time is near.*”

The first four chapters of the Book of **Revelation** address seven literal Churches that were located in the region of Asia at the beginning of this dispensation. The seven Letters were addressed to the *angels* of the seven Churches who have authority over and the responsibility to minister to the Churches. John was removed from the earth and placed, at a future time, in the Lord’s Day in heaven. John was placed in the Lord’s Day to witness the events that would transpire and then to record it. These seven Churches represent seven spiritual conditions that apply to individuals today and that are addressed by Christ at His judgment seat. Furthermore, these seven Churches represent all of Church history from Pentecost to the Rapture. The events of the Judgment seat of Christ, revealed in the first three chapters of **Revelation**, provide a word-picture of *all* Christians being raptured from the earth to heaven to face their Judge and to give an account of all their works done in the body.

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)*

The greetings to the seven Churches in **Revelation 1:4, 5** were delivered from all three Persons of the Godhead: God the Father (*from Him who is and who was and who is to come*, which denotes a timeless existence and a future return without any ending), Jesus Christ, *the faithful witness*, and *the seven Spirits who are before His throne*. The seven Spirits represent the sevenfold nature of the Holy Spirit and may also be translated “*the sevenfold Spirit.*” In **Isaiah 11:2**, the sevenfold nature of the Holy Spirit

is disclosed: *The Spirit of the Lord* [i.e. deity] *shall rest upon Him* [Christ], *the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

The opening greeting to the Churches reveals that the complete Triune God will be present at His throne at the Judgment seat of Christ. All three are uniquely connected and yet inexplicably separate in function regarding God's creation. Reference is made to Jesus Christ in three capacities:

1. *The faithful witness* — He is the Word who came in the flesh and was a faithful witness to all; 2. *the firstborn from the dead* — a reference to His resurrection, never to die again; 3. *the ruler over the kings of the earth* — His firstborn status is connected to His position as ruler over the earth, a position yet to be realized when He comes the second time in glory as King of kings.

And because Christ loved us, His sacrificial death on the Cross made it possible for us to be freed from the bondage of sin and was the basis for all redemptive work (Justification, sanctification and glorification). Because of this, He has made Christians “kings and priests” (a kingdom of priests) during the coming Messianic Era, granted they also suffer through “death to self” in this life. This will qualify them to rule and reign with Christ in the kingdom of the heavens.

*Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1:7)*

The appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ encompasses end time events beginning with the rapture of the Church and ending after the Tribulation. Therefore, the whole matter surrounding Christ's return through a series of events is to be viewed as *one* return or *one* coming.

And during the events of His return, He will be accompanied by angels. The reference to *He is coming with clouds* indicates Christ coming with an innumerable company of angels. “Clouds” in Scripture denotes both “deity” and “angels;” and could be referenced here as “*clouds of angels connected with deity.*” At some point in time, whether at the rapture, Tribulation or judgment, *every eye will see Him*, the saved and unsaved.

Since all individuals will be judged at one point in the future, all will stand before Him and see Him. And many of the Jews will see Him and mourn, because they had rejected their Messiah -- *they who pierced Him* **(Revelation 1:7b)**.

John began his testimony of what he saw and heard:

*I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." **(Revelation 1:9-11)***

John stated that he was on a remote island called Patmos for the purpose of revealing the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. God had chosen to isolate John to a remote place, something that He had done with other prophets and apostles before, for the purpose of attaining his undivided attention from the outside world. John was there to capture and record everything he saw in regards to end time events, so that man would know and understand God's purpose for them. We can place our hope in that which John witnesses and describes next.

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day... **(Revelation 1:10)***

This verse could be translated to read, "*I became in spirit on the Lord's Day.*" John was removed (raptured) from the island of Patmos and was transported into the Lord's Day, to a future time (such as time travel), some 2000 years in the future. This was *not* a vision or a dream — John was *physically* present as the events were taking place! John's transportation to the heavens is an awesome reminder that we also will have such an experience. This transportation will be accomplished by two means: one, by the indwelling Holy Spirit; and two, by the powerful voice of God.

The word “Lord’s” is the Greek definition (Strong’s #G2960) meaning “belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ;” and “Day” (Strong’s #G2250) means “period, judgment, time.” Within this context, such as seen in the writings from the prophets in the Old Testament referring to “The Day of the Lord,” this is connected with Christ’s judgment upon man and the world, and this Day or time will not end until Christ’s judgment has ended (a period of 1000 years) and then He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father. Therefore, while John was being removed from the earth to heaven 2000 years in the future, traveling to the end of this dispensation, the Church was also being removed to heaven at the same time. The sound of the “trumpet” which John heard was the sign that the Lord’s Day had begun and the rapture had occurred.

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet... (Revelation 1:10)*

This sign is also given in **1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17:**

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be ‘caught up’ [Translation for Greek word “harpazo” (Strong’s #G726) meaning “caught up”; “rapture”] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*

John heard the powerful voice of God instructing him to write everything that he saw and to give his written testimony to the seven Churches [all Christians]. John saw the complete Church before him, from the seven Churches at the beginning of this dispensation to all Christians at the end of this dispensation, in Christ’s presence — at the Judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, this includes all of us!

The number “seven” in Scripture denotes *completeness for that which is in view*, and in this case, the “seven” Churches depicts the “complete” Church from the beginning to the end of this dispensation. John described the Judgment seat of Christ, in which he saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of them he saw Christ in all His glory:

*Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

*His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;*

*He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. (Revelation 1:12-17)*

The seven golden lampstands were revealed by Christ to be the seven Churches (**Revelation 1:11**). Lampstands are devices that hold light or produce light; it is a holder or base for holding light high up to be seen. Therefore, these lampstands symbolize Christians who possess the light for all to see, which Jesus described more clearly in **Matthew 5:14-16**:

*“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

In **Exodus 25:32; 37:17**, instructions were given to Moses pertaining to the creation of the lampstand, called the Menorah. It was perhaps the loveliest ornament in the tabernacle and it stood in the Most Holy Place, opposite the table of showbread. All the elements of the lampstand were to be made from one solid piece of gold with seven lamps placed on top of it. The fact that it was all made of gold denotes worthiness and value. God commanded the Levite priests to place this lampstand in the tabernacle as part of the earthly sanctuary (**Hebrews 9:1, 2**). However, all the pieces of furniture and worship items to include the gold lampstand from previous temples are missing in “Ezekiel’s temple,” which will be the earthly Messianic temple built at the beginning of the Millennial kingdom and will function as Christ’s dwelling place for His 1000-year reign. The reason the items are missing is because Christ will replace all

these items with His presence in the Temple. *He is the Light* and therefore there will be no need of a lampstand in His temple. In **Zechariah 4:1**, the vision of the lampstand and the olive trees are depicted as being a gold lampstand with seven lamps, which are the eyes of the Lord, and provide a word-picture of the sevenfold Spirit burning on top of the lampstand, in which the lampstand represents Christ the Lord.

