

Revelation - Commentaries by Hamilton Smith

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 19:1-10: The Marriage of the Lamb

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Looking abroad on Christendom today, we see, on the one hand, that the great Christian profession is becoming increasingly corrupt, and will end at last in being supported by the political leaders who derive their power from the bottomless pit; in the language of the symbols, the woman will sit upon the beast. On the other hand, we see the true people of God becoming increasingly weak outwardly and insignificant in the eyes of the world.

In the face of the corruption of the profession, and the weakness among the true people of God, there is the ever present danger that we, who desire to be true to the light that has been given to us, may grow weary and faint in our minds; that our hands may hang down, our knees grow feeble, and that we may wander from the straight and narrow way into a wider and easier path.

In order that we may press on, in spite of every difficulty, and run with patience the race set before us, we continually find in Scripture that the Spirit of God directs our thoughts to the end of the journey. Thus, in this passage, having seen, in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters, the final judgments of all the corruptions of Christendom, we are now carried in spirit to heaven to have unfolded before us the glory of Christ and the final blessing of His people. How good, then,

Revelation 19:1

John can say, "After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven." We are permitted not only to see the final judgment of the false church on earth, but there is also revealed to us the final blessedness of the true church in heaven.

Already, in chapter 18:20, we have heard that heaven, together with saints, apostles, and prophets, are called to rejoice over the judgment of the false woman. Now we are permitted to hear heaven's response for "much people in heaven" are heard saying "Hallelujah." They speak, too, with one voice—"a great voice." All the mind of heaven is one. As we sometimes sing, "No jarring note shall there discordant sound." Babylon had professed that salvation was alone found in her false system: she had arrogated to herself glory and power, as we read, "She hath glorified herself," and said in her heart, "I sit a queen." Heaven, with one voice, ascribes "salvation," "glory," and "power" to God.

Revelation 19:2-4

Moreover, heaven sees that the judgment of this false system is the vindication of the holy character of God. With one voice, heaven says, "True and righteous are His judgments." Looking back we see the arrogance, the self-glorification, and display of power of this corrupt system that has been allowed to continue for centuries. We recall, too, the persecutions by which the blood of millions of God's people has been shed at the hands of the false woman, with no apparent intervention on the part of God. Seeing these things we might be tempted to think that God has been indifferent to the evil of the world and the sorrows of His saints. At last the day will come when it will be seen that the longsuffering of God does not mean that He is slack concerning His promise, or that He has not seen the sufferings, and heard the cries, of His people. In righteousness He will judge all the corruptions and avenge the blood of His servants. This intervention of God calls forth a second "Hallelujah" from the hosts of heaven.

Moreover, the saints fall down and worship God, and for the third time we hear heaven raise its "Hallelujah." The first Hallelujah is called forth by the attributes of God; the second Hallelujah for His holy judgments on evil; the third Hallelujah is worship for all that God is in Himself.

Revelation 19:5-7

The corruptions of earth having been dealt with and the blood of God's saints avenged, we are permitted to look by faith beyond all the judgments and see the glory of Christ and the blessing of His people. We see that the way is opened for the reign of Christ to be established, and the great day of the marriage of the Lamb is come. In view of these great events, a voice from heaven calls upon all God's servants, both small and great, to praise our God. With great delight heaven responds to the call, for at once John hears the praise of a great multitude like the impetuous rush of waters, and the sublime roll of thunder, saying "Hallelujah." This fourth Hallelujah is the expression of heaven's joy in that the glory of Christ is secured, and the desires of His heart fulfilled. His sufferings will have a glorious answer for the reigning time has come, and His love that led Him to die for the church will be satisfied, for "the marriage of the Lamb is come." We are thus permitted to see the fulfillment of all the counsels of God for Christ and His church. It is blessed to see that from the beginning of man's history, and through all time, God has ever kept before us the truths so dear to His heart concerning the Lamb and the bride. Abel's firstling of the flock begins the story of the Lamb. Abraham takes up the story when he tells us that "God will provide Himself a Lamb"; Moses continues the story when, on the Passover night, he tells Israel to take a lamb "without blemish"; Isaiah foretells that Christ will be "brought as a Lamb to the slaughter." John the Baptist, looking upon Christ upon earth, can say, "Behold the Lamb of God;" Peter reminds us that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" and the apostle John brings before us the Lamb in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain, and carries us on to the glorious answer to all His sufferings, when the great day of the marriage of the Lamb is come.

Moreover, God has ever had before Him the church as the bride of Christ, to be at last presented to Him for the satisfaction of His heart. Before ever the fall came in may we not see in Eve, who was presented to Adam as one that was "his like," the great secret, now disclosed,

that Christ was to have a great company of saints made like Himself and presented to Himself? Rebekah, the one in whom Isaac found comfort and love, keeps up the story of the bride. Again, we know how Asenath, Ruth, Abigail, and the bride of the Song of Songs, all present different pictures of the church as the bride of the Lamb. Throughout the ages and changing dispensations, the rise and fall of Israel, and through the Christian period with all the failure that has marked it—behind all—God has been carrying out His great purpose, and everything has been moving on to the great day of the marriage of the Lamb.

Revelation 19:8

That the bride “hath made herself ready” will surely indicate that the judgment seat is past. All the failure in her wilderness journey through this world has been dealt with, and nothing remains but that which has the approval of Christ. The bride will be displayed in fine linen, which, we are at once told, “is the righteousnesses of the saints” (JND). All that the saints have done for Christ, and in His Name, during the time of their sojourn on earth—all the sufferings, reproaches, and insults, they have endured, every cup of cold water given for His sake—will be remembered in this great day, and be found “unto praise and honor and glory.” The smallest act that has Christ for its motive is a stitch in the garment that will adorn the church when at last it is presented to Christ without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. How good to realize that not one member of Christ's church will be absent in this great day. Both small and great will be there. Every one of the untold millions of the martyrs who suffered every form of violence and outrage in the days of pagan Rome will be there; all those who passed through yet greater horrors at the hands of Papal Rome will have a glorious answer to all their sufferings. The vast host of saints who through the ages have lived their lives in obscurity under the eye of God as the quiet in the land, and of whom we have no record in history, will at last be displayed in glory as forming part of the bride of Christ, “holy and without blemish.”

Revelation 19:9

Further we learn, not only will the church enter into the special place of blessing for which she has been chosen, but there will also be those who are blessed as being “called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” A marriage supper cannot be confined to the Bridegroom and the bride; of necessity it includes the guests. At this great marriage feast, the guests surely represent the great host of the Old Testament saints who, though they form no part of the church called out from Jew and Gentile, during the Christian period between Pentecost and the Rapture, yet they will share in the resurrection of the saints as forming part of that great company that are spoken of as “They that are Christ's at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23), and will have their special place of blessing in the day of glory. All the long line of saints before the Cross will be there; Abel and the great army of martyrs will be there; Enoch, who walked with God, and the “ten thousands” of God's saints of whom he prophesied, will be there; Abraham and the “strangers and pilgrims” who turned their backs on this world to seek a heavenly country will be there; Moses, and all those who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, will be there. In a word, all the great host of saints from the Garden of Eden to the cross of Christ, who have trodden the path of faith, “both small and great,” of whom the world was not worthy, will be there, and have their part and blessing in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

These wonderful unfoldings of coming glory are closed with the assurance that “These are the true sayings of God.” We can, then, be fully persuaded of their truth and heartily embrace them in the faith that rests on “the true sayings of God.”

Revelation 19:10

Overcome by the glory of the angel that announces these great events, John falls at his feet to do him homage. At once he is admonished not to worship one that is a fellow-servant, but to worship God. The angel was but a servant to announce the true sayings of God, and thus lead us to worship God—the end of all true service. Moreover, we are reminded that “the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus” (JND). Prophecy does, indeed, unfold to us the coming judgment of the nations, and the future blessing of God's people, but all is in view of the glory and honor of Jesus. The great end of “the true sayings of God” is Jesus. Well it is, then, in reading prophecy to have before us not simply future events but JESUS Himself.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Revelation 1-3: Seven Churches: Revelation 1:1-8

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(Rev. 1:1) In commencing to study the last book of the Bible it is at once evident, from the introductory verses, that we are about to read a book of judgment, and that every truth is presented in perfect consistency with this solemn subject.

Viewed as a whole the Book is declared to be “the Revelation”; a term which implies the unfolding of truth which otherwise would be unknown. Moreover, it is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him.” Thus Christ is here viewed, as indeed throughout the Book, in His perfect Manhood, though as ever, there will be found statements that guard, and maintain His Deity. Bearing in mind that the Revelation is the Book of Judgment, preparing the way for Christ to inherit the earth, it will at once be seen how suitably Christ is presented in His Manhood; for it is as Man that Christ is ordained to be the Judge, and as Man He will inherit all created things (John 5:27: Acts 17:31: Psa. 8:4-8).

Further, the Revelation was given to Christ “to show unto His servants.” Thus believers are not viewed in their relationship to the Father as sons, but in relation to Christ as servants. This again is perfectly intelligible when we remember that the Book does not unfold the privileges of sons, as we find in the epistles, but rather expresses the judgment of the Lord upon the way those who profess to be believers have exercised their responsibilities as servants.

Moreover, we learn from the introduction, that the great purpose of Christ in the Revelation is “to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.” The contents of the Book make perfectly clear that these things are the judgments that are shortly coming upon Christendom, and the world at large. These judgments are made known, not to gratify curiosity, or feed the fleshly mind in its craving for the

sensational, but in order that the servants of Christ, being warned of coming judgment, may walk in holy separation from an unholy and judgment-doomed world. The Revelation, as with all other communications from God, is given to produce a present moral effect upon the hearers. It is not merely communicated but “signified”; a term that implies a communication accompanied by visible signs, thus preparing us for the visions of the Book.

John, who receives these communications, is viewed, not as the disciple that Jesus loved, with his head upon the bosom of Jesus, sharing the intimate thoughts of His heart, nor even as an Apostle sent to others to communicate the thoughts of love, but as a servant responsible to his Master.

(Vs. 2). Having received these communications John passes them on to others. He “bare record of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The Revelation comes with all the authority of the Word of God. At the same time, it is the testimony of Jesus: not a testimony to Jesus, however much it may contain truths which do indeed testify to Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is that which He Himself renders as to things which must shortly come to pass, -things which John saw (compare ch. 22:8).

(Vs. 3). The introductory verses conclude with a special blessing for the one who reads, and for those that hear the words of this prophecy, if the reading and hearing is accompanied by keeping the things which are written therein. This keeping implies a subjection to these words that will affect our practical conduct. This will indeed make demands upon us, but, as ever, the path of submission will be one of great gain, even though it be one of self-denial.

The whole Revelation is here referred to as a prophecy, definitely showing that even the addresses to the Seven Churches have a prophetic character.

Finally, we are reminded that “the time is at hand.” The servant is not to expect any further revelation, but to walk with patience in the light of the Revelation of things shortly to come to pass, knowing that “the time is at hand.”

(Vss. 4-6). Following upon the introductory verses we have the salutation of the Apostle from which we learn that the record John bears takes the form of a letter addressed to the Seven Churches in the Roman province of Asia. The greeting is characteristic of the Book. Grace and peace is toward the Churches, not as being composed of children in relation with the Father, but, of servants on earth in connection with the throne of government. Thus God is seen according to the name of Jehovah that He takes in connection with Israel and the earth; the One who is, and who was, and who is to come. Further, the Spirit is viewed in His fullness as the seven Spirits before Jehovah's throne; setting forth, doubtless, the fullness of the Spirit ready to be “sent forth into all the earth,” as we learn from chapter 5:6. Have we not in Isa. 11:2, an intimation of this sevenfold perfection of the Spirit in connection with Christ, the fruitful Branch from the root of Jesse? There we read, “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.”

So, also, Christ is presented in connection with the government of the earth. He is “the faithful Witness”; the One who perfectly set forth God on earth. He is the first begotten from the dead; the One who broke the power of death on earth. He, too, is “the Prince of the kings of the earth”; the One who will rule over all that rule over the earth.

How blessed that the Persons of the God-head, who are here seen in connection with the government of the earth—controlling, guiding and judging—secure grace and peace to the churches, or servants, while they are yet in the scene that is under judgment.

This salutation immediately calls forth a glad response from the Church. John, representing the Church, says, “Unto Him that loves us and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us a kingdom and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (JND). The love is viewed as a present reality, as that which remains, though the work by which it has been so perfectly expressed is finished. It is a measureless love, for who can estimate the value of the blood by which the love has been set forth? By the precious blood believers have been washed from their sins, and are thus assured, as they open the Book of Judgment, that they themselves are beyond the judgment.

Moreover, not only are believers washed from their sins, but, as washed, they are made a kingdom. Does this not suggest a company of people who are in subjection to God to do His will, and not, as in time past, their own wills? (Compare 1 Peter 4:2-3).

Further, believers are viewed as priests unto God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as such have access to God for intercession and praise.

This response to the glory of Jesus Christ closes with a burst of praise to the Lord, “To Him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen.”

How beautiful is this presentation of the Church in its privileges. Loved by Christ; washed by His precious blood; subject to God; having access to the Father, and praising the Lord Jesus—a loved people, a cleansed people, an obedient people, a priestly people, and a praising people.

When we come to the addresses to the Seven Churches, which present the Church in its responsibilities, we learn how solemnly the Church has failed to answer to its privileges. Truly there are two Churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, in which the Lord finds nothing to condemn, nevertheless, in the other five Churches there is a serious departure from the normal privileges of the Church as set forth in this fine burst of praise. In Ephesus there was the departure from the love of Christ. In Pergamos, instead of a condition suited to those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, unholiness is tolerated. In Thyatira, instead of a kingdom where all are subject to the Lord, the Church assumes the place of rule. In Sardis, there is a name to live before men, but death before the Lord. The place of priests before God is lost. In Laodicea, instead of exalting the Lord, and ascribing to Him all glory and dominion, the Church exalts itself and practically ignores Christ.

(Vs. 7). This outburst of praise is followed by a testimony to Jesus Christ. John has greeted the Churches, bringing Christ before them in His glory, and drawing a bright response from them. Now he hails the One who is coming to earth as the Judge. "Behold," says he, "He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

This is not indeed the hope of the Church, but the testimony of the Church. The Church will not wail when it is caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then, indeed, for the Church all tears will be wiped away. For the world, however, that has rejected Christ, and scoffed at His coming, it will be a time of wailing, when "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

(Vs. 8). To this testimony the Lord Himself, responds: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, He who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." The coming Judge is the Alpha and the Omega; as another has truly said, "whose word is the beginning and end of all speech: all that can be said is said when He has spoken." At the beginning His word brought all things into being, and in the end, His word "It is done," will fix their eternal state.

Moreover He is the Lord God-Jehovah, as it has been said, "The covenant keeping God, unchangeable amid all changes, true to His threats and to His promises alike."

He, too, is the Almighty-the One with irresistible power, able to carry out His threats and fulfill His promises.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Revelation 1:9-18: The Vision of the Son of Man

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 1:9-18) The vision of the Son of Man, in His dignity as the Judge, is introductory to the messages which give His judgment on the Seven Churches. We do well to linger over the vision, for it is the greatness of the Speaker that gives value to His words. Thus the deeper our sense of the glory of the One who speaks, the more heed shall we give to that which He utters.

(Vss. 9-10). Before we see the vision of Christ, we learn that such sights call for special circumstances; they require a suited condition of soul, and their appropriate season. Thus it is that John finds himself in circumstances of trial, and, though truly in the kingdom as subject to Christ, yet not in the kingdom and glory, but, in the kingdom and patience in Jesus. Furthermore, he is banished to the barren Isle of Patmos. If, however, he is banished to some desolate spot by the decrees of man, it is that, withdrawn from every other influence, he may receive the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. How often, in the history of God's people, times of trial have become seasons of spiritual illumination. As another has pointed out, Joseph must go to the prison to become a revealer of secrets: David must be driven into the dens of the earth to sing his sweetest songs: Paul must suffer imprisonment to receive his highest revelations; and John must go to his Patmos prison to hear words, and see visions, that mortal had never heard nor seen before.

John is not in this lonely spot as a self-exiled anchorite, embittered against the world; but an outcast for whom the world has no use. Though withdrawn from the Lord's people, he can still speak of himself as their "brother and companion in tribulation," and the Lord makes the loneliness of Patmos an occasion for John to serve others in love.

Moreover, John was not only in the suited place to receive the Revelation, he was also in a suited condition, for he can say, "I became in the Spirit." This would indicate something more than the fact that he was in the normal and proper condition of the believer, as in the Spirit, according to Rom. 8:9. It would rather set forth a special condition in which the Apostle was so completely in the power of the Spirit as to be oblivious to all but the wondrous vision, and communications, he was about to see and hear.

Further, the Revelation was given to the Apostle at a special time. It was on "the Lord's day." This term must not be confounded with "the day of the Lord," an expression found in the prophets, and used by the Apostles Paul and Peter, to signify the day when the Lord will suddenly come as a thief in the night to execute judgment (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Obviously the things which are described in chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation, and the greater part of "the things that are about to be after these things," do not take place in the day of the Lord. There would be no meaning in the Apostle being carried in spirit to the day of the Lord to see things that must take place a couple of thousand years before that day. Thus it seems clear that the Lord's day is the resurrection day, referred to in other Scriptures as the first day of the week. It is called the Lord's day to indicate that it is not a common day; as, indeed, the Lord's Supper is so called to distinguish it from a common meal. It is a day specially set apart, not by a legal command, as in the case of the Jewish Sabbath, but as a special privilege for the worship and service of the Lord.

Thus it is in a place withdrawn from the world, in a suited condition-in the Spirit; and on a special occasion-the Lord's Day, John is arrested by a great voice, as a trumpet, in order to see these wondrous visions, and hear these solemn communications.

(Vs. 11). What John sees he is told to write in a book and send unto the seven Churches. Already the Apostle has sent greetings to the seven Churches, now they are designated by name. Only seven Churches are addressed; nevertheless, the Spirit of God has selected the written, rather than the oral, form of communication so that the whole Church, for all time, may benefit by these communications.

(Vss. 12-13). John turns to see the One that spake with him, and at once we have the first great division of the Book, referred to by the Lord as "the things which thou hast seen" (vs. 19). John is first arrested by the vision of seven golden candlesticks. A little later we learn that the candlesticks represent seven Churches. The symbol of a candlestick would at once suggest that they represent the Church in its responsibility to maintain a light for Christ in this dark world. The gold would signify that the Church in its beginning on earth was set up in suitability to the Divine glory as a witness for Christ. Moreover it is surely the professing Church that is in view, for later we learn there is the possibility of the

candlestick being removed, and finally that which the candlestick represents becoming wholly nauseous to Christ.

Further, John sees, in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like the Son of Man. This we know is a vision of Christ as about to judge, for all judgment is committed to the Son of Man that He may be honored in the very nature in which He has been despised and rejected by men. Nevertheless He is spoken of as One like the Son of Man, indicating that He is a Divine Person who has become flesh.

Here Christ is not presented as in the midst of the Assembly to lead the praises of His people; nor in the midst of two or three to guide their prayers. Neither is He viewed as the One Shepherd to unite the sheep into one flock, nor as the Head of the Church-His body. He is seen in the solemn aspect of the Judge in the midst of the Christian profession. He is walking (ch. 2:1) in the midst of the Assemblies, observing their condition and passing sentence, whether of commendation or censure. Every feature by which He is described is in accord with His character as Judge.

His garment is not girded for the service of grace and love, as in the glad day yet to come when His servants will be gathered home and He "shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37). Here the Lord is seen in "a garment reaching to the feet," as befitting the dignity of the Judge. Moreover He is "girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle" indicating that the affections are held in by every consideration to the Divine glory.

(Vss. 14-16). "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." These symbols, as we know from Dan. 7, verse 9, set forth the glory of God as the Judge upon His throne. Thus we learn that the Son of Man, Himself, possesses the characteristics of the Ancient of Days seen in the vision of Daniel. In due time He will come forth crowned with many crowns: here there is no crown, for the reigning time is not yet come. The judgment throne must precede the Kingdom glories. He must first clear the scene of all evil as the Judge, before He reigns in glory as the King.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire;" setting forth the searching character of that gaze from which nothing can be hid.

"His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace," speaking of the inflexible holiness of walk, that never turns to any crooked way, and is undefiled by any soil of earth.

"His voice as the sound of many waters," expresses the power of His word that no man can resist.

"He had in His right hand seven stars." All subordinate authority, as represented by the stars, is under His control, and maintained by His power.

"Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." Everything is judged by His infallible word, a sword with two edges that deals not only with outward conduct, but is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12-13).

"His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength," a symbol that implies that, as the Judge, He is invested with supreme authority.

(Vss. 17-18). The effect of this great vision of the Son of Man, as the Judge, is so overwhelming that even an Apostle falls at His feet as dead. John had known Christ in His humiliation in the days of His flesh, and had once reposed his head on His bosom; he had seen the vision of Christ in His kingdom glories on the Mount; he had communed with Christ in His glorified body in resurrection; but never before had he seen Christ in His dignity as the Judge. Yet, be it remembered, this is the attitude that Christ takes toward professing Christendom. It is true that as believers we know Him as our Savior: as members of His body we know Him as our Head; as servants we know Him as our Lord; nevertheless, as connected with the great Christian profession, we have to do with Him as Judge of all our Assembly ways. As we say, the believer knows Him in other and more privileged ways; but the great mass of the Christian profession-composed of mere professors-can only know Him as the Judge. The mass may profess to honor Him by erecting magnificent temples for His worship, and doing great works in His Name; if, however, they caught but a glimpse of His glory they would find He is walking in the midst of the profession as a Judge, and they would fall at His feet as dead.

For John, a "brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus," it was far otherwise. There was no need for his fears. The Lord's touch, and the Lord's voice, recall John to the Jesus so well known in the days of His humiliation, whose voice he had so often heard uttering these peace giving words, "Fear not." The One who is the Judge-the first and the last-is the One who had been into death, and is now living for evermore. Everything that would cause the believer-represented by John -to shrink before the Judge, humbled as he ever must be in the consciousness of failure in his witness, has been borne and forever removed by the death of the One who is going to judge. The keys of death and of Hades are in His hand. The believer then need have no fear, for those keys cannot be used apart from the One who loves us and has died for us. As one has said, our Lord "is the absolute Master of all that might threaten man, whether for the body or the soul."

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Revelation 1:19-20: The Messages to the Churches

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Vs. 19) The last two verses of the first chapter form a fitting introduction to the Lord's messages to the seven Churches. The fears of the Apostle having been dispelled, he is instructed to commit to writing the things which he had seen, the things which are, and the things that are about to be after these.

Here, then, we have the Lord's own division of the Revelation. First "the things which thou hast seen," referring to the vision of the Son of Man as the Judge (1:9-18): second, "the things which are," comprising the addresses to the Seven Churches, representing things which then existed, and the condition that will continue to exist during the Church period (ch. 2 and 3.): thirdly, "the things that are about to be after

these," embracing the great prophetic events that will take place after the Church period is closed (ch. 4-22).

(Vs. 20). As a necessary introduction to the Messages to the Churches, the Lord explains the mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks. It is revealed that the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches.

The angels of the Churches would appear to represent those who are set in the Assemblies to give heavenly light, even as the stars, which are the symbols of the angels, give light in the heavens. But, like the stars in relation to the light of the sun, they are subordinate light-givers under Christ. The sun is the great and supreme source of light for the whole earth. The stars are needed when the sun is away; and the minor light they emit is of the same character and nature as the light of the sun. In Christ's personal absence the perfection of the Church's witness would be to emit the same character of light as Christ in heavenly glory-the same in quality, though so far removed in volume. In a special way the angels of the Churches are responsible to Christ for the moral condition of the Assemblies, for while the Assemblies as a whole are responsible for their condition, yet the state of the Assemblies would largely depend on the character of ministry they receive.

While in each Church the Lord addresses the Angel, and thus holds the Angel responsible for the state of the Assembly, yet it is noticeable that He constantly passes from speaking directly to the Angel in order to address the Church. Thus in the Pergamos address He speaks of a faithful martyr "who was slain among you"; and again He says, in the Smyrna address "the devil shall cast some of you into prison." This change from the singular to the plural makes it impossible to apply the Angel to an individual presiding officer, and obliges us to see a symbolical representative of the Church.

The seven candlesticks are symbols of the Seven Churches. It is plain from chapter 1:4, and 11, that seven actually existing Churches in the province of Asia are indicated. It is, however, equally plain that these Churches present the history of the whole Church period. Seven actual Asiatic Churches were selected in which were found moral traits which have been used by Christ to prophetically set forth the moral condition of the professing Church as a whole, or in part, at different periods of its history.

There are substantial reasons for this conclusion. In the first place, in chapter 1:3, the whole book of the Revelation is spoken of as prophecy. This would give a prophetic character to these addresses. Then the number seven is a constant symbol in Scripture of completeness, and, as the seven Spirits speak of the fullness of the one Holy Spirit, so, we judge, the seven Churches present a complete view of the varied conditions of the whole Christian profession. Perhaps, however the most convincing argument for the prophetic character of the Churches is, as one has said, "the real correspondence between the picture given of the seven Churches and the well known history of the professing Church."

To profit by the addresses to the Seven Churches it is not only necessary to see their prophetic character, but also, of the first importance, to keep in view the particular aspect in which the Lord is viewed in relation to the Church, as well as the aspect in which the Church is viewed in relation to Christ.

The Church is viewed not as the Body, of which Christ is the Head in heaven, and into which nothing that is unreal can come, but as an external body of people on earth professing the Name of Christ, and which may, and in fact does, include a vast profession without life. This profession has taken the Name of Christ, whether His or not; and having done so is responsible to walk according to the order of God's house, and thus represent on earth the Christ who is in heaven, in all His love, faithfulness and holiness-in a word to be a light for Christ on earth. It would be impossible to speak of the Church as the Body of Christ being rejected by Christ. That, however, which professes to be the Church will finally become so nauseous to Christ that it will be spued out of His mouth, when that which is real-the Body of Christ-has been caught away.

Moreover, let us remember that Christ is not here viewed as the Head of His Body, giving gifts and ministering grace to the Body, and revealing the heavenly privileges of the saints as in the Epistle to the Ephesians. He is not instructing the Assemblies in the principles of Church order, and discipline, as in the Epistles to the Corinthians. Nor is the Lord even instructing the faithful how to act in a day of ruin, as in the second Epistle to Timothy. Here the Lord is presented as walking in the midst of the Christian profession in His character as Judge, with eyes as a flame of fire, searching into the condition of that which professes His Name, and inquiring how far the Churches have answered to, or departed from, their heavenly privileges; how far they have carried out, or failed in, their responsibilities to maintain divine order, and obey divine instructions. Further, having searched into the condition of the Churches, the Lord passes sentence on what He finds, approving what is right and condemning all that is contrary to Himself; warning as regards the evil, and giving encouragement to the overcomer.

It may further help us to understand the prophetic character of these addresses to briefly indicate the different periods of Church history that appear to be set forth by the seven addresses.

The address to the angel of the Church in Ephesus, clearly sets forth the condition of the Church in its first decline during the latter days of the last Apostle, and the years immediately following his decease.

The address to the Church in Smyrna would seem to set forth the condition of the Church, as a whole, during the period of the persecutions from the heathen world.

In the address to the Church in Pergamos, we have the condition of the Church, as a whole, when the persecutions of the heathen gave way to the patronage of the world.

The address to the Church in Thyatira sets forth the condition of the Church as seen by God when, instead of being patronized by the world, the Church sought to become the ruler of the world. The greatest expression of this condition being seen in the Papacy. This condition while ceasing, after a time, to represent the whole Christian profession, continues to the end of the Church period.

In the address to the Church in Sardis we see the condition into which a part of the Christian profession falls as the outcome of the Reformation being corrupted by man. It is a condition that develops out of Thyatira, and in opposition to Thyatira, though co-existing with Thyatira to the end.

In the address to the Church in Philadelphia there is presented a faithful remnant, apart from the corruption of Thyatira, and the deadness of Sardis, that continues to the end.