In the heavenly sanctuary, in the kingdom of the heavens, there will also be no need of a lampstand, for Christ and His bride will replace the lampstand in the Most Holy Place during the Messianic Era. Another interesting thing to note is that in **Revelation 4:5b**, John saw *Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God*. Lamps are placed on top of a lampstand. Therefore, these seven lamps, which represent the fullness of the sevenfold character of the Holy Spirit described in **Isaiah 11:2**, were on top of the seven lampstands, which were the seven Churches.

*“The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.” (Revelation 1:20)*

The seven stars were the angels of the seven Churches who presently rule over the earth. The angels' responsibility is to minister to the Churches in the present age. Since angels will relinquish their crowns to the bride in the Messianic Era, they will then be made lower than the bride. During the Millennium, the bride will judge angels from the kingdom of heaven.

*Do you know that the saints will judge the world? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3)*

All Christians, i.e., the complete Church, will be raptured to the Judgment seat of Christ in heaven, but after the testing of their works are completed and they have been judged, only a part of the Church (the faithful overcomers) will become Christ's bride and will participate in ruling and reigning in the kingdom. This is why the Lord warns the Church that if they do not repent and do their first works, their lampstand will be removed from its place (**Revelation 3:5**). This means that their position in the kingdom will be removed. The seven golden lampstands therefore

represent the complete Church in Christ's presence awaiting judgment.

When the bride is revealed there will still be seven Churches, a complete number of that which is in view although the *actual* number of individuals is not told. God's work relative to the Church is presented as complete at this time. The Spirit will have completed His 2,000 year search for a bride for God's Son. This will also complete Christ's high priestly work (in the order of Aaron) on behalf of Christians and matters after this point can only point to Christ's work as Judge. In the midst of the seven golden lampstands, John sees Christ in all His glory. The description of the Lord is very similar to that of Daniel's vision in **Daniel 7:9**, of Ezekiel's vision in **Ezekiel 1:26**, in **Matthew 17:2** and in **Revelation 4:1**. They all depict Christ as Judge. The garment described in **Revelation 1:13** is a judge's robe. The girdle seen about Christ's chest is the accessory worn by a judge, not a priest. A priest wore the girdle around his waist. And the reference to Christ as the "Son of Man" is a Messianic title referenced in **Daniel 7:13**.

*His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire.*

His white hair symbolizes justice, purity and glory. Fire is also a symbol of judgment.

*His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*

His feet like brass and the sound of His voice reveals Christ's authority and power. The two-edged sword, His Word, represents power and judgment.

*His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength depicts His covering of glory shining forth. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.* John's initial reaction was fear. He was overwhelmed by the glory of the Lord and he fell before Him not being able to move, as when one faints or is in shock.

In that coming Day, every Christian will stand before Christ the Judge and see His eyes "*like a flame of fire*" and hear His voice "*as the sound of many waters*" and see His face and body "*like the sun shining in its*

*strength,*” full of power and glory. Our reaction will be no different than John’s as we will experience great fear in the presence of the Lord. But Christ tells John not to be afraid:

*But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” (Revelation 1:17-19)*

Christ placed His hand on John to console him and to affirm that He had the power over Hades and Death. By recalling the following statement Jesus gave to him and the rest of the disciples, this would have eased John’s fear:

*“Let not your heart be troubled, you 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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” (John 14:1-4)*

*Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)*

And this will be the case for overcoming Christians who have wholeheartedly followed the Lord during their lifetime. Christ will tell them, *“Do not be afraid.”* This, however, will not be the case for non-overcoming Christians. They will stand before Christ with great fear and will not be consoled. Rather, they will be cast out weeping and wailing bitterly, some bound hand and foot.

As John saw the Church appearing before Christ in judgment, Christ tells him to *write*:

*“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” (Revelation 1:19)*

Pertaining to “*the things which you have seen,*” this refers to the events which John had just experienced — being transported into the Lord’s Day in heaven along with the Church being removed as well.

Then, “*the things which are*” refers to the events which John was witnessing at the time, following the removal of the Church to heaven, which includes the seven Epistles to the Churches regarding judgment. And because the Epistles were showing a history of the Churches relative to the Word of the kingdom, “*the things which are*” also includes the condition of the Church during the present dispensation.

Last, “*the things which will take place after this*” refers to the events occurring following the judgment of Christians — which is seen occurring within **Revelation** chapter **four** through the end of the Book, to include the relinquishing of the angel’s crowns, Christ opening the seals, the start of the Tribulation, and all the events following that lead to Christ’s return, the establishment of His kingdom for 1000 years, and then the kingdom being delivered to God the Father after Satan, Hades and Death is destroyed, bringing in the Eternal Ages.

John wrote seven Epistles to seven literal Churches during his day and he wrote what he witnessed in heaven. The Epistles present events surrounding the Judgment seat of Christ and depict the history and condition of Christendom during the present dispensation. Each Epistle to the Churches is structured exactly the same way, in a particular fashion:

### 1) Recognition of works: “*I know your works.*”

The basis for all judgment in Scripture is *works*. God judged sin at Calvary on the basis of His Son’s finished work. Christians will be judged at the end of this present dispensation on the basis of works; works emanating out of faithfulness or works emanating out of unfaithfulness. We see these two types of works presented in **1 Corinthians 3:12** as either *gold, silver, precious stones* (faithful works) or *wood, hay, straw* (unfaithful works) that will be tried by fire at the Judgment seat of Christ. The first works will pass through the fire unharmed but the second works will be consumed by the fire. The first group will acquire their inheritance into the kingdom, but the second group will suffer loss, losing their inheritance and the salvation of their soul.