In the last address, to the Church in Laodicea, there is presented the final phase of the Christian profession, in which the condition is so wholly nauseous to Christ that it ends in the great unreal mass of the Christian profession being spued out of His mouth.

It will also help, in the interpretation of the addresses, to notice that there is a division between the first three and the last four Churches. This is marked by the fact that in the first three Churches the appeal to the one that has an ear to hear, precedes the promise to the overcomer; in the last four addresses it comes after the promise. Again, in the first three addresses there is no mention of the coming of the Lord, whereas in the fourth, fifth, and sixth addresses the coming of the Lord is definitely held out as a hope, or a warning. Furthermore, in the last four addresses we see a faithful remnant distinguished in the midst of the increasing corruption.

These differences can be explained by the fact that the first three Churches set forth the state of the whole Church during the first three successive periods of its existence upon earth, conditions which have passed away: whereas the last four represent distinct phases of the Christian profession that do not supersede one another, but exist at the same time, and continue until the Lord comes.

In the first three addresses, representing the condition of the Church as a whole, the one with the hearing ear is to be found in the Church as whole. In the last four the Church, as a whole, has broken up and the condition so deteriorated that those who hear what the Spirit has to say will only be found among the overcomers, and therefore the appeal comes after the promise to the overcomer.

In the first three addresses there is the call to repentance and the possibility of the Church returning to its original condition. In the last four the condition is such that this is no longer set before the Churches as a possibility; therefore, the coming of the Lord is held out as the only hope of the godly remnant.

Thus it becomes clear that the last four Churches are distinguished from the first three by these definite facts: (1) a faithful remnant is distinguished from the corrupt mass; (2) the coming of the Lord is set before the Churches; (3) the one who hears is only found among the overcomers.

As to the structure of the Addresses there is a similarity in the way in which the truth is presented in each address. Each address opens with a presentation of Christ in a character which, if it had been apprehended or kept in mind, would have preserved from the state into which the Church had fallen, or which-in such a state-would sustain the faith of the godly in their testings. This is followed by the assertion of the Lord's perfect knowledge of the condition of each Church leading to His approval or condemnation of what He finds. Then we have special warnings and words of encouragement. Finally each address closes with a special promise to the overcomer.

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 19:11-20:3: The Appearing of Christ

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

We have already learned from chapter 11:15-18; that with the sounding of the last judgment trumpet, the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The record of this great event is followed by an important parenthetical portion of the Revelation that brings before us the leading persons and events during the time that immediately precedes the reign of Christ. After this parenthesis the prophetic history of coming events is continued in the eleventh verse of chapter 19.

Revelation 19:11

We are now told of the public appearing of Christ and His saints to establish His reign over the earth. John says, "I saw heaven opened." Whenever the heavens are opened it is in connection with Christ. When on earth "the heavens were opened unto Him" in order that at last heaven could look down and see on earth One in whom the Father found all His delight (Matt. 3:16-17). After the ascension, Stephen can say, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." The heavens are opened now in order that believers on earth can look up and see a Man in the glory (Acts 7:55-56). In Revelation 4 we see "a door opened in heaven" that John might pass in spirit into that scene of glory to find Christ, as the Lamb, the theme of universal praise, being the One who, as Creator and Redeemer, is worthy to receive "glory and honor and power" (Rev. 4:11; 5:9-14). In this nineteenth chapter the heavens are opened that Christ may come forth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Hereafter we shall still see the "heavens open," that angels may wait upon Christ—the Son of Man—in millennial days, when under the reign of Christ, heaven will be in touch with earth (John 1:51).

In the vision, John sees "a white horse," the symbol of victorious power. His first coming was in circumstances of weakness and lowly grace, as a little babe. The next coming will be in power and glory. We know that the Rider on the white horse can only represent Christ, for who but Christ can be described as "Faithful and True." At His first coming He was marked by "grace and truth" that brought salvation to men. At the second advent He will come forth as Faithful and True to execute judgment; thus, at once, we read "in righteousness He doth judge and make war."

Revelation 19:12

His eyes as a flame of fire, surely speak of the searching gaze from which nothing is hid. The "many crowns" may remind us of His universal dominion and sovereign rights. Then we read, He had "a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself." The passage brings before us other names that, in some measure, we can know, for He is "called Faithful and True," and "His name is called The Word of God," and, again, He has "a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." But if He comes forth as the Son of Man to reign, the glory of His Person as the Son of God is carefully guarded. As such, He is above man and beyond the comprehension of the creature, for "no man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. 11:27).

Revelation 19:13

His “vesture dipped in blood,” would surely speak, not of His blood shed for sinners, but rather of the blood of rebels—the sign of their death under judgment. From the Gospel of John we know that, as the Word, Christ reveals the Father in grace and truth. Here we learn that He declares God in righteousness and wrath against the nations.

Revelation 19:14

We now learn that the glorified saints will come forth with Christ at His appearing. From other Scriptures we know that when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven it will be “with His mighty angels” (2 Thess. 1:7). Also we know that believers will come with Christ, for we read, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Here the armies which follow Christ, would seem to refer to the glorified saints rather than angelic hosts. From chapter 17:14 we have learned that those who are with the Lord of lords and King of kings are “called, and chosen, and faithful,” statements that could hardly be applied to angels. Further, we read of these followers that they are “clothed in fine linen, white and clean,” and thus morally fitted to accompany the King and Lord in His victorious power.

Revelation 19:15

Saints may accompany the Lord but it is He, Himself, who will execute judgment. It is His mouth that will speak the word that, like a sharp sword will destroy the wicked. It is His hand that will wield the rod of iron that, in fulfillment of the second Psalm, will break in pieces the apostate and rebellious nations. It is His feet that, with unsparing judgment, will tread “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

Revelation 19:16

Thus, when He appears in glory dealing with all the enemies of God, it will be made manifest that He is, indeed, the “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,” the One of whom God has declared, “I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psa. 2:8).

Revelation 19:17-18

The verses that close the chapter foretell the judgments that will immediately follow the appearing of Christ. In the ninth verse we have heard of the blessedness of the saints in heaven who will be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Here we read of a very different supper—“the supper of the great God,” that will take place on earth, to which those who prey on the remains of the dead are called to feast on kings, captains, mighty men, horses and their riders, free and bond, small and great, who will be overwhelmed in judgment at the appearing of Christ.

Revelation 19:19

If the King of kings comes to earth followed by the armies of heaven, the devil gathers “the kings of the earth and their armies,” to make war against Him that sits on the horse and His armies.

Revelation 19:20

The issue of a conflict between Christ with the armies of heaven and the beast leading the armies of earth, can only be the overwhelming defeat of the forces of evil. In the course of the history of this world two men have been singled out for the special glory and honor of being taken to heaven without passing through death. When the world had abandoned itself to violence and corruption, Enoch, who walked with God, “was not, for God took him.” Again, when the nation of Israel was sinking into corruption and apostasy, the prophet Elijah was taken up into heaven. Now we look on to the time when an apostate world will be gathered together to make war against God and Christ, and we learn that the two leaders in this rebellion will be “cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” As it has been pointed out, if God had interposed to show signal mercy in bringing alive to heaven two men who had stood for God, so now God interposes in overwhelming judgment to send alive to the lake of fire two men who had been leaders in evil under Satan. No further judgment at the great white throne is needed for the beast and the false prophet. Their eternal sentence is at once executed. The armies that followed them come under the governmental judgment of the King of kings, but not with such an immediate and terrible doom as that of the two leaders. They must yet appear before the great white throne.

Revelation 20:1-3

We have seen the fearful climax of evil to which Christendom of today is heading, when the nations under the rulers of these Western lands will be gathered together in open revolt against Christ and the armies of heaven. We have seen, too, the awful doom that awaits the leaders and their armies, and thus, with all the assurance of God's word, we learn the solemn crisis that awaits the world around us. But there remains the arch enemy of God and man, of Christ and His saints. Now we are told who he is and how he will be deprived of all his power. We are reminded that this enemy is that fallen being, “that old serpent,” who from the beginning of the world's history, and throughout the ages, has been the active source of all rebellion against God. As the serpent he has, from the beginning, been the seducer of man; as Satan he has been the adversary of man; as the devil he has ever been the accuser of the saints; and as the Dragon he has wielded his power in seeking the destruction of men.

At the appearing of Christ an angel from heaven will, under the symbols of the key and the chain, bind his power and confine him in the bottomless pit, and thus rid the earth of his presence during the thousand years' reign of Christ.

In chapter 12 we have learned that he will be cast out of heaven “into the earth,” and now we learn that he will be cast from earth “into the bottomless pit,” to be loosed for a little season when the millennium is fulfilled, before receiving his final doom in the lake of fire.

We have learned from the visions seen by the apostle that the leaders, together with their followers, in the final rebellion of apostate Christendom, will come under summary judgment at the appearing of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Revelation 20:4

Now we learn, from the visions that follow, that “the armies which were in heaven” (Rev. 19:14), and that followed the King of kings are invested with judicial authority. Are we not to distinguish in these armies three classes of saints? Firstly, there is the church, together with the Old Testament saints. Already we have seen these saints represented under the figure of elders as surrounding the throne in heaven and intelligent in the mind of God (Rev. 4-5); then we have seen them presented as the bride and guests at the marriage of the Lamb, for the satisfaction of the heart of Christ (Rev. 19:9); now we see them as forming part of the armies that follow the Lord out of heaven to be associated with Him in His reign.

Secondly, John sees the resurrection of those who had suffered martyrdom on account of their witness of Jesus, and their faithfulness to the word of God, and who, in the days of the fifth seal, had cried to God, saying, “How long, O Holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on those that dwell on the earth?” They were told to rest yet a little season. That season is over, and the answer to their cry is come, for they are raised to have a glorious reward for all their sufferings, by being associated with Christ in the blessings of His reign.

Thirdly, we hear of those saints who had suffered under the reign of the beast, for refusing to worship him or receive his mark. They, too, will live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

Revelation 20:5-6

The raising of these saints completes the first resurrection. The first resurrection does not signify that all that have part in it are raised at the same moment. Christ's resurrection was the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:23); then follows the resurrection of Old Testament saints, and those who have fallen asleep during the present period, at the time of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17); and finally the resurrection of the saints at the appearing of Christ, who have died or suffered martyrdom during the period between the rapture and the appearing.

It is clear that the expression “the first resurrection” includes Christ and His saints, and blessed and holy are those who have part in this first resurrection. On such the second death—that final separation between God and the soul—will have no power. The unregenerate will alone have part in the final resurrection at the close of the millennial reign.

Revelation 20:7-10

In these verses we are carried to the end of the glorious reign of Christ, to learn that at the end of the thousand years there awaits one final test for man. It seems no part of the purpose of God in the Revelation to describe the blessedness of the millennium. This has already been done in many passages of infinite beauty in Psalms and Prophets of the Old Testament. Here we are taken to the end of the reign of Christ to learn that the flesh never alters. Before the flood men filled the earth with violence and corruption. Under law, man transgressed and fell into idolatry; under grace men utterly reject God's offer of salvation and Christendom becomes apostate. At last, under the reign of Christ in righteousness, it will be found that the instant Satan is loosed “for a little season,” the nations will be deceived and gathered together under his leading to oppose Christ and His saints. It has been truly said, “Such is man, and such is Satan. A thousand years' confinement in the bottomless pit has not changed the character of the deceiver. A thousand years' blessedness under Christ's rule has not changed the nature which greedily listens to the deceiver's voice.” There will indeed be the saints, and the beloved city, true to the Lord, but the mass of men will be found in opposition to Christ and His own, for men will be gathered from the four quarters of the earth, and their numbers as the sand of the sea.

The names Gog and Magog would seem to be used as symbols, borrowed from the Prophet Ezekiel, to represent the hatred and opposition of the world to Christ and His people. In Ezekiel Gog is a literal person, the chief prince of the vast region to the north of Palestine and known in our day as the Empire of Russia.

The issue of this last conflict will not, for a moment, be in uncertainty, as in the conflicts of men. The destruction of these rebels will be instantaneous and overwhelming. Fire from God, out of heaven, will devour them, and Satan, the leader in this last rebellion, will enter upon his final doom in the lake of fire, where already the beast and the false prophet are confined, there to “be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Revelation 20:11-15

Another scene of intense solemnity follows—the judgment of the “great white throne.” This surely takes place in eternity, for we read, “the earth and the heaven fled away.” The present order of creation disappears to prepare the way for a new creation. There is “found no place” for the present “earth and the heaven” in which man has sought to gratify his pride and magnify himself by founding mighty empires and building great cities, enriched and adorned with all that human skill can devise.

But if the scenes in which man's pride has been set forth and his rebellion against God expressed, forever pass away, we learn that man, himself, remains to answer to God for his rebellion and receive the just reward of his deeds. Thus we learn that the time will come when “the dead small and great” will stand before the throne of judgment.

The figure of the two books would seem to set forth, on the one hand, that the record of all the works of man are known to God, and on the other hand, that God has kept a record of the names of those ordained to life. At this solemn judgment men will be judged, not only on account of their evil works, but because they have rejected Christ and His work (whereby their sins could have been forever put away) as manifested by the solemn fact that their names are absent from the book of life.

In this solemn scene we are permitted to see the end of all evil and the final doom of every enemy of God, both small and great. The devil is "cast into the lake of fire." Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 21:1-8: The Eternal State

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

While in these mortal bodies it is difficult for us, if not impossible, to conceive of the conditions and full blessedness of the eternal state. It may be for this reason that the references to this state are few and brief.

The Apostle Peter, in the third chapter of his second epistle, in one brief verse leads our thoughts to the eternal state, when he writes, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth." The context clearly shows that these words have no reference to the millennium. In this passage the apostle speaks of three worlds: Firstly, in verse 6, looking back to the days before the flood, he speaks of "the world that then was," and reminds us that, "being overflowed with water," it perished. Secondly, in verse 7, he speaks of "the heavens and the earth, which are now." Of this present earth he says it is "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." And he tells us, in that day, "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." Thirdly, he reminds us, in verse 13, that "we"—believers—on the assurance of God's promise, "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." During millennial days, we read that "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32:1). In the eternal state, righteousness will dwell. Ruling supposes there is evil to be repressed. In the eternal state there will be no sin to mar the new heavens and the new earth. There everyone will be in right relations with God and with one another, so that it can be truly said righteousness will dwell.

Moreover, the Apostle Paul, in one brief verse, 1 Corinthians 15:28, looks on to the eternal state. In that passage he shows how Christ must rule until He has put all enemies under His feet. Then, when He shall have put down all rule, all authority, all power, and every enemy, including that last great enemy death, and the great purpose of the millennial reign is accomplished, He will deliver up the kingdom to God even the Father, and we pass to the eternal state when God will be "All in all." God will be all as an Object to fill and satisfy the heart, and will be "in all" that we may perfectly enjoy our relations with God.

Two great truths as to the eternal state are pressed by the apostle: Firstly, before we enter that state every opposing power, every enemy—even death itself—will have been annulled. So that in the eternal state there will be no fear of the intrusion of an enemy, no fear that death will ever cast its blighting shadow over that fair scene. Secondly, we learn that in the eternal state, Christ, Himself, will be subject to God. Having brought all into subjection to God, He delivers up the kingdom to God, though He, Himself, remains subject to God. Does this not tell us that for all eternity Christ will never cease to be Man, while it is equally true He will never cease to be God—a Divine Person? Even as on earth He was a true Man, and yet one with the Father, so throughout eternity He will be a Man, though never ceasing to be the Son, one with the Father. It was Jesus, Himself, that stood in the midst of His own on the resurrection day; it is Jesus, Himself, that by faith we see at the present moment crowned with glory and honor; and it will be JESUS, HIMSELF, that we shall see face to face, and be with for all eternity.

Revelation 21:1

Coming to the first eight verses of Revelation 21, we have the testimony of the Apostle John to the eternal state. John has seen "all enemies" put under Christ's feet; the final doom of the devil, and "the last enemy"—death—cast into the lake of fire. Every enemy having been annulled, there rises up before him this glorious vision of "a new heaven and a new earth." The new heavens and a new earth, that Peter can say "we look for," John can speak of as having seen, though truly it was but in a vision. In this vision he tells us "there was no more sea." The sea speaks of separation, and how often separation means marred love, blighted hopes, and broken hearts. On earth, sin separates, circumstances separate, age separates, time separates, and above all death is the great separator. So it comes to pass, too often, on earth that the dearest friends are parted, closest relations are divided, families are broken up, and the saints of God scattered. Of all this separation the sea is the symbol. Little wonder that Jeremiah can say there is "sorrow on the sea." But if at times we have to part with loved ones down here we can look on to the blessedness of the eternal state, where there will be no more separations, for there will be "NO MORE SEA."

Revelation 21:2

Then John is permitted to see the special place of the church in the eternal state. At the beginning of the Revelation John had seen the church in its failure on earth. Later, he had seen the church, under the figure of a bride, presented to the Lamb in heaven, all glorious, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Then, carried in spirit beyond the thousand years' reign of Christ, he sees the church coming down from heaven.

He sees, moreover, that the church is "holy" in nature; "new" as being entirely different to the earthly Jerusalem of old; it is "from God" and so entirely divine in origin; it comes "out of heaven," and thus heavenly in character. Though a thousand years have rolled by, the church is still as precious and as beautiful in the eyes of Christ as when first presented to Christ all glorious. Time will not alter the fadeless splendor with which Christ has invested His church. For all eternity the church will retain her bridal beauty and preciousness in the eyes of Christ.

Revelation 21:3

As John gazes upon this vision of the church descending from glory, he hears a voice saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God." We are thus reminded that in relation to Christ the church is viewed under the figure of a bride; while in relation to God the church is also viewed as a tabernacle wherein God dwells. Thus the Apostle Paul can say of believers, "ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22).

It has ever been God's great purpose to dwell with men. This great desire came out in the Garden of Eden, when the Lord God came down to the Garden in the cool of the evening. Alas! sin had defiled that fair Garden and God could no longer dwell with man. Then, on the ground of redemption, God dwelt in a tabernacle in the midst of Israel. Alas! Israel entirely failed to walk in consistency with the presence of God. The nation fell into idolatry, finally rejected Christ, and the Lord has to say, "Your house is left unto you desolate." But God does not give up His great purpose, for the church is called out to be the house of God. Alas as in every other age, the church breaks down, and the breakdown is all the more terrible because of the greater light and privileges granted to the church. At last that which professes to be the church becomes so utterly corrupt that instead of being "an habitation of God through the Spirit," it becomes "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18:2). But how good to learn that no breakdown on the part of man can thwart God in carrying out His purpose, for looking on to the new heaven and the new earth we see, such is the manifold wisdom and power of God that, in spite of all our failure, at last the purpose of God will be fulfilled in a scene where there will never be any breakdown. Three times we read that God will be with men.

"The tabernacle of God is with men."

"He will dwell with them."

"God, Himself, shall be with them."

Let us mark, too, this word "dwell," for it implies home and rest and love. It will be no question of rule, or government, or judgment, for there will be no sin to put down, no enemy to overcome. Hence "God Himself," with no intermediary, such as a Moses or an Elias, "shall be with them, and be their God."

Moreover, it is "men" with whom God will dwell. It will be no longer nations. No national, political, or social distinctions will intrude into this new world. It will be God, Himself, with men, and the men will be His people, and He will be their God. God will "be all in all."

Revelation 21:4-5

When at last God, Himself, dwells with men all the sorrows of this present world will be forever past, for we read, "God shall wipe away all tears." An old saint of a past century has written, "Christ our Lord in this world wipes the tears from His bairns' faces; yet after that they weep new tears. He never wipes away all tears till now. Here shall be our last good night to death, good night to crying, and mourning and sorrow. We shall be on the other side of the water, and over beyond the black river of death, and shall scorn death; for Christ shall take death and hell and cast them in the prison of fire (Rev. 20:14). And, therefore, never till now shall "all tears" be wiped away" (S. Rutherford).

Then we read "the former things are passed away," and He that sat upon the throne said, "Behold I make all things new." Today, the men of the world are trying to get rid of "the former things," and seeking to "make all things new." They can break hearts and fill the earth with death, sorrow, crying, and distress, but they cannot end the sorrows of the world, nor can they "make all things new," or bring in a new order, as they vainly dream.

It is the One that sits upon "the throne" who is above all, and has all power. He alone can cause "the former things" to pass away; He alone can "make all things new."

Then we are reminded that for the fulfillment of all these blessings faith can rest in unquestioning confidence upon the words of the One who sits upon the throne, for "these words are true and faithful."

Revelation 21:6-8

The vision of the blessedness of the eternal state is closed with a word of encouragement and solemn warning. Does the unfolding of these coming glories awaken in any soul a sense of need? Then let such hear the gracious announcement, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." He that answers to this invitation and turns to Christ, overcoming every hindrance, will inherit all the blessedness of which the vision speaks, and will find that God will be his God and he will be one of God's sons. But we are warned that he that spurns God's invitation will have his part in the lake of fire "which is the second death"—eternal separation from God.

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 21:9-22:5: The New Jerusalem

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

From verse 11 of chapter 19 we have had an unfolding of great future events that will be introduced by the appearing of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, and carry us on through millennial days to the eternal state.

In the course of the Revelation it is seen now and again that the record of events is interrupted in order to bring before us deeply important truths as to certain persons and events. So in this closing portion, having seen the fulfillment of all God's purpose in the eternal state, we are carried back in thought to learn important details as to the blessedness of the church in relation to the world during millennial days.

Revelation 21:9

One of the seven angels that had the seven vials, that a short time before had shown John the judgment of the great whore, under the figure of the great city Babylon, now comes to talk with the apostle and unfold to him the glories of "the bride, the Lamb's wife," under the figure of the "holy city Jerusalem."

In one city we see headed up all the long centuries of evil and corruption that have marked professing Christendom; in the other city we see the glorious end of all the trials and sufferings of the true people of God.

Judging by that which is before our eyes, we may be deceived as to the true character of the great profession which is so imposing before the eyes of men, or disheartened by the weakness and reproach which prevails among the people of God. But we are not left to form our own estimate of the evil of that which professes the Name of Christ upon the earth; nor are we left to our own conclusions as to the glory that awaits the true people of God according to the eternal counsels of God.

Through the ministry of the angel we learn that the vast profession, with all its display of riches and power and human wisdom, is in the sight of God but a false woman going on to judgment; while the true people of God, so outwardly weak and insignificant, are passing on to the great day of the marriage of the Lamb, at last to be displayed before the world in all the glory of Christ as "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

We do well to mark these words, for it is not only the church as the bride, that the apostle sees, but "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Only in heaven is the church called the Lamb's wife. On earth, since the day of Pentecost, there has been the church composed of true believers, in relation to Christ as His bride (2 Cor. 11:2), but the church is not complete until the rapture, followed by that great day of which it is said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come." Following the day of the marriage, the church will be displayed in all the comeliness that Christ has put upon her as "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

We know from Scripture that God's earthly people Israel are viewed in relation to Christ under the figure of a bride, but, as such, they are the bride of the King; the church is the bride of the Lamb. All saints, earthly or heavenly, will be in relation to Christ on the ground of His death; but the earthly bride will be presented as "the Queen in gold of Ophir" to Christ the King, when through judgment, He will have reached His earthly throne (Psa. 45). To secure His heavenly bride, Christ must indeed take the path of suffering as the Lamb, who "loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Having taken the way of the cross to secure His bride, and having dealt in judgment with the false woman, the church is presented to Christ a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The marriage of the Lamb takes place before Christ comes forth as King of kings, and Lord of lords to take His earthly throne.

In the beginning of the Revelation we see the church in its utter failure as the responsible witness for Christ on earth. Moreover, we learn that the root of the failure was the loss of bridal affection for Christ. It should have been "like a bride adorned for her husband" waiting for the marriage day. But it failed in affection for Christ, and the Lord has to utter those sad words, "Thou hast left thy first love." The church should have been attached to Christ by "love" and shining before the world as "light." Marked by "love" and "light" it would have been a true witness for Christ. Failing in love to Christ, the Lord has to say, "Repent... or else I will come unto thee, and will remove thy candlestick." Having left first love to Christ, the church lost its light before men.

Turning to the end of the Revelation we are permitted to see that, in spite of all its grievous failure, the church will at last be displayed before the world in its true character as "the bride, the Lamb's wife." As the bride the church will be seen in true affection for Christ and will then shine as a light before the world in all the loveliness of Christ. Christ will be glorified in the saints. This, then, is the blessedness of this great Scripture; it sets before us the church according to the heart of Christ. If we catch some glimpse of what Christ will have us to be in the future, we shall begin to learn what Christ would have us to be morally even now.

Revelation 21:10-11

To see this great vision the Apostle John was carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain. He is set free from the things of earth to have his mind set on things above. The corruptions of Babylon had been viewed from a wilderness; but the glories of "the holy city, Jerusalem" can only be seen from a "high mountain." To detect and discern evil requires no great moral elevation. The man of the world can go far in condemning the corruptions of Christendom; but the natural mind is wholly incapable of entering into the things of God. Even for true saints, it is only as they are lifted above the things of earth, and walk in separation from the corruptions of Christendom, that they will be able to appreciate the coming glories of "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

From this elevated position there passes before the apostle the vision of a glorious city. The angel says, "I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife"; actually he sees a city. Clearly, then, this resplendent city is used as a figure to set forth the church in glory.

In the beautiful description that follows we are first permitted to see the character of the city. It is a "holy city"; it descends "out of heaven"; it comes "from God"; it has "the glory of God"; and it is a "shining" city.

Who can fail to see that these are the very characteristics that were displayed in infinite perfection in Christ, Himself, as He passed through this world as the perfect Man? At His birth He is called that "holy thing which shall be born" of Mary. And again, we read, He is "holy, harmless, undefiled." Moreover, He can speak of Himself as, "He that came down from heaven" (John 3:13). Then, He can say, "I proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8:42). Further we read of "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). He too is described as the light that "shineth in darkness" (John 1:5).

The very terms that are used to describe the loveliness of Christ are here applied to the church in glory. The church that has so grievously failed to represent Christ in the day of His absence, will at last be displayed in all the beauty of Christ in the day of glory. It will be seen to be "holy" in nature; "heavenly" in character; "of God" as to its origin; setting forth "the glory of God"; and "shining" as a stone most precious to reflect the glory of Christ.

Here, then, we see the church according to the heart of Christ and the eternal counsels of God. Would we learn the blessedness of these counsels, settled before the foundations of the world, we must look on to the coming glory, to see the church displayed in all the loveliness of Christ. In the light of this coming glory the passing glory of this present world becomes very dim, and its highest honors lose their charm. Moreover if we see the character the church is going to wear in glory, we learn what the church should be even now.

Revelation 21:12-14

We have seen the marks of the city, setting forth the lovely character of Christ that will be displayed in the church in the day to come. In the verses that follow, there passes before us the walls, the gates, and the foundations of the city, all speaking to us of the security, protection, and stability of the city, reminding us that the church must be kept from the evil of the world if it is to be a testimony to Christ and a blessing to the world. Thus the wall speaks of protection from every enemy, and exclusion of everything unsuited to Christ. The gates speak of the reception of all that is suited to Christ, as well as the outflow of blessing to the world.

In the days of old, when the condition of the people of God had become so evil that the LORD had to bring judgment upon them, the solemn message by Jeremiah was, "I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come and set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about" (Jer. 1:15). So it came to pass, for we read that the enemy came in and "sat in the middle gate," and "brake down the walls of Jerusalem" (Jer. 39:3-8).

As in the days of old, so today, professing Christendom has become so corrupt that it is unable to exclude evil, and is no longer a testimony to the world. The walls and the gates are broken down. And with those who seek to answer to the truth in a day of ruin, it will be found that the unceasing attack of the enemy is upon the "walls" and the "gates." How well the enemy knows that if we let down the barriers against that which is contrary to the word, and let in that which is unsuited to Christ, we shall be drawn back into the corruptions of Christendom and cease to be any testimony to the Lord.