That which is dealt with at the Judgment seat of Christ will be whether the Christian was faithfully obedient to the Word or not during his lifetime—this will determine whether one’s works were good or bad. This is why Christ’s words in all seven Epistles to the Churches address “*works*” first, because this is what is centrally in view when it comes to judgment.

And this is not judgment relative to their eternal salvation, but judgment relative to what lies immediately following this age — the Messianic Era; the 1000 year reign of Christ.

## 2) A call to repent and heed the Lord’s command:

The word “repent” is a translation for the Greek word (G3340) *metanoeo* which means “to think differently, re-consider.” It is a call to renew the mind or to change the mind so that one can transform from unholy to holy. We see this in **Romans 12:2**,

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

The act of repentance is to turn from unrighteous to righteous acts, from unfaithfulness to faithfulness. Repentance is *always* directed towards those who already believe, but who have strayed away from the faith. An unsaved person cannot repent and return to his faith or do good works when he never had faith and good works. During Jesus ministry, He preached the Word of the kingdom and called on believers (Israel) to “*repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (**Matthew 4:17**). Then later, following the inception of the Church, the tares were placed in order to corrupt the Word of the kingdom. This caused believers to fall away from the truth and follow a path of destruction. This is the main reason why Christ calls on Christians to repent or to “change their mind” and return to the truth of the Word, the Word of the kingdom. Without [the] faith and good works, one cannot inherit the kingdom.

## 3) An overcomer’s promise:

The word “overcome” is a translation of the Greek word *nikao*, which means “to conquer” or “to gain victory” over something. Overcomers are those conquerors, those victors, who have successfully run and won the

race of the faith, conquering numerous trials that came along the way. The overcomer's promises relate to Christians alone, for only saved individuals are able to be entered into the race of faith. They can either realize their promises and overcome *or* they can fail to ever realize the promises and be overcome [by the three enemies of God: the world, the flesh and the devil]. Again, with respect to overcoming, we are not speaking of [eternal] spirit salvation, the salvation that we presently possess, but of soul salvation, which is a future salvation, a salvation that is millennial in scope.

Note that a warning directed to one of the seven Churches would also be applicable to any of the other six Churches, which means that the things commanded and promised in each of these seven Epistles deal with *all* Christians from the beginning of Church history to the end — from 33 AD to the removal of the Church. This means that all seven Epistles are directed to every Christian in every generation. And we can see that the rewards promised to each of these Churches and to every Christian who overcomes correspond to the exact measure of faithful works they produced in their life.

Many of the examples set forth in the **Matthew** parables, such as the Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant in **Matthew 24:45** and The Parable of the Talents in **Matthew 25:14** are all connected to the Judgment seat of Christ. These parables present a word-picture of the Christian being judged based on their works in this life and then either being rewarded or rejected, depending on whether their works emanated out of faithful obedience or not.

The following seven Epistles are written for every believer's admonition. It reveals what has already occurred at the Judgment seat of Christ through the eyes of John and what will occur in the near future so that we can be prepared.

1. *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are*

*not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

*Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”’ (Revelation 2:1-7)*

Christ at His judgment seat commended the Church in Ephesus for their labor, their struggle for His name's sake, and for their patience (patient endurance), because *they have not become weary*. Christ also approved of their abhorrence for the deeds of evil men and was pleased that they had tested the false teachers, verifying that they were liars. And the direction in which they had to have tested these false teachers was to have compared their teachings to the Word of God.

There are numerous Scriptural references that describe and warn Christians of the difficult path leading to Christ in the kingdom. Christians will face trials and sufferings for their belief. This is because they are set apart from the world, therefore the world hates them. They do not follow the world's popularity views and immoral ways, therefore the world speaks evil of them, classifying them as "strange." But with the armor of God, one can gain strength from Him and endure. If not, there is a big possibility that one will fall away and go back to the world. With the Church in Ephesus, the believers had initially loved Christ. What does this actually mean?

*But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. (1 John 2:5)*

*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. (1 John 5:3)*

*“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)*

*“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words;...”*

**(John 14:23)**

*“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”*

**(John 15:10)**

The Church in Ephesus was initially abiding in the Word, following God’s commandments, and doing works under the control of the Holy Spirit while their focus remained in Christ and the kingdom. But eventually they *left their first love* (**Revelation 2:4**). Evidently, the Church turned away from the love of the Lord by taking their eyes and heart off of Christ and the kingdom. A good example of this is shown in the Parable of the Sower in **Matthew 13**. In the beginning, the Word of the kingdom is accepted with great joy, but then because of the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, the believer falls away and loses his focus in the Lord. His fleshly works are not acceptable to God and will not pass the test at the Judgment seat of Christ, as works must be done according to His Word.

In light of this, Christ instructed them to *“Remember from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.”* Christians are warned about their fallen condition and are told to repent. They are told to remember the goal and purpose for their salvation. Then, they are told to do the first works, works pleasing to God, done out of faithful obedience to His word, which reveals their love for Christ.

Christ told them to *repent* or “to change their mind and behavior.” This means to go in the opposite direction from where they are heading. This is done by first recognizing one’s sins and asking God for forgiveness. He then forgives and cleanses so that the Christian is able to allow the Holy Spirit to once again take control of his life.

Christ warned the Church in Ephesus that if they did not repent, He would

remove their lampstand from its place. The “lampstand” is the “Church,” i.e. Christians. The *removal of your lampstand from its place* pertains to a Christian being removed from his position as co-heir with Christ in the heavenly kingdom. He will be cast out, as being disapproved.

One thing that Christ had commended the believers in Ephesus was that they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. The word “Nicolaitans” derives from the Greek compound words “*niko*” meaning “conqueror” and “*laos*” meaning “the people.” It appears that this group represented a Church consisting of clergy (or priests) which were placed above or superior to “the people” or “common believers.” From what history reveals, this group of ministers evolved into a ruling clerical order. And we can see how this prevailed in man’s religion today in which the clergy is elevated to a higher honor over their congregation.

Charles Strong, pastor-teacher and editor, wrote about one of these religions, the Roman Catholic Church:

“This is prevalent in the Roman Catholic religion, wherein the clergy dictates non-Scriptural doctrine for the parishioners to follow, i.e., sacraments, confessing sin to the clergy, praying to the earthly mother of Christ, praying to the dead, venerating images (statues and symbols) of religious persons, the ability of the clergy to forgive sin, etc. Such practice represents a dictatorship by the clergy, allowing no independent thought of freedom to its members. Ministers of God were never meant to be better than those to whom they ministered. All are only “flesh and blood;” all are only human and as such, are all “one in Christ” with every other member of the “body of Christ;” and, each should never think of himself or herself as any better than any other believer in Christ. The New Testament says nothing of “clergymen” and nothing of “priests” except that all believers (children of God) in the Church Age are “a royal priesthood” (**1 Peter 2:9**).

Pastor-teachers are to act in accordance to **Philippians 2:3**,

*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

Another interesting thing to note is that the clergy or priests of the Roman Catholic religion do not condone reading the Word in their place of “worship.” They want their congregation to conform to their man-made beliefs and customs and not to the Truth. Furthermore, they make the congregation believe that only they are able to understand the Word, in order to build themselves up to be better than others. But Scripture clearly says this:

*These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have receive from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. (1 John 2:26, 27)*

Because of deceptive, man-made religions it is so important to study the Word of God, so that we will not succumb to false teachings and practices. Christ stated that He also hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. He did not say that He hated the Nicolaitans but that He hated their deeds or practices. Likewise, Christians should never hate the sinner, but must hate the sin (**John 13:34**).

Then, Christ inclined all who are interested, to hear what will be addressed,

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. “To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”*  
**(Revelation 2:7)**

What is the significance of the “*tree of life?*” God placed the “*tree of life*” in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 2:9b**) for Adam and Eve to eat of its fruit. Its primary purpose was to provide man wisdom and judgment which would enable them to properly rule over the earth, since this was the purpose for which God created man. The tree of life was not given to Adam so that he could live forever, for Adam *already* possessed immortality and “death” was not an issue until *after* Adam’s sin. Adam had lived in an undying state prior to his sin, but after his fall, this resulted in his disqualification to rule and therefore was banned from the tree of

life and cast out of the Garden of Eden. Likewise, Christians, who already possess eternal life, are promised the tree of life in the Messianic Era if they overcome. The tree of life is reserved for overcoming Christians who will rule and reign as coheirs with Christ. The same tree of life that was in the Garden of Eden in **Genesis** will exist again in the future and will hold the same exact purpose — to provide the fruit of wisdom and understanding in relation to ruling and reigning.

Solomon, in all his God-given wisdom, gave four references to the “tree of life” in the Book of **Proverbs**:

*She [Wisdom] is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her. (Proverbs 3:18)*

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. (Proverbs 11:30)*

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life. (Proverbs 13:12)*

*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (Proverbs 15:4)*

In these verses in **Proverbs**, we can see the connection between wisdom and the tree of life. This tree is being reserved strictly for overcoming Christians during the Messianic Era — Christians who have the hope of the coming kingdom and who abide in the things mentioned in these verses, which are God’s wisdom, the fruit of the righteous, the hope of glory, and a wholesome tongue.

In **Proverbs 3:18**, “*wisdom*” is called the “*tree of life.*” We can associate this wisdom with Solomon’s position as ruler of Israel to correctly understand one part of the tree of life. Solomon possessed much wisdom and understanding as he ruled; and overcoming Christians must also possess wisdom and understanding as they rule, just as it would have been necessary for Adam had he ruled. The fruit of this tree will provide the necessary wisdom and understanding to govern in equity, justice, and righteousness in the kingdom. When overcoming Christians become heavenly rulers in the age to come, they will be allowed to partake of the

tree of life, which will prepare them to rule effectively over the earth, each in their respective capacities in the kingdom.

During the Exodus under Moses, the children of Israel ate the Manna sent from heaven, a type of Christ, in order to sustain them during their strenuous journey through the wilderness. Today, man is to feed upon the Bread of Life, which is the written and living Word of God — Jesus Christ, in order to sustain them during their difficult journey in this world, during their race of the faith. In the age to come, overcomers will have the “tree of life” to provide them the fruit of wisdom and understanding during their rule in the kingdom of heaven over the earth.

2. *“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,*

*These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”*” **(Revelation 2:8-11)**

The Church in Smyrna arose during a period in Church history that resulted in the greatest persecution of all time, in which millions of believers were martyred. But even during such great persecution, the Church in Smyrna grew and the believers were successful in spreading the gospel of Christ. Throughout the Roman Empire, the Church suffered persecution from the outside world but also from within their members. A group of believers who called themselves Jews outwardly (portraying a form of godliness) but were actually of the synagogue of Satan, were murdering Christians. By disguising themselves as holy, they were able to discredit and murder members of their own Church. Today, there are Christians who teach false doctrine, denying the Lord Jesus Christ and His return. These Christians at one time fell away from the Lord and became involved in different sects and cults, some of which are known today as Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, the Unification Church, etc. These cults should be avoided, as they also are connected to

the synagogue of Satan.

Although these believers were subject to persecution and poverty, Christ told them they were rich. Their spiritual wealth far outweighed their material poverty, knowing that one day they would reap their rewards of great riches.

*...that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...*

**(Ephesians 1:18b)**

*...that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to ward us in Christ Jesus.*

**(Ephesians 2:7)**

And through all of their tribulations, Christ told the Church not to fear these things. These trials and tribulations were for the testing of their faith. If they follow Christ, no matter the circumstance, nothing can separate them from Him. Though they may die, it is only their body of flesh that dies. Even so, Christ will give them a new body and will save their soul in the age to come.