In the day of glory no evil will enter the city and there will be nothing to hinder the outflow of blessing to the world. In the city there are three gates on each of the four sides of the city, and the names of the tribes of Israel are found on the gates, surely indicating that blessing through the church will flow out first to Israel and then to every quarter of the earth.

Moreover, at every gate there is an angel. In Scripture we constantly see angels employed as the guardians of God's people, as we read, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psa. 34:7; Acts 12:7-10). Then they are used in executing governmental judgment upon the wicked, as in the case of Herod, of whom we read, "The angel of the Lord smote him" (Acts 12:23). Further, angels are used as the messengers of the Lord between earth and heaven, as the Lord can say, "Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51).

So in the millennial day the angels will have a subordinate position in relation to the church, but will still be found at the gates in their guardian character, and ready to act as the messengers of God.

Further, the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of "the twelve apostles of the Lamb." In Scripture the unique character of the church is carefully maintained by the way it is distinguished from all that went before. Heavenly in its character, it was kept secret since the world began, and its existence on earth is not a development from any earthly kingdom. "In other ages (it) was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets" (Eph. 3:5). Therefore, though the names of the tribes of Israel may be found in the gates, they are not in the foundations. The witness of the church may flow out to the twelve tribes, but the revelation of the church was made to the twelve apostles. So the Apostle Paul can say, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). The unique character of the church may be entirely lost in corrupt professing Christendom, but it will be clearly set forth in the day of glory.

Revelation 21:15-17

The measurements of the city follow and prove that the city lieth foursquare. Thus the city is tested, for not only are measurements given, but it is "measured," with the result that all is found to be in perfect proportion. Today, alas, one truth may be presented and another neglected. In the day to come every truth will be set forth in the church in perfect relation to every other truth and thus the church will be perfectly fitted to present Christ before the world.

Revelation 21:18-21

In these verses we come to the materials of which the city is built. The walls of jasper; the foundations garnished with precious stones; the gates twelve pearls; and the street pure gold. In Christendom man has built up a vast system that professes the Name of Christ, but into which there has been introduced that which is false, and a denial of His Name—wood, hay, and stubble. Looking on we see in the church in glory nothing but what is real—gold and precious stones.

Already, in the early part of the Revelation jasper has been used to symbolize the glory of God (Rev. 4:3). Now we read that the wall, that excludes all evil, is of jasper and so is a witness to the glory of God. Nothing that comes short of that glory will have part in the glorified church. The church, or company of believers, that ceases to exclude evil will cease to be a witness to God.

"The city was pure gold like unto glass." The gold speaks of the divine righteousness in which every believer has part. At present, alas, the practical display of this righteousness is often hindered by the dross of the flesh. In the day of glory there will be only "pure gold." No hidden unworthy motives will ever mar our practice or lurk beneath our words. Nothing will dim the fine gold, it will be "like unto clear glass."

The foundations, garnished with precious stones, would seem to symbolize the all varied perfections of Christ. The source of light is found in God and the Lamb, but the stones reflect the light and thus display the glories of Christ before the world.

The pearl, we know from the Lord's own words, is used to set forth the preciousness of the church in His sight (Matt. 13:46). Thus, when we read that "every several gate was of one pearl" we are assured that in the day of glory there will be the setting forth, to every quarter of the world, the unity of the church as well as the preciousness of the church in the eyes of Christ.

Moreover, the street of pure gold reminds us that in the church in glory there will be nothing to defile our walk, and therefore no need for the girded loins. Further, there will be nothing to hide from one another, for the street will not only be pure gold but it will be "as it were transparent glass."

Revelation 21:22-23

The spring and source of all blessing in this glorious city is that therein God is fully revealed. There is no temple in which God is hidden behind a veil. The whole city is filled with the glory of God revealed in Christ, for we read, "the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (JND). Christ will ever be the One in whom God is revealed; moreover, He is presented as the Lamb for, as such, He not only declares the glory of God but fits His people for the glory. The sun and the moon had, indeed, in their season declared the glory of God in His handiwork (Psa. 19); but in the church in glory the everlasting witness to the glory of God will be found in the Lamb.

Revelation 21:24-27

From these verses we learn the relation of the church in glory to the millennial earth. The church was left in this world to shine as a light for Christ in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Alas! failing in its bridal affection for Christ, it has ceased to set Him forth before the world. The love failed and the light went out. But when this day of glory dawns the church is seen in its bridal affection for Christ, and as a light before the world. The Lamb who is the light of the city will shine through the church before the world. Christ will be glorified in the saints. Moreover, the church will be the witness of the riches of God's grace according to that word, "That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). Learning of Christ and of the grace of God through the light of the city, the kings of the earth will bring their glory to it, thus doing homage to the One who is the light of the city.

Moreover, the blessing that will stream through the city to the nations will be unceasing, for the gates will not be shut at all by day; and no shade of darkness will ever obscure the light, for there will be no night there. Further, if light and blessing pass through the gates to the world, we are assured that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Today, under the plea of carrying blessing to the world, we may become defiled by the world. In the day of glory the world will receive blessing through the church, and the church will be unsullied by the world.

Revelation 22:1-2

We have seen that only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will enter the city. Now we learn the everlasting provision for the sustainment of the life. The life of believers is indeed eternal life, but none the less it is a dependent life; it is not life apart from Christ. "The river" and "the tree" are symbols that very blessedly bring Christ before our souls. Further, they speak of Christ in connection with "life," for the river is the "river of water of life," and the tree is "the tree of life." Christ is not only the fountain of life through whom we receive life, according to His own touching words, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," but, as the river of life He is the One that sustains the life He gives. So the Apostle Paul can say, "Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The new life is sustained by Christ in all His wondrous love as the object before the soul. Alas! it may be but feebly that we keep our eyes on Christ, and thus feebly live the new life we have. In the day of glory the new life will be sustained and enjoyed to the full as, without let or hindrance, we shall have Christ before the soul and thus drink of the river of water of life. Thus we can say,

Moreover, the river of life is "clear as crystal." Any little reflection of Christ seen in one another will help to sustain the new life; but, in ourselves, the stream is often fouled and muddied with the things of earth, and hence reflects little of the loveliness of Christ. In Christ the river of water of life is "clear as crystal." "He is altogether lovely."

The river proceeds from "the throne of God and of the Lamb." God is the blessed source of this life, for it is the "eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." But it comes to us through Christ as the Lamb—the One who was "lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Moreover, if the life in us is a dependent life, it is also a fruitful life. If Christ is the river of life from which we drink to sustain life, He is also the tree of life on which we feed in order that our lives may be fruitful. Even now, if, like the bride of the Song, we sit down under His shadow, we shall find His fruit sweet to our taste, and abiding in His love we shall bear fruit as in our little measure we reflect His excellencies.

In the day of glory there will be nothing to hinder our souls delight in feeding on Christ. No longer will there be "Cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life," for the tree will be "in the midst of the street," open and free to all in that fair city. The fruit, too, is not only free; it is always available, for the tree of life "yielded her fruit every month."

Thus, as we look on to this glorious city, we see that it is God's eternal purpose that the saints shall find in Christ the One that sustains life, and makes the life beautiful with the comeliness that He has put upon us. If this is His purpose for us in glory, it is His desire for us even now. Alas! it is little we may drink of the water of life now, or feed upon the tree of life, but very soon it will be our eternal portion to

Further, we learn that "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The church in glory, beyond all her sorrows, will enjoy the fruit of the tree of life. But on earth the nations will have passed through the sorrows of the tribulation that will come upon all the world. The One that brings fruit to the church will bring healing to the nations, for "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psa. 147:3).

Revelation 22:3-5

Looking back to the Garden of Eden we remember that the tree of life was there, and “a river went out of Eden to water the garden,” and God came down to walk with man in that fair scene. Alas! man had sinned, and God could not dwell with man; the way of the tree of life was barred, and the curse was over all. Looking on we are permitted to see this vision of the church in glory, and find again the tree, and the river, and free to all, for there will be no more curse.

The curse being forever removed, the purpose of God to dwell in the midst of His people can be fulfilled. Thus we read, “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.” Moreover, the glorified saints will delight to serve the One that dwells in their midst. In their passage through time, poor and unprofitable servants they may have been; in the coming glory, set free from every unworthy motive, they will serve Him with singleness of purpose and devotedness of heart.

At last, in all the nearness and intimacy of His presence they will see His face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads. They will see His beauty and, looking upon the redeemed, He will see His own glorious character reflected in their faces. Even now, as by faith we behold the glory of the Lord, we are changed into His image from glory to glory; but when, at last, faith is changed to sight, and we see Him face to face, we shall be altogether conformed to His image. We shall see His face, and He will be seen in our faces.

Further, we read, “There shall be no night there.” Now our gaze is often obscured by the mists of earth— “we see through a glass darkly”; but when at last we see Him “face to face,” the darkness will be past, for there shall be no night there, and we shall know even as we are known. Our knowledge will not be the result of any artificial aids, nor flow from natural sources. We shall need “no candle neither light of the sun,” for the source of all the light in that glorious day will be in the Lord God Himself.

Moreover, to the eternal ages, the church will be associated with Christ, for we read, “They shall reign forever and ever.”

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 22:6-21: The Closing Exhortations

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Revelation 21:6-7

In the closing verses of the Revelation we have not only the formal conclusion of the prophecy but the fitting conclusion of the whole Word of God. In many Scriptures the principle is asserted that “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor. 13:1). To strengthen faith, and rebuke unbelief, we have in these closing verses a threefold witness to “the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” The angel says, “These sayings are faithful and true” (vs. 6); the apostle says, “I, John, saw these things and heard them” (vs. 8); the Lord, Himself, says, “I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches” (vs. 16). How serious then to reject, or neglect, the sayings of this book. It means, not only indifference to angelic testimony and apostolic witness, but that the testimony of Jesus, Himself, is ignored.

If then it is so solemn to neglect the great truths of the Revelation, what, we may ask, will lead to the sayings of this book being treasured in the heart? The answer is plain. It is only as our souls are in the faith and enjoyment of the great truth of the coming of the Lord that we shall value the sayings of this prophecy. None will rightly interpret the Revelation unless they believe in, and cherish, the truth of the second coming of Christ. This great truth is the central fact of the Book of Revelation. The opening verses assert this truth, “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him” (Rev. 1:7). In the course of the book this great truth is again and again kept before us, and, finally, in these closing verses we have a threefold presentation of the Lord's coming (verses 7, 12, 20). The Revelation unfolds to us events that will precede His coming; it instructs us as to the manner of His coming, and reveals to us the solemn and glorious events that will follow His coming. Cherishing the hope of His return, every event that precedes or follows His coming will have for us the deepest interest. Thus, in verse 7, the coming of Christ and the sayings of the prophecy are closely linked together.

Revelation 22:8-9

Further, in these concluding verses we see that the proper effect of these prophecies on the soul of the believer is to lead to a spirit of worship. Thus the Apostle says, “I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship.” He had seen the Lord in His glory in the midst of the churches in ruin on earth, and he had seen the Lamb in the midst of the glorified saints in heaven. He had been carried into a wilderness to see the judgment of the great city Babylon, and he had been carried to a high mountain to see the glories of the holy city, Jerusalem. He had seen the judgment of the nations at the coming of Christ, and he had seen the judgment of the dead at the great white throne. He had looked into eternity and seen the new heaven and the new earth, where all tears will be wiped away, and there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying. He had heard heaven and earth join to celebrate the glories of the Lamb, and he heard all heaven rejoice at the marriage of the Lamb. Can we wonder then that, having seen such sights, and heard such sounds, he should fall down and worship? It is true that he worshipped at the feet of the wrong person, but he did the right thing. The object of worship must ever be, not the angelic messenger that tells us of these wondrous things, but the One who sends the messenger and who alone can bring these mighty events to pass. Thus the word of the angel is, “Worship God.”

Revelation 22:10-11

A word of warning follows. We are not to seal the sayings of the prophecy of this book, as if the events foretold referred to some far distant age. Already we have been told that the angel was sent by the Lord “to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done” (vs. 6); now we are told that “The time is at hand” —the time when all these solemnities and glories that John had seen in vision will be fulfilled in fact. When this time comes, the condition of every one will be fixed. The unjust will be unjust still; the filthy will be filthy still; the righteous will be righteous still; the holy will be holy still. The filthy will never become holy; the holy will never become filthy. Now, indeed, it is the day of grace when the filthy can have all their filthiness washed away; but here we look into eternity where the condition of all will be fixed.

Revelation 22:12-13

The word of warning is followed by a word of encouragement. Not only the “time” is at hand, but the Lord, Himself, is at hand, for His words are, “Behold, I come quickly.” Already, in these closing verses, the Lord's coming has been brought before us to encourage us to cherish the words of this prophecy. Now His coming is presented to encourage us to continue in His blessed service in the midst of the increasing difficulties of the last days. Thus we hear the Lord say, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me.”

It is possible to make a great religious profession with the object of gaining the applause of men. Of such the Lord can say, “They have their reward” (Matt. 6:2,5,16); but it is not Christ's reward, and it is a reward without Christ, for, says the Lord, “My reward is with Me.” To enjoy Christ's reward we must wait Christ's return. What an encouragement to quietly continue in the Lord's service, in obscurity, it may be, and unknown by men, and possibly little appreciated by the people of God. Nevertheless, all is under the eye of the Lord. He knows, He will not forget, and when He comes every little act for Him, every little sacrifice for Him, every cup of cold water given for His Name's sake, will have its bright reward; but it will be “with Him.”

As ever, in Scripture, the reward is set before us, not as an object, but as encouragement to endure in the midst of suffering and opposition. When the Lord was here there were those who followed Him for the loaves and fishes; but in the same chapter we read, they “went back and walked no more with Him” (John 6:26,66). It is Christ alone that can hold our affections and become the object of all true service. As one has said, “Rewards will follow by and by, but saints follow not the rewards but the Lord.”

Further, we are reminded of the glories of the One who is coming, and that we seek to follow and serve. He is One who can say, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” As the Alpha and Omega He is the Word—the One who is the full revelation of God. As “the beginning and the end,” He is the Creator by whom “all things were made,” who can dissolve the things that He has made, and bring in the “new heavens and a new earth.” As “the first and the last” He is the eternal God before all created things. So the Lord can say through Isaiah, “I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God” (Isa. 44:6).

Revelation 22:14-15

If, however, every work for the Lord's sake will have its reward, we are reminded that no works that we have done will give any right to the tree of life or entrance into the holy city. To be within the circle of eternal blessing, to enjoy Christ as the tree of life in life's eternal home, the soul must be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Thus the angel can say, “Blessed are they that wash their robes” (JND).

We are then warned that though it is glorious to “enter in through the gates of the city,” it is intensely solemn to be “without.” Those inside the city will be in the presence of the Lamb and have the company of the redeemed who have washed their robes, and “there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” Outside that circle of blessing there will only be the company of “dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

Revelation 22:16

The angel has delivered his message, and now at last the Lord, Himself, speaks. The solemn scenes of judgment, the coming glories of the heavenly city, the blessedness of the millennial reign, the perfect bliss of the new heaven and the new earth, have all passed before us, but at last we are left alone with the One upon whom all depends—we are alone with JESUS. The One who can say, “I Jesus” has the last word. Angels have spoken, elders have spoken, trumpets have sounded, the voice of great multitudes have been heard and the sound of mighty thunderings, but at length all give place to the One who is above all—the voice of Jesus is heard.

As the wonders of this book are unrolled we have Christ presented in His glories and dignities, as the Faithful and the True, the Word of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, as the Alpha and Omega, and the beginning and the end—titles, indeed, that impress us with His worthiness and majesty—but in this closing scene He presents Himself under the Name which thrills our hearts and calls forth our affections—the Name that is above every name, the Name of JESUS. With this name He came into the world, for at His birth we read, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus.” With this name He went out of the world, for over His cross we read, “This is JESUS.” With this name He ascended to glory, for the angels said, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you to heaven shall so come in like manner.” Under this name we look up to Him in the glory, for, says the apostle, “We see Jesus...crowned with glory and honor.” And under this name He speaks to us from the glory, as He says, “I Jesus.” We have untold glories and blessedness in prospect, but in the present we are in a wilderness scene alone with One who presents Himself so tenderly as “I Jesus.”

Further, this blessed One recalls our hearts to all that He is, as the heavenly Man. What can be more important, or more blessed, than to have a living Person before our souls—Jesus where He is, and Jesus as He is? On earth He was despised and rejected of men, from the glory He can say, “I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”

Firstly, the Lord can say, “I am the root... of David.” Had He been only the offspring of David, then that could have been said of Solomon. But Jesus alone could be the root of David. The root is the hidden source of life. Christ is the source of spiritual life for every saint of God, and the blessing is sure because the root is perfect. Job can say, “There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again... though the root thereof wax old in the earth... yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs” (Job 14:7-9). Israel has indeed failed; the tree has been windswept and tempest—torn amongst the nations, but the root remains, and hence Israel will again bud and bring forth branches. So Scripture can speak of the sure mercies of David, for Christ is the root of David.

Secondly, Jesus is also “the offspring of David.” If He is the source of all as Root, He is the inheritor of all as the Offspring. He is of the royal line and, as the Son of David, He is God's King to establish God's kingdom. The heathen may rage and the people imagine a vain thing. Today we see that in their folly the powers of this world think that they can get rid of God, and God's King, and thus seize the inheritance of this world and set up a kingdom in which man can gratify his own lusts without any restraint from God. To this evil end they may set themselves and take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed. Nevertheless God can say, “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” Men nail Jesus to a cross, God sets Jesus as the King of kings upon the throne, and all who will not submit to God's King will “perish

from the way" (Psa. 2).

Thirdly, Jesus is "the bright and morning star." As such He is presented in relation to the church. Others will know Him in all His kingly glory as the root and offspring of David; the world will know Him as the Sun of righteousness that will arise to chase the darkness away, and bring healing to this sorrow-stricken world, but only the church will know Him as "the bright and morning star." When the sun shines the stars cannot be seen. He has not yet arisen above the horizon of this dark world as the Sun of righteousness, but while it is yet night He is known in the heart of the believer as the bright and morning star.

Two other Scriptures present Christ as the morning star. The Apostle Peter writes, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light (or lamp) that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). Prophecy is a light in the darkness; Christ is the star of the day. It is true that both shine in the darkness but there is this difference between the lamp and the morning star: the lamp tells me the darkness is here; the star tells me the day is coming. Prophecy warns us as to the condition of the world around, and the judgments to which it is hastening and, as the apostle says, we do well to take heed to it. Thus the effect of prophecy is to close up all our hopes of this present age and to center our hopes in Christ. He is seen to be the coming One, and when our affections are drawn out to Christ as the center of all our hopes then, indeed, it can be said that the day star has arisen in our hearts.

Then again, in the address to Thyatira, the Lord can say to the overcomer, "I will give him the morning star" (Rev. 2:28). The Lord can also say to the overcomer, "To him will I give power over the nations." But if He holds out the reward of power in the future, He also gives the overcomer a portion for his heart in the present. Amidst the moral and spiritual darkness of Thyatira the overcomer will enjoy Christ known in his heart as the star of the coming day.

In this closing scene Christ is presented not only as the morning star but as "the bright and morning star." Everything in the hands of man loses its luster, but Christ, in the heavens, is beyond the touch of man's rude hand. He shines with undimmed luster; He is the bright and morning star. With the day star in our hearts we can watch through the darkness of the night and wait for the coming glory—the morning without clouds.

It is significant that Christ is not revealed as the morning star until the ruin of Christendom had set in. When the Apostle Peter wrote his second epistle the dark shadow of apostasy was already creeping over the Christian profession. False prophets were arising who would deny the Lord that bought them, and many would follow their pernicious ways, and the way of truth would be evil spoken of. The apostle holds out no hope of improvement, no prospect of the restoration of the fallen profession. But the day star had arisen in his heart, and thus he looked beyond the darkness to the coming day. His hopes were centered in Christ.

Revelation 22:17

Immediately after this touching presentation of Christ the church again comes into view as the bride of Christ. The knowledge of the ruin of the church in the hands of men will not make us indifferent to the church according to the counsels of God, under the control of the Spirit. Indifference to the church as the bride would be indifference to that which, in this world, is nearest and dearest to the heart of Christ. In Christ we see that God has purposed to give us an object that can satisfy our hearts; but in the church, as the bride, we see what is yet more wonderful, that He has purposed to present the church to Christ as an object suited to Him, worthy of His love, and for the satisfaction of His heart.

With this great truth the Book of Genesis opens. Before sin came in, God sets forth, in Eve being presented to Adam, the great secret of His heart to have an object suited for the love of Christ. Throughout the ages and all the changing scenes of time, God has never given up His great purpose. In spite of the power of Satan, the evil of man, and the ruin of the Christian profession, God holds on His majestic way, that rising above every opposing power, fulfills His purpose and secures an object for the heart of Christ. Thus at the close of His book the bride of the Lamb rises up before our vision.

How blessed this last view of the bride, for here she is seen at the end of her wilderness journey, wholly under the control of the Spirit, and thus with Christ as her one object. The result is the "Spirit and the bride say, Come." Led by the Spirit we feel the desolation that sin has caused in the world around, and we groan, and led by the Spirit we look to Christ as the bright and morning star who will usher in the morning without clouds, and hush creation's groan, and we say, "Come."

Then let us mark what follows. Under the control of the Spirit, and thus in right relations with Christ, the church is ready to bear witness for Christ to others. The desire for His coming will not hinder our witness to the world around. On the contrary, it becomes the most powerful motive for desiring the blessing of others. We are never so morally fitted to stay and bear witness for Christ as when in affection we are longing to go and be with Christ.

This witness will first go out to those who "hear." To such the testimony is, "Let him that heareth say, Come." The fact that they "hear" would seem to indicate that they are true believers. The fact that they have to be told to say "come" would show that they are not in the conscious joy of their relationship to Christ as His bride.

Secondly, the witness goes to those who are "athirst." There are needy souls having some sense of their need longing to have part in the blessings that Christ can bestow, yet, it may be doubting the grace of His heart and His power and willingness to save. But the bride knows the heart of Christ and to such she can say "Come," you are welcome to Christ; "Let him that is athirst come."

Lastly, there is the world around careless of its condition and heedless of its doom. But the grace of God carries with it salvation for all, and the church having tasted this grace can say, "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." How touching it is that the last appeal from Christ in the glory is a gospel appeal to a needy world, and let us mark well how full and how wide is the appeal. As one has said, "There is no man in the world to whom Jesus does not appeal. He gave Himself a ransom for all and therefore He has the right to appeal to every man, whoever he may be, 'Let him take the water of life freely.' Whoever will may come and drink of living water without money and without

price.”

Revelation 22:18-21

Following upon the solemn warning as to adding to, or taking from, the words of the prophecy of this book, we have, for a third time in these closing verses, the Lord's promise that He is “coming quickly.” The first occasion presents His coming as an incentive to keeping the sayings of this prophecy (vs. 7); the second occasion, His coming is presented in connection with His rewards to encourage us in our service (vs. 12). On this last occasion we lose sight of prophecy, and service, and rewards, and think only of Himself, “Surely I come quickly.” The other occasions call forth no response, but now the bride responds, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” The closing word tells us that, until that blessed moment we can count upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with all the saints. Amen.

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The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Fragment: First Love

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

In Revelation we find the root of all failure in the church in responsibility. “I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love” (ch. 2:4 JND).

What injures and finally ruins is invariably from within, not from without. In vain does Satan seek to cast down those who, resting on Christ's love, have Him as the loved object of their life and soul. Having lost their first love for Christ, the Lord has to pronounce the solemn words, “Thou art fallen.” However outwardly blameless their testimony might be before the world, the church was a fallen church in the sight of the Lord. The warning follows that, unless there was repentance, their candlestick would be removed. If the first love for Christ was lost, the light before men would fail.

What is true of the church as a whole is surely true in the history of any local assembly, as, indeed, of each individual believer. The root of all failure is within, in the heart, and unless there is repentance, the outward testimony will, in the government of God, cease to have any power.

Nevertheless though there was no recovery on the part of the church as a whole, it was possible for individuals to overcome this solemn, inward failure and maintain first love to Christ. To such the Lord would reveal Himself as the tree of life the hidden source of spiritual sustenance in the paradise of God, where no enemy will ever intrude to draw our hearts from Christ.

H. Smith (adapted)

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 2:1-7: The Address to the Church in Ephesus

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

In this address, may we not say that we have a presentation of the church, as seen by Christ in the closing days of the apostles? In each address it will be found that the Lord presents Himself in a character that corresponds to the condition of the church. At this early stage of the church's history there were no outward signs of departure. Christ is still seen as the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, and walks in the midst of the churches. Does this not indicate that those who were set in subordinate authority under the guidance of the Lord to represent His interests in the assembly, were still held in His power and under His direction? Moreover, the Lord was still able to walk in the midst of the churches, and not outside the door as in Laodicea.

In this early stage of the church's history there was still much that the Lord could approve. The saints were marked by labor and endurance in the Lord's service. They had borne trial for Christ's Name, and had not wearied. They had resisted every attack of Satan from without to corrupt the church by false pretension and evil deeds.

Nevertheless, while outwardly blameless, the Lord, who knows the heart, has to say, “I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.” Here we have the root of all failure in the church in responsibility. One has said, “What injures and finally ruins, is invariably from within, not from without. In vain does Satan seek to cast down those who, resting on Christ's love, have Him as the loved object of their life and soul.” Having lost their first love for Christ, the Lord has to pronounce the solemn words, “Thou art fallen.” However outwardly blameless their testimony might be before the world, the church was a fallen church in the sight of the Lord. The warning follows that unless there was repentance their candlestick would be removed. If the first love for Christ was lost, the light before men would fail.

What is true of the church as a whole, is surely true in the history of any local assembly, as, indeed, of each individual believer. The root of all failure is within, in the heart, and unless there is repentance the outward testimony will, in the government of God, cease to have any power.

Nevertheless, if, as we know, there was no recovery on the part of the church as a whole, it was possible for individuals to overcome this solemn inward failure and to maintain first love to Christ. To such the Lord would reveal Himself as the Tree of Life—the hidden source of spiritual sustenance in the paradise of God, where no enemy will ever intrude to draw our hearts from Christ.

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 2:8-11: The Address to the Church in Smyrna

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

This address would surely indicate the days of persecution that we know the church was allowed to pass through after its declension from apostolic purity.

The Lord presents Himself in a way that would be of the deepest encouragement to saints that were being persecuted, even to death. He is before all that rise up against His people, and will remain when the persecutors have forever passed away. If the saints are called to face death let them remember that Christ has been into death and lives.

In Smyrna we see the fresh evils by which the church was attacked; the tribulation the Lord allowed to arrest these growing evils; and the devotedness of individual overcomers who, in the midst of persecution, were faithful unto death.

In this period of the church's history the effort of Satan to corrupt the church and mar all testimony took a twofold form. Firstly, there was the rise of the corrupting influence, within the Christian circle, of those who sought to add Judaism to Christianity. Secondly, opposition was raised to Christianity from without by Gentile persecutors. Both evils are traced to Satan. Regarding the judaizing teachers, as long as the apostles were on earth all Satan's efforts to have Judaism recognized in the church of God were frustrated. After their departure there arose not only judaizing individuals, but a definite party, here called the synagogue of Satan, that sought to attach the forms, ceremonies, and principles of Judaism to Christianity. This evil has been working ever since, so that today the Christian profession has lost its true heavenly character and become a great worldly system with magnificent buildings, and forms, and ceremonies, that appeal to the natural man after the pattern of the Jewish system.

In the presence of this grave departure the Lord allowed the church to pass through a period of persecution that brought to light, in the midst of the increasing darkness, those who were true to Himself, being "faithful unto death." Such have the assurance of the Lord that He is over all, and has set a limit to the sufferings of His people. He will reward their faithfulness unto death with a crown of life, and the promise that, though they may pass through death, they will never "be hurt of the second death."

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 2:12-17: The Address to the Church in Pergamos

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

In this address we see the further departure of the professing church that followed the days of persecution, and that was the outcome of the teaching and practices of the judaizing party within the profession.