*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)*

*...and you will have tribulation ten days (Revelation 2:10).* “Ten” is the number of *ordinal completion*, pointing to “all” the days of tribulation. Therefore, these “ten days” must cover a complete period of time — the entire dispensation. All Christians will experience trials and tribulations during their lifetime. The Book of **James** teaches that trials are for the testing of our faith and should not be taken by surprise. If we are prepared for these trials when they come, we should consider them all joy knowing what lies ahead — the salvation of our soul (**James 1:2, 12**). Christians are to look upon such trials in their life in the same manner as the apostles looked upon their trials. During their trials, the apostles *rejoiced* that *they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41)*.

The Christian who patiently endures temptations until death is promised

the “*crown of life*” (**Revelation 2:10b**). A parallel to this can be found in **James 1:12**,

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved [at the Judgment seat of Christ] he will receive the “crown of life” which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Overcoming Christians will wear crowns occupying positions of power and authority with Christ during the coming age. In fact, there are five crowns that could be obtained by overcomers: *The incorruptible Crown* (**1 Corinthians 9:24-27**); *The Crown of Rejoicing* (**1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20**); *The Crown of Life* (**James 1:12; Revelation 2:10**); *The Crown of Righteousness* (**2 Timothy 4:8**); and *The Crown of Glory* (**1 Peter 5:2-4**).

The recipient of the “crown of life” is given the assurance that he will “*not be hurt by the second death.*” It is evident in **Revelation 20:14** that “the second death” is used in association with the unsaved. But within the context of Christians receiving the *crown of life* in **Revelation 2:11**, this second death applies to Christians — the non-overcomers.

The first death was our spiritual death from birth (due to the fall of man) until we believed and were born again; and the second death is our spiritual death, or separation from Christ, during the Millennium (for non-overcomers). For the unsaved, this separation will take place in the lake of fire *after* the Millennium. For non-overcoming Christians, it will be either outer darkness, Gehenna, blackness of darkness or the lake of fire *during* the Millennium. For those who do overcome and are found approved at the Judgment seat of Christ, having endured temptations throughout their life until death, they will receive the crown of life. They will not be separated from Christ in the age to come [the second death], but will rule and reign with Christ in the kingdom for 1000 years.

3. *And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,*

*These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against*

*you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which things I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” (Revelation 2:12-17)*

The city of Pergamos was situated on a high hill 50 miles north of Smyrna. Evidently, its inhabitants were followers of Satan who worshiped other gods (Satan’s seed). Christ commended the Church in Pergamos for holding fast to His name and not denying “the faith,” even in the midst of these city dwellers. Even under much persecution because of the Word of God and the witnessing of the murder of their fellow believer, Antipas, they did not deny His name. But one thing that the Church had begun to do is add within its group false teachers, who were teaching and acting according to the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans.

Balaam was a prophet hired by Balak, the king of the Moabites, to curse the nation of Israel so that they would be driven out of the land of Moab. But on three separate occasions, God caused Balaam to articulate blessing rather than cursing. Failing in his mission, Balaam instructed Balak to develop friendships with the Israelites, enticing them into sinful relationships. And because Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness,” he devised a plan to separate Israel from the blessings of God by bringing them to commit harlotry with the women of Moab, who in turn invited them to turn to their god, Baal. Balaam was successful in leading Israel astray through his “doctrine” which was simply this: that Israel had a covenant with God which could not be broken, therefore, they were able to do what they wanted and form other relationships with ungodly people and their gods. Balaam’s teaching resulted in blurring the distinctions between Israel and its pagan neighbors.

We can determine in this example that Balaam taught that which was common and acceptable to most of the people — those who walked

according to the desires of the flesh. He told them what they wanted to hear, because they had “itching ears.” And his whole motivation for doing this was greed — for money.

Apparently, a similar seduction was taking place in the Church at Pergamos, especially in regards to the Church allowing those who hold the doctrine of Balaam to form relationships with them. And not only was the Church involved with those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, but also those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Therefore, they were allowing those individuals, who were following this ruling clerical order, to form relationships within their Church. Forming relationships with these ungodly people and false doctrines would eventually only bring harm to the Church causing them to eventually fall away from the truth of God’s Word.

It appears the doctrine of Balaam paved the way for the heresy of the Nicolaitans. Although the Nicolaitans instigated the distinction between clergy and laity, there is also evidence of a licentious sect led by Nicolas of Antioch, who advocated freedom in conduct and encouraged participation in pagan practices. The doctrine of Balaam allowed interaction with surrounding paganism and culminated in the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, in which promiscuity was actually incorporated into the activities of the Church. The Church professed to serve the Lord but in practice served man and his popular opinion.

John was well aware of these false doctrines and false teachers committing harlotry with the Church, and he warned the Church about this in **2 John 7-11:**

*For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*

Every believer has the potential to fall away. The way in which we can overcome is through our faithfulness in Christ. Those who “transgress” meaning “running too far ahead” or “going too far” would relate to the Gnostics who considered themselves as having advanced beyond basic Christianity. In essence, they are very similar to the followers of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Departure from Christ into doctrinal error indicates that a person does not have God. Love for God means supporting the truth and standing away from those who reject it. Christians should not only refuse to receive false teachings or to support false teachers in any way, but should also avoid relationships with them.

Keeping close company with deceivers signifies that one is endorsing their teachings. “To greet” someone means to identify with that person publicly. This can refer to the Church’s public welcome of a false teacher. The proper response to deceivers is to reject them if they do not adhere to the Truth. This shows how seriously we should take the Scriptures and how careful we should be in evaluating the teachings of everyone. Christ then tells them to “*Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*” (**Revelation 2:16**)

The two-edged sword is the powerful voice of God’s Word. Unless the Church in Pergamos repents, Christ will come to them quickly (for judgment and condemnation) and will also fiercely judge the deceivers by His powerful Word.

*For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*” (**Hebrews 4:12, 13**)

Christ concluded His Epistle with an overcomer’s promise:

*“To him who overcomes, “I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”* (**Revelation 2:17**)

Believers in Pergamos were involved in pagan feasts, where they ate food sacrificed to idols. The promise is for those who repent and refuse to partake of these feasts and to associate themselves with these ungodly people, there will be a better banquet in heaven, as they share it special with Christ. The hidden manna will provide a supernatural sustenance to enable them to function effectively as co-rulers in Christ's kingdom.

In the Greek athletic games, the "white stone" was given to the victor in a contest. This symbol of victory for the overcomer at the Judgment seat of Christ comes with a new name, which identifies him in terms of his distinctive character. The "white stone" is a symbol of Christ as the pure living Stone, and we as partakers with Him, as part of His body, are also living stones, a holy priesthood in His kingdom.

*Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes in Him will by no means be put to shame." (1 Peter 2:4-6)*

This holy priesthood or living stones (overcomers), with Christ being the Chief Cornerstone in the heavenly sanctuary, will make a more superior and glorious temple than that built by dead stones from man in the earthly sanctuary. And as each overcomer is given a new name by Christ, the fact that only Christ and he will know it indicates the very special, intimate relationship between the two. How encouraging this is for all who strive to be an overcomer!

4. *"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,*

*"These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed*

*I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.*

*And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— As I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 2:18-29)*

Christ addressed this Letter with *eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass* indicating His fierce judgment to the Church in Thyatira. This Church was commended for its growth in works and for their love, service, faith and patience. However, at the same time, they allowed corruption and extremely evil practices to come into the Church, the same evil practices that were instigated by the false prophetess, Jezebel, from the Old Testament.

Ahab, the son of Omri, became king over Israel and did the most evil than any other king of Israel before him. And to add insult to injury, he married Jezebel, a Phoenician and false prophetess who served the idol, Baal. She was involved in witchcraft and demonic practices and seduced Ahab to become a full-fledged worshiper of Baal, in which she was a priestess. She had massacred the prophets of the Lord and because of this God sent a drought across the land for several years and a severe famine spread.

After many years, God sent Elijah to speak to King Ahab to convince him and the children of Israel (who were practicing Baal worship) to repent. With signs and wonders from God, Elijah showed Ahab and the Israelites that there is only One True God and that Baal was just a statue. This led to Jezebel’s fury when the people sided with Elijah, and she went searching to kill him. But God protected Elijah and raptured him to

heaven alive. Afterwards, God sent a curse on the whole house of Ahab which led to his death, Jezebel's gruesome death, and the death of her seventy sons.

This example teaches that God does not and will not tolerate sin, idolatry and wickedness. Jezebel was a child of Satan, who practiced witchcraft — the interpretation of dreams, performed miracles, malicious magic and spell casting in the name of Baal. She corrupted the children of Israel and her husband, the king of Israel.

The Hebrew word “witchcraft” is *keseb* (Strong's #H3785) which means “magic, sorcery, witchcraft.” Christ related those who hold this “doctrine” of Jezebel to knowing the depths of Satan. In other words, those who practice witchcraft, magic or sorcery for idol worship know the deep things of the devil, because these are things associated with the devil.

Since the early 1800's there were forms of witchcraft and idolatry that had taken root in the Church. By the mid-20th century, witchcraft had branched to neo-paganism, especially the Wicca tradition and Shamanism following Gerald Gardner, who claimed a religious tradition of witchcraft with pre-Christian roots. Some of the forms of witchcraft include black magic, fortune tellers, reading tarot cards, crystal ball readers, palm readers, mind readers, conjuring the dead, sexual mysticism, spiritual healing and mediating, malicious magic to cause harm, human sacrifices, spell casting, magical herbs, etc.

Recently, witchcraft has begun to take on distinctly positive connotations especially among Wiccans and other Neo-pagans as the ritual element of their religious beliefs. Wicca is a witchcraft religion that is now practiced as an initiatory secret society. Some modern neo-pagan commentators consider the nature of witchcraft to be a Christian projection. Some of these practices include meditation, manipulation of energy, seeing auras, conducting séances, chanting mantras, healing rituals, divination-tarot cards, astrology (reading horoscopes), invoking spirits and fairies and conjuring the dead. The ceremonies and rituals practiced is a form of duo-theistic universalism considered today as New Age Christian Universalism, which is in actuality not Christian at all but more closely related to the synagogue of Satan.

Likewise, mysticism in Catholicism (as well as in the “Jewish roots movement”) is understood as a unique experience of spiritual enlightenment. The ceremonies or rituals practiced in the Catholic Church are similar to those practiced in witchcraft, such as chanting prayers and songs, the sign of the cross, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the incense, the rosary, worshiping the dead and the spirituality of the saints. *None* of these things is accepted as a form of worship in the Word of God. These all are forms of idol worship and witchcraft. The fact is that literally thousands of ignorant Christians follow the traditions of the Catholic Church without even realizing that they are indulging in the deep things of Satan. For this reason, we must be diligent to adhere to the Scriptures, so that we are mindful of these hidden Satanic influences and can guard ourselves against them.

Following a command to repent from this, Christ gave an overcomer’s promise to those who refrain from these evil practices and keep His works until the end. To the faithful believer, Christ promised the greatest privilege of ruling and reigning in His kingdom and sharing in His royal splendor. He will share His sovereignty with Messianic partners who have proven their faithfulness in this life by doing the will of God to the end. This is the prize to which all believers should aspire! *“Power over the nations”* relates to ruling over the nations of the earth from the heavens. In addition to this, Christ promises to give the overcomer *the morning star*. In this passage, the morning star refers to the overcomer’s share in the glory of Christ. The word “star” in Scripture usually refers to either an actual “star,” “light,” “angels” or “Christ Himself.” In this case, it is the “glory or light” received from Christ.