To the Christian profession of this period the Lord presents Himself as the One with "the sharp sword with two edges." The solemn condition of the church is exposed by the cutting edge of the word of God. To link Judaism with Christianity is an attempt to accommodate Christianity to the world by the adoption of that which appeals to the sight and sense of the natural man. It ends not in drawing people out of the world, but in leading the Christian profession into the world. So the Lord has to say to the church of this period, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is." Where we dwell is a serious indication of what our hearts desire. To dwell where Satan's throne is would surely indicate a state of heart that desires to dwell under the patronage and glitter of a world of which Satan is the prince.

Nevertheless, though seeking the patronage of the world, at this period of the church's history, the great cardinal truths as to the Person and work of Christ were still maintained, for the Lord can say, "Thou holdest fast my Name and hast not denied my faith." As we know, councils were held which refused every effort of Arianism to deny the deity of Christ, and which asserted the great truths of the faith in the face of persecution and martyrdom.

Notwithstanding this measure of faithfulness to Christ and the faith, the church, having fallen under the patronage of the world, adopted the methods of the world and fell under the evils that marked Balaam of old. There arose in the professing church a class of men who, like that wicked man, turned ministry into a profitable profession and thus linked the church with the world and robbed it of its true position of a chaste virgin espoused to Christ. This, again, opened the door to Nicolaitanism, which apparently was the Antinomian doctrine that held the practical life of godliness to be of little account, seeing the believer is justified by faith. This was turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. Against such the Lord would use the two-edged sword of the word that truly tells us of the grace of God, but also warns us that "our God is a consuming fire."

The overcomer that refused to settle down in the world seeking public approval by adopting its methods would be rewarded with the secret approval of the Lord, and be sustained by Christ as "the hidden manna," who, in His pathway through this world, was a stranger with not where to lay His head.

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 2:18-19: The Address to the Church in Thyatira

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Can it be questioned that in this address we have a forecast of the condition of the professing church in medieval times? The Lord is presented as the Son of God with eyes like unto a flame of fire, discerning all evil, and with feet like fine brass, prepared to act against the

evil.

The Lord's words indicate that at this period the professing church had two outstanding marks. Firstly, on the part of many there was great devotedness expressed by their works, love, faith, service, and endurance. Does not history confirm the Lord's words, for we know that in spite of much ignorance and superstition there were, during the Middle Ages, a great number of individuals marked by personal devotedness, unsparing self-denial, and patient suffering for Christ's sake.

Secondly, in spite of this devotedness on the part of individuals, the Lord's words indicate that at this period the professing church reached "the depths of Satan." For then it was there came to the fore that fearful system known as the Papacy, and symbolized by "that woman Jezebel." In this system we see the exaltation of the flesh, for this woman "calleth herself a prophetess." The church takes the place of a teacher to enunciate doctrine, leading to an unholy alliance with the world, and the setting up of a system of idolatry in the worship of images and saints. Here we see a great advance on the evil in Pergamos. There the church was settling down under the patronage of the world where Satan is enthroned. In Thyatira we see that the outcome of dwelling in the world is that the professing church seeks to exalt itself by ruling over the world and pandering to its lusts. The outcome of this fearful system is a generation within the professing church that comes under the sentence of death, and the searching judgments of the Lord, according to their works.

Nevertheless, in the presence of this corrupting system of evil the Lord had a remnant, who were personally free from its teaching, and strangers to the depths of Satan into which it had fallen. Such were not to look for any repentance or reformation in this awful system, but to hold fast to the truth they had until the Lord comes. Then they will have their reward. Having refused to reign in the world during the absence of Christ, they will rule in power over the nations in the day of His glory. In the meantime the overcomer will know Christ as the Morning Star—the One who lives for His people in all their trials, before the day dawns when He will come forth as the Sun of righteousness.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Ephesus: Revelation 2:1-7

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 2:1-7) Through the extended ministry of the Apostle Paul, the Assembly at Ephesus had probably enjoyed privileges unequalled by any Assembly before or since. It may well be for this reason that this is the first Assembly upon which the Lord passes His judgment.

To this Assembly the Apostle Paul had declared all the counsel of God. To these Ephesian saints he had unfolded the love of Christ—the love that passeth knowledge, and led them into their bridal relations with Christ. At Ephesus he had uttered his warnings as to the coming scattering of the saints after his departure, and there he exhorted the elders to take heed to themselves.

These privileges and warnings should have led the saints to shine for Christ in a dark world, while taking heed to themselves and watching against decline. The greater the privilege the greater the responsibility. Thus the Assembly that had privileges above all others, is the first to pass under the searching gaze of the Lord; and they were to discover that they to whom the highest truth had been ministered, were the Assembly in which decline commenced. The highest truth—the love of Christ to the Church—was the truth they failed to maintain. They did not, according to the exhortation of the Apostle, take heed to themselves. Of old the wise man had said, "Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded" (Prov. 4:23, N. Tn.). Alas! while outwardly correct in conduct, they failed to guard the heart. They left their first love.

We must however remember that the condition of this first Assembly, sets forth the spiritual condition of the whole Assembly, under the eye of Christ, in the latter part of the life of the last Apostle, and, probably, the period immediately following his death. It thus gives us the mind of Christ as to the decline of the Assembly, as a whole, from its true place and character as a witness for Christ in this world.

(Vs. 1). The address is "unto the angel of the Assembly." It would seem that the angel represents those who are set to give heavenly light in each Assembly. Even as a star emits its light during the absence of the sun, so the angels (which are likened to stars) are representative of the absent Christ, to bring heavenly truth to the Assembly, which, as a whole, is responsible to be a light for Christ in the world. Thus it follows that the angel, in a special sense, is held responsible for the condition of the Assembly.

The Lord presents Himself to this Assembly as, "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." The angels, who directly represent Christ in the Assembly, are here seen in their proper place of dependence upon the Lord. They are held in His right hand, indicating that they carry out their ministry under the direct authority and power of Christ. At this early period of the Church's history the time had not come when those, who are responsible to give heavenly light, take themselves out of the hand of Christ, to receive their authority from the hand of man.

Moreover the Lord is seen, not only in the midst of the candlesticks as in the vision seen by John, but as One "who walketh" in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He is seen not as an onlooker but, as moving in the midst of the Assemblies, taking a deep and active interest in the condition of His people, who are viewed as the divinely appointed light bearers to shine for Himself in this world.

(Vs. 2). After this introductory presentation of the Lord, the address opens with the words, "I know." These are searching words that speak of the Assemblies being under the gaze of One from whom no secrets can be hid. We are limited in our knowledge, and therefore often partial in our judgments. The Lord knows all that is of Himself and all that is contrary to Himself, though often unknown to others. There was nothing in this Assembly that the world could take account of as being inconsistent with the Christian profession; nevertheless, the Lord knew what was lacking. "I know" are encouraging words for the heart, though searching words for the conscience.

As ever, the Lord speaks first of things that have His approval, and in this Assembly there was much in accord with His mind. First the Lord says, "I know thy works." These surely were works of which the Lord could approve, for there was in this Assembly much devoted activity in the service of the Lord.

Then the Lord commends the "labor" that marked their works. There may be much service and yet little labor in the service. The word indicates that energy, and real toil, were involved in their service. It cost these saints an expenditure of labor.

Further, the Lord finds patience, or "endurance," of which He can approve. Their service was not marked by mere human energy that oftentimes expends itself in a great outburst of activity. It was marked by that quiet endurance that continues in the Lord's work in the face of all hindrances, discouragements, and even opposition.

Moreover, the Lord can say with approval, "Thou canst not bear them which are evil." They refused to tolerate, or compromise with evil, nor would they give countenance to the persons who compounded with it.

Again, the Lord commends them for the firmness and boldness that refused to receive people on their own commendation. Whatever profession people made, even to the pretension of being apostles, they tested, and refused such as were found to be liars.

(Vs. 3). Finally, the Lord delights to witness to their true, and devoted, love for Himself. Their endurance; their suffering; their unwearied labor, was for the name of Christ. It was not to make a name for themselves, but in love for His name.

How beautiful are these qualities that the Lord singles out for His approval; and well, indeed, that those who seek to be a light for Christ in this dark world should covet such excellent traits, and seek to possess them in combination; for each characteristic tempers the other. The "works," that the Lord approves, are kept by "toil" from becoming merely languid works taken up in a casual way. The "endurance" keeps the toil from being only a passing outburst of fervor. The hatred of evil prevents the patience from degenerating into tolerance of evil. The testing of profession, and exposure of pretension, proved their hatred of evil to be not mere lip profession, that ended in protest without any action against the evil. Moreover, doing all for Christ's name, proved that their works, their toil, their endurance, and their dealing with evil, was not simply to make, or preserve their own religious reputation. It was for Christ's sake.

(Vs. 4). It is thus evident that there was very much in the Assembly at Ephesus that met with the Lord's unqualified approval; and the Lord does not withhold His approval because of any defect that He may see. Nevertheless, He does not refrain from exposing the defect because of so much that He can approve. Under His eye there was in this Assembly decline, and that of a serious nature. In spite of much that the Lord approves He has to say, "Nevertheless I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." The word "somewhat" is a serious and unwarranted interpolation. It would give the wrong impression that to leave first love is a small matter in the eyes of the Lord. It was, on the contrary, so serious, that, in His sight, it constituted the Assembly a fallen Assembly. Outwardly there was nothing in the Assembly that the Lord condemns, and nothing about which the world would find fault. The Assembly might indeed be marked by characteristics that the world could neither understand nor imitate, but at any rate the world would hardly condemn those who are marked by works, toil, endurance, hatred of evil, and refusal of pretension. Outwardly all was fair, and the candlestick appeared to be burning brightly enough before the world. Yet, under the surface, there was that which, in the eye of the Lord spoiled all this fair show. The Assembly had left its first love to Christ. It was not that they had left their love to Christ; but they had left their first love to Christ. One has said, "How dreadful a dishonor to Christ is this, to lose one's first love! It is as if at first sight He was more than He proved on longer acquaintance."

What, we may ask, is first love? Is not first love an absorbing love: a love that finds complete satisfaction of heart in its object. The love that satisfies must be an absorbing love. A love that absorbs the mind and heart is the love that excludes other objects, and satisfies because it fills the heart.

There was a time when Christ was all in all to the Assembly at Ephesus. Then, indeed, Christ satisfied their hearts, absorbed their thoughts, and engrossed their energies. That early freshness had passed. They had not ceased to labor for Christ, nor love and suffer for Christ, but their labor and love had lost its early freshness. The first love had gone.

What was it, however, that had absorbed their love in those early days? Was it not the realization of Christ's love for them? The love that passeth knowledge—the love of Christ for His Assembly—had been set forth before them; but as time passed they lost in measure the sense of His great love for them, and thus they left their first love for Him.

The fact that Christ reproaches the Assembly with having left her first love, is a proof of the greatness of His love to the Assembly. Such is His love that He cannot be satisfied without the whole-hearted return of her love to Him. It is only the full response of love that can satisfy love. Works for Christ, however great, will not satisfy the heart of Christ. Mary's devoted love is more approved than Martha's toiling service. It is not that works will be lacking where there is love. Mary who chose the "good part," did the "good work," and, the Lord Himself, in this address links "first love" with "first works." There were indeed works at Ephesus of which the Lord could approve, but they were not the first works that were the outcome of first love.

Here then the Lord discovers to us the root of all decline, whether it be in the Assembly as a whole, or in the individual believer. All the ruin that has come in; all the subsequent evil that develops in other Assemblies, have their root in this first departure. In Ephesus we see the first step that leads to the complete breakdown of the Assembly in responsibility. In Laodicea we see the full result. The first step in Ephesus was loss of first love, the full result, in Laodicea, is the loss of Christ altogether. Christ is outside the door. If Christ is not retained in the heart of the Assembly, the time will come when Christ will be outside the door of the Assembly.

(Vs. 5). The exposure of this hidden source of decline is followed by a solemn word of warning. The Lord can say, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen." In the eyes of others, the Assembly at Ephesus might well appear as a pattern Assembly; in the sight of Christ it was fallen. Not only is the Assembly called to remember, but repent. It is useless to bemoan the loss of early freshness if there is no repentance. What is repentance but owning our true condition before the Lord? If truly repentant we shall put our feet into the hands of the Lord that He may remove the defilement that has come in to hinder our enjoyment of His love to us, and dull our first love to Him. If our feet are in His hands, He can remove all the dust of the way, so that, like John of old we can, as it were, rest our heads on His bosom, there again to taste the joy of first love.

The result of getting back to first love would be seen in first works. The Thessalonian Assembly, like the Ephesian Assembly, was marked by "work," and "labor," and "patience," but of the Thessalonian Assembly we read that their work was a work of faith; their labor was labor of love; and their patience the patience of hope.

Then comes a last word of warning. If the Assembly does not repent-if there is no recovery, no return to first love-the Lord warns that He will come to them in the way of judgment and remove their candlestick out of its place. The place of the Assembly was to be a light for Christ in this dark world. This place can only be maintained as the heart is right with Christ. This loss of place with which the Assembly is threatened, is viewed as the Lord's own act. He will remove the candlestick, even as of old He removed Israel from the land in which they should have been a witness to Jehovah. In either case the removal may be effected through the instrumentality of the world, none the less it is the Lord's own act.

(Vs. 6). If however there was loss of first love for Christ, they had not yet lost their hatred of those who were a dishonor to Christ. The Nicolaitans appear to have been those who made the profession of Christianity a cover for sin. They used the grace of God to indulge the lusts of the flesh. Such conduct was hated by Christ, and rightly hated by the Assembly at Ephesus. This evil showed itself at first in abominable conduct. In the later Pergamos period of the Assembly's history, the evil so far progresses that evil deeds are supported by evil doctrine.

(Vs. 7). Following upon the warning there is the appeal to the one with the hearing ear, to hear what the Spirit has to say to the Assemblies. The Lord sends these addresses to the Assemblies, but throughout the ages the Spirit applies the Lord's words to the heart and conscience of the one with the hearing ear. Thus in the Lord's message to the angel of the Church at Ephesus there is disclosed to the one who has the opened ear the hidden root of all the increasing failure that has marked the Assembly in her long history as the responsible witness for Christ on the earth. The first failure was not in her testimony before the world, but in her secret relations with Christ. Inward departure ever precedes outward failure.