5. *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,*

*“These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.*

*Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and*

*they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes, shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:1-6)*

The Church in Sardis was surrounded by the worship of Roman Caesar and of Artemis, the goddess of fertility. The Church was deeply involved in the affairs of their surrounding neighbors. They were eternally saved, but that was the extent of it. They were carnal believers walking according to the flesh and the world. Christ, therefore, makes this statement: *“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”* These believers took no interest in the Word of God, and therefore had not matured in the knowledge of the Lord. Since their spirit was not allowing the Holy Spirit to work through them unto maturity, they were considered dead in spirit. And since they had not matured, they did not know about “the hope” or were watchful for the coming of the Lord and His kingdom. Therefore, Christ tells them to *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.”* Christ was exhorting them to mature in the Lord and to be watchful, to strengthen their works by allowing the Spirit to work through them. If their present works remained as is, they would not be found worthy before God and their dead works would not pass the test of fire.

**Hebrews 5:13-6:2** provide strict warning of not maturing in the Word of the kingdom:

*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [mature], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

*Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection [maturity], not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Rather than being “dead” to the Holy Spirit and to the Lord, and alive to the flesh and the world, a Christian ought to be dead to sin, to the flesh and to the world. This is the reason Christ died for us — to put away sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We need to wake up from our sleep and be alive in the Spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us into the mature Christian that we are called to be. When we are mature in the Lord, He will lead us to do good works in preparing for that Day. But if we are dead in the Spirit, we are immature and our works are dead, and the life we lead, in sin and unfruitfulness, leads only to death.

*For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*  
**(Romans 6:20-23)**

Christ then said, *“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”* **(Revelation 3:3)**

Christ told the Church to remember when they first received the Word and heard with an open heart; and in eagerness, had the love and hope for Him. We must hold fast to this love and eagerness for the Lord, and be ever watchful for His return. Otherwise, He will come as a thief upon those who do not watch.

At this point, it will be too late for the non-overcomers to receive any grace or repentance. But Christ has said that for those who seek and learn from Him, He will not come as a thief, for they will know what period of time He will return. They will expect Him and will not be surprised. They will be prepared for Christ and will have overcome. Christ tells us that even amongst a dark world where Satan rules, we can still overcome. In the end, there will be only a few amongst the millions of people who do overcome, but that should give us hope to faithfully endure. Christ mentioned that “even in Sardis” there were a “few” names who had not defiled their garments. These were the few who had not gone astray but continued to walk in righteousness. Christ said, *“they shall walk with Me*

*in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Revelation 3:4, 5)*

The “white garments” represent “*the righteous acts of the saints*” (**Revelation 19:8**), the same garment that Ruth had to put on to prepare herself for marrying Boaz, and it is the same wedding garment that Christians will have to put on to be the bride of Christ — by preparing beforehand with righteous acts.

If we prepare ourselves unto the end, Christ guaranteed that our name will not be blotted out from the “Book of Life.” There are many “Books” that are opened during God’s judgments, including the Book of Life. For the saved, the “Book of Life” is not associated with Eternal life. The Book of Life will be opened at the judgment seat of Christ which contains the records of works that will be the basis of judgment involving *millennial verities alone*. A non-overcoming Christian, on the basis of his own works, will be blotted out of the Book of Life and will be denied positions of rulership for the 1,000 year Messianic Era. However, the overcomer will have his name left intact in the Book of Life and will be awarded positions of rulership in the kingdom during this time.

Christ promised the overcomers that not only will they walk with Him in white garments, but on that Day in the presence of the Father, Christ will confess their name before the Father and before His angels. During the present dispensation, Christ, in the flesh and in His Word, has declared the name of the Father to all believers (**John 17:26**). But on that Day, Christ will declare our name to God the Father and God will honor us! (**John 12:26**).

6. *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,*

*“These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts and shuts and no one opens”: “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before*

*your feet, and to know that I have loved you.*

*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:7-13)*

John described Christ as “*He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.*” The key of David represents authority and the One who opens and shuts the door is Christ as the rightful “Son of David” (**Matthew 1:1**).

The Church in Philadelphia was commended for doing the will of God — for having little strength, for persevering in the faith, for being faithfully obedient to His word and for not denying His name. Christ said, “*I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it...*” Christ gave them an “open door” to be able to produce fruit for their ministry, a time in which there was worldwide missionary activity. And through patient endurance, they endured the trials in respect to their ministry of the truths surrounding Christ’s return. This was a time when God imparted much wisdom to missionary individuals and prophetic teachers, a time that lasted over one hundred years. But because of the destructive work of the leaven placed in the three measures of meal seen in **Matthew 13:33**, the missionary activity diminished rapidly. Christ mentions the responsible party, “*those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie...*” These were Jews who were walking according to the flesh and speaking lies of hypocrisy. And to the Church in Philadelphia who kept the faith, Christ tells them what His judgment will be for these Jews: “*Indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.*”

Christ gave the overcomers the assurance that they will be kept “*...from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who*

*dwell on the earth.*” This verse has led many to believe that Christ is referring to the future Tribulation, but this simply cannot be. If this was the case, then it would mean that the rapture of the saints is a selective event. This, in turn, would be contrary to what Scripture teaches, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, which is that *all* Christians will be removed at the same time, not just those who have been faithful.

*So what does this mean?* The promise of deliverance from the “hour of trial” is not referring to the Tribulation, but to the present dispensation. Given the previous context about those who were from the “synagogue of Satan” telling lies, we can understand that the Church was undergoing trials and temptations during their race of the faith.

Trials come in two forms — one, trials are allowed by God in connection with the maturing process and two, trials are executed by Satan who tempts individuals in his efforts to bring about defeat in a Christian’s life. In this case, with the Church of Philadelphia, Satan was tempting the Church in order to bring about defeat, and this is why God promised to protect them from the “hour of trial.” Since Pentecost, Christians have been in the “hour of trial” and will be until their rapture and resurrection. Christ endured trials and sufferings “for the joy that was set before Him” and, as our example, we also are to endure trials and sufferings for the joy that is set before us. The same joy that is set before Christ is set before us — to rule and reign in the kingdom of the heavens. This is our chance, in this life, to work out our own salvation so that we may be found worthy in the age to come. Satan knows that he has little time left before all Christians worldwide are raptured, so he is busy tempting and deceiving, doing as much harm as he can.

But for those who remain faithful during trials, God will protect them from the evil one. Christ exhorts them to “*Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown*” because “*Behold, I am coming quickly!*” This is why Christians should live every day in anticipation for the coming of the Lord. He will come so suddenly that for those who are not watching, He will come “as a thief in the night.” But for those who are watching, they will be prepared when the Lord returns.

Although the Church in Philadelphia was mature, faithful in all and lacking nothing, they had not yet finished the race. They still had to be

strong and endure until the end, never to let their armor of God down so as to keep their crown, and not be removed from their position as co-heir with Christ. This is exactly why Paul continued to strive for a crown by continuing to discipline his body and bringing it into subjection, for he himself could be disqualified (**1 Corinthians 9:24**). It is this race for the crown that motivated Paul to “die daily,” or die to self, to fight and to follow his calling from God. He did not assume that he would automatically persevere to the end of the race. Paul recognized that the loss of this victor’s crown, this imperishable crown, was a very real possibility for him and for any believer; and therefore, he could never take his mission lightly. It was not until Paul’s approaching death that he knew he had finished the race and would receive the victor’s crown from God.

“Crowns” have to do with rulership, and all those found worthy at the Judgment seat of Christ will wear crowns in that Day. The crowns represent a position of power and authority, not just for a time, but forever. The overcomer’s promise from Christ is that He will make them *“a pillar in the temple of My God and he shall go out no more.”*

The word “pillar” is used to describe the position that the overcoming Christian will have in the future temple. In the Messianic Era, Christ and His co-heirs will be the temple, as we see in **Hebrews 9:11** and **1 Peter 2:4**. It will not be a building made of dead stones built by hands such as was the earthly sanctuary, but a spiritual house made from living stones (Christians) built by Christ. Since a pillar denotes a strong and powerful part of a building, overcoming Christians will be placed in a position such as pillars in the temple. In other words, overcoming Christians will have a strong and powerful position as co-rulers with Christ in the kingdom.

The statement that *“he shall go out no more”* indicates a stable, secure and permanent position in God’s temple. Furthermore, Christ will inscribe upon the pillars (upon overcoming Christians) three names: *“I will write on him, 1) the name of My God and 2) the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. 3) And I will write on him My new name.”* A similar occurrence of inscribing or sealing God’s servants is seen in **Revelation 7:3**, when the angel of God prepares to seal the 144,000 Jews on their foreheads, as a sign of ownership and authority. During the Tribulation, Satan will deceive the people using the same means as God, by inscribing on their foreheads his

mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. His number is the number of a man: 666 (**Revelation 13:16**). But the True Name, the new name that we all aspire to have is that of Christ. We want to be sealed with the name of the Father, and the Son and the New Jerusalem forever.

7. *“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,*

*“These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*

*Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”*  
**(Revelation 3:14-21)**

The seventh Church, the Church in Laodicea, marks the final condition of the Church at the end of the dispensation, a completely leavened condition which resulted from the destructive work of the leaven placed in the three measures of meal at the beginning of the dispensation, described in **Matthew 13:33**. This corruption brought about the destruction of “the faith,” the Word of the kingdom. This is a picture of where the Church is today. Many Christians believe this Letter does not apply to saved individuals. Rather, they apply this judgment to unsaved individuals. But this Letter addressed to the Laodiceans *is* to the Church, as well as the other six Letters.

Christ described the Church as being *“lukewarm, and neither cold nor*

*hot.*” The Greek translation for “lukewarm” is *chliaros* [Strong’s #G5513] which means “tepid, lukewarm, lacking interest, lacking enthusiasm.” This is the only place in the Word of God that the word “lukewarm” is used. The works of the Church in Laodicea had this “lukewarm” attitude for Christ, mixed in with the cares of this present world system. They were saved with the indwelling Holy Spirit, but they cared nothing for their gift. They could take it or leave it.

Their interest and focus was on the things of this present age. It is exactly as we have seen with Israel in the wilderness, who were saved with the blood of the Passover lamb and were given the Manna from God. But the nation grew tired of this, longing instead for what they ate in Egypt (a type of the world) — being mindful of the things of men and of the world and not the things of Christ and of the kingdom. And we can see this whole matter again with regards to Lot’s wife and then again with Ruth’s sister-in-law, Orpah, both whose desires were for the flesh and the world, rather than for God.

The thoughts of these lukewarm Christians are: “*I am rich, have become wealthy and have need of nothing,*” which means they feel rich in the things of this world — all which is coming to nothing. Christ describes them as “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.*” This is their spiritual condition “in Christ.” They are poor in spirit, blind to the Truth and naked without their white garments, without righteous acts. Everything they think, say and do is similar to an unsaved individual and whether they realize it or not, they are following Satan, the god of this world. Christ will vomit them out of His mouth, being sick to His stomach because of what His people represent. They have totally forsaken Him, but He has not forsaken them. Despite the actions and attitude of the Church as a whole, Christ still extends an invitation for individual Christians “to repent.”

If we transform by the renewing of our mind, we are able to produce good works (righteous acts) — works that produce *gold, silver, precious stones.* These works will inevitably pass the test of fire at the Judgment seat of Christ. Only then will we be truly rich in the kingdom of the heavens, wearing white garments depicting our holiness, and our spirit filled with the truth and wisdom of God. This is why Christ rebukes and chastens in this life, because He is preparing Christians for the age to come. He is

there waiting at the door and knocking. All we have to do is listen to His voice (read His Word) and open the door (receive His Word). By digesting His Word, which is the Bread of Life, He will come in and dine with us. If we endure, we will have life in the age to come. Christ promised this:

*“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”*

**(Revelation 3:21)**

Overcoming then is with a view to the throne. And Christ stated *“as I also overcame,”* coincided with *“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps”* must be heeded by any Christian aspiring to be an overcomer. Christ’s overcoming is associated with His sufferings during the time of His shame and rejection; and Scripture makes it very clear that overcoming for Christians is no different. We must follow the example that Christ left. And He left us the Holy Spirit and His Word to guide us. We must have the desire and the enthusiasm to seek Him and to want what He has purposed for us — to share the actual throne with Him. *Praise be to God forever!*