The address closes with the Lord's promise to the overcomer. The normal overcoming for the Assembly should be in relation to the world, even as John tells us, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Here the overcoming has to be within the Christian profession, a sad witness to the fallen condition of the Church. For the encouragement of the overcomer the Lord holds out the promise of eating of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. In the paradise of man there were two trees, one connected with privilege and one with responsibility. Man disobeyed and lost all blessing on the ground of responsibility. God came into the garden only to drive out a fallen man. Now the way is opened for man to enter the paradise of God as the result of redemption, there to feed on Christ the tree of life, and to go no more out. The overcomer, the one who repents and gets back to first love, has the promise of being eternally satisfied with the fruit of the tree of life in the paradise of God. At the same time, the Lord surely intends that the overcomer should have a foretaste of these encouragements while he is overcoming down here.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Smyrna: Revelation 2:8-11

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 2:8-11) IF the address to Ephesus brings before us the condition of the Church in the last days of the apostolic era, the address to Smyrna vividly portrays the condition of the Church during the years of persecution that continued for two centuries after the Apostles had passed away.

In Ephesus we see an outwardly united Church in separation from the world, but, one that had declined from first love to Christ, and, therefore, in His sight a fallen Church. There was the call to repentance and the warning that, unless the Church returned to first love, it would lose its place of testimony before the world. Alas! there was no general return to first love, and hence, to the end of her sojourn on earth, the Church is viewed as a fallen Church. There may indeed be revivals, and individuals that overcome, but that which has the place of being the Church on earth is fallen, ceases to be a true witness for Christ. Ceasing to witness for Christ in the world, the Church increasingly adapts itself to the world, until, in its last stage, it is the world. Finally, when all that is of Christ in the midst of the profession, is taken away, the vast and empty profession, that is left, comes under the judgment of the world.

In the freshness of first love the Church was entirely separate from the world, and the world had no power over the Church. The allurements of this world have no attraction for a heart that is satisfied with the love of Christ. Leaving first love, whether in the case of an individual, or of the Church as a whole, opens the door for the world to enter and assert its power. The Church when it left first love took the first step that leads to the world where Satan dwells.

It is well then to remember that in the Smyrna period the Church is already a fallen Church. In tender love we see the Lord dealing with this fallen Church in a way that, for a time, arrests this downward path. The Lord passes the Church through the furnace of affliction. Ephesus was without reproach before the world but fallen before Christ; as the result of the Lord's dealing, Smyrna was persecuted by the world, but faithful before the Lord.

(Vs. 8). The Lord presents Himself to this Church in the glory of His Person, as the First and the Last; and in the glory of His work as the One who became dead and lived.

What could be more suited to sustain and encourage those who are called to meet the power of Satan, and faced with a martyr's death, than the knowledge that they are in the hands of a divine Person-the First and the Last-One who existed before every opposing power, and will remain when the last enemy has been put under His feet: One, therefore, who is above all. The Lord may indeed use the hostility of the enemy to pass His people through trial, but, if He is the First and the Last no power of the devil can finally prevail against those that are His. Moreover, if called to face a Martyr's death, Christ, Himself, has led the way in the path of martyrdom; for He has suffered death at the hands

of men. He became dead and lived: seemingly defeated and slain, yet emerging in victory over the last and greatest of enemies. Death could not prevail against Him; therefore, death will not prevail against those that are His.

(Vs. 9). Having presented Himself in a way so blessedly suited to their condition and circumstances, the Lord lets these suffering saints know that all is under His eye. "I know," He says. He would have them to realize that the trials they are passing through, the circumstances they are in, the opposition of Satan they may have to meet, and the sufferings they may yet have to face, are all known to Him.

Nor is it otherwise today. Our trials, our circumstances, the opposition we may have to meet, whether within the Christian circle or without, are all known to One, who, being the First and the Last, can see the end from the beginning. If, however, He is the First and the Last, with all power in His hands, why are His people permitted to pass through trial? Is it not because He has, -not only all power in His hands, but, -all love in His heart? Divine love knows full well that trials are needed for our blessing; and, loving us, He sends the trials according to that Word which says, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6). We may lose our first love to the Lord, but never will He leave His first love to us. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." If in His unchanging love He has to pass us through trial, it is for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Knowing all things, He knew from whence the Church had fallen, and He knew to what depths it would yet fall. The One who is the First and the Last deals with us according to His perfect knowledge, and His infinite love. In His dealings He not only corrects for past failure, but would also form us according to His own holiness in the present, and prepare us for what He sees we may yet have to meet in the future.

It may be pointed out that the word "works," of this verse, is not in the original. These saints were not characteristically distinguished by works, but by suffering. The saints of the Ephesian period were great workers; the saints of the Smyrna period were great sufferers. Let us remember there is the service of suffering as well as the service of doing.

The trials that were allowed to come upon the Church at this period were three-fold; suffering from the world, poverty of circumstances, and opposition from the devil.

A church that has left first love is in danger of drifting into the world; to arrest this tendency the Lord allows persecution from the world. Moreover, a fallen Church that is drifting towards the world will ever be in danger of adopting the world's methods, and of attempting to advance the Lord's interests by means of earthly riches, and the acquisition of worldly power and influence. How different the early Church, composed mainly of the poor, and without worldly power or influence. Then indeed they were enriched with "great power," and "great grace." This, however, was spiritual power and the grace from another world. Foreseeing the danger of the world, the Lord stripped the Church of Smyrna, in such fashion, that they were poor in those things that the world counts gain, such as wealth, power, and influence, in order to leave them rich in His sight. Thus the Lord can say of this Church, "I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty, but thou art rich." Better far to be poor in the eyes of the world, and rich in the sight of the Lord, than to be rich and increased with goods, like the Church in its last stage, and yet, "wretched and miserable and poor" in the eyes of the Lord.

Alas! in contrast with the Church at Smyrna we see the Christian profession fast falling, on every hand, into a Laodicean condition, in which the professed followers of the One who had not where to lay His head, are vying with one another to obtain power and influence in the world. In the day of Smyrna the Lord used the persecution of the world, with its consequent impoverishment of the saints, to stem the drift towards the world.

There was, however, another way in which the enemy sought to entangle the Church and draw it into the world. In the Smyrna period the Church had to meet the opposition of those who insisted on Jewish principles and thus sought to draw the Church into a worldly religion. Probably the word "Jews" is used in a figurative sense, signifying those who, like the Jews, boasted in a hereditary and sacramental system which associated religion with the world and sought to make it attractive to the flesh by the use of magnificent buildings, gorgeous vestments, and histrionic ceremonies. Thus the effort was made to turn Christianity into a system which, while highly pleasing to the flesh, keeps the soul at a distance from God. Moreover, such a system necessitates a human priesthood after the Jewish pattern, for, it has been truly said, whenever the world is connected with religion, priesthood must come in, because the world, as such, cannot stand and does not want to stand, before God.

We can well understand these Judaizing teachers coming to the front in times of persecution, for such would offer a specious way of escape from persecution. The Apostle Paul asks, "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased." The law recognizes, and appeals, to the flesh with its imposing temples, splendid ceremonies, and ornate ritual. If we consent to recognize the flesh and adopt methods that appeal to the flesh, the world would have no objection to being religious, and, instead of persecuting, would begin to patronize a Christianity corrupted according to its tastes.

The devil's attack on the Church in the Smyrna period of its history took a double form. First the devil sought to undermine the foundations of the Church by corrupting it with Judaism. This failing, the devil opposed the Church by persecution. It is ever thus that the devil works. The special malignity of the devil drawn forth by the birth of the Lord, first took the form of corruption, when Herod sought to find the young Child under the false pretension of desiring to pay Him homage. This failing the devil sought by violence to destroy the Child by slaying all the young children in Bethlehem. So too, when the gospel was first preached in Europe, we see another outburst of the devil's enmity, when he sought to stop the work by the devil-possessed woman, who corruptly appeared to be helping on the work. This wile being exposed, the devil resorted to violence, hounding on the people to beat the apostles and thrust them into prison. Here, in the early history of the Church, the apostles having passed from the scene, the devil again made a twofold attack upon the Church. He sought first to seduce the Church from her heavenly calling through the corrupting influences of those who, by their practices, proclaim themselves to be Jews but are not. Such would seek to form a Church after the pattern of the Jewish system, with the addition of Christian beliefs. This would not be a true Jewish synagogue nor a pure Christian Assembly, but a mixture of both and therefore a mere imitation-a synagogue of Satan. At this stage of the Church's history the effort apparently failed; for those whom the devil used are not spoken of as the Church. They might indeed be seeking to work in the Assembly, but the Lord says, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews." The Lord knew them and the Church resisted them.

(Vs. 10). The attack by corruption having failed, the devil was permitted to resort to violence, as the Lord says, "The devil shall cast some of you into prison." The violence of the devil may indeed be painful to God's people but it is safer for them than the wiles of the devil. The Lord allows this attack, for, as Peter says in his Epistle, the saints may indeed be "in heaviness through manifold temptations," "if need be." If, however, the Lord sees a "need be" for the trial, He will also put a limit to the trial: so we read, "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." So, too, Peter says these manifold trials are but "for a season." The devil may be allowed to cast some into prison, but he cannot go a day beyond the Lord's ten days.

The Lord does not hide from these saints the path that lies before them. Suffering, imprisonment, and possible martyrdom, will be their portion. Nevertheless, He encourages them to "fear not," to be "faithful," and that even unto death, for beyond death there is the crown of life. The Lord sets before them the cross here, and the crown hereafter. Of old the Lord had said to His disciples, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4). Beyond death neither men nor devils have any power. They cannot touch the tree of life in the paradise of God, nor the crown of life that awaits the faithful martyr.

If in this life the devil is permitted, at times, to raise persecution against the saints, it is not that they may be vanquished, but, as the Lord says to these suffering saints "that ye may be tried." This trial is not for the trial of the flesh, but for the trial of faith, therefore the Lord says, "Be ye faithful." The Lord could say to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." Years afterward we are permitted to hear Peter strengthening his brethren. He reminds them that men try their gold with fire, but the believer's faith is much more precious than gold that perisheth. So they must not be surprised if God tries the faith of His saints by passing them through the fiery furnace of persecution. If He does thus try them it is in order that their faith may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. The martyr's death in the day of suffering, will lead to the crown of life in the day of glory.

(Vs. 11). The "ten days" of fiery persecution may be passed, but none the less we are to hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches. What was said to Smyrna in the days of fiery persecution has a voice for us in these days of easy profession. It tells us the true character of the world under the power of Satan. It reminds us of the two ways in which the world can divert the Church from its allegiance to Christ. On the one hand by corrupting the Church with a worldly religion that is a mixture of Judaism and Christianity; or, if the Church resists this, by open persecution. We find ourselves in the last days of Christendom when the wile of corruption has so thoroughly leavened the vast mass of the Christian profession, that it is hardly necessary for the devil to persecute. Nevertheless, neither the devil nor the world have altered in hostility to Christ.

In the day of persecution, how suited is the promise to the overcomer. He shall not be hurt of the second death. The body may be hurt by the torturer's rack or the flames of a martyr's death; but the soul of the believer cannot be hurt of the second death. The martyr's death may separate soul from body, but the second death will never separate the soul of the believer from God. The overcomer is to enjoy the comfort of this promise while passing through sufferings, that afterward may be consummated in martyrdom.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Pergamos: Revelation 2:12-17

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 2:12-17) THE address to the Church in Ephesus clearly shows that the departure of the Christian profession, from the place of a witness for Christ, on earth, commenced with the loss of first love to Christ. In the address to the Church at Smyrna, we learn how this decline was, for a time, arrested by the Church being allowed to pass through a period of persecution. At the same time the Church was troubled by Judaizing teachers, who sought, apparently, to escape the persecution of the world by attempting to link the forms of Judaism with the doctrines of Christianity. For a time, the persecution drew out the faithfulness of the saints. Nevertheless, the leaven of Judaism, though at the time resented, was working in the Smyrna period. This effort to turn the Christian Assembly, composed only of true believers, into an imitation Jewish synagogue, composed of a mixed company of believers and unbelievers, would naturally let the world into the Church, and thus prepare the way for the Church to settle down in the world.

This, the next stage in the downward history of the Christian profession, is the outstanding mark of the Church in the Pergamos period. A Judaized Church is no longer an offense to the world. In an earlier day, the Apostle Paul could write, "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased" (Gal. 5:11).

(Vs. 12) The presentation of Christ to the angel of the Church in Pergamos has reference to the condition of the Church at this period. The Lord presents Himself as "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." We know from Hebrews 4:12, that the two-edged sword is a figure of the Word of God. The Psalmist can speak of the Word as a lamp unto his feet. Here it is not viewed as a light for the Christian's path, but as a sword to deal with all that is contrary to the light. The word viewed as the sword is ever judicial. It may, indeed, be used by the Spirit to defend the Christian against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11-17); or, as in this solemn passage, used by Christ against the public professing Christian body, unless there is repentance.

(Vs. 13). At once the Lord passes to speak of that which is so serious in His eyes. He says, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is." Satan, we know, is the prince of this world, and his throne is where he rules. It is not in hell as poets vainly dream. His throne is where he reigns, not in the place to which he will be consigned when his throne is crushed, and his reigning time is over. Nor does he merely reign at Rome, or Pergamos. His throne is not local, it is the world. If the professing Church dwells in the place of Satan's throne we may be sure the Church has given up her pilgrim and stranger character and settled down in the world.

The Lord said of His people, "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Furthermore, Christians are called with an heavenly calling, their home is in heaven. The Church belongs to heaven and should wear a heavenly character. How solemn then, for that which takes the place before the

world of being the Church, to abandon the heavenly calling, fling away its heavenly character, and settle down in the world. It is true the Christian is in the world, and, indeed, the Lord speaks of His disciples as sent into the world, for He can say to the Father, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). How then was He sent? Assuredly not to "dwell" in the world, but to witness to God as the Light of the world. The One, who when on earth, could speak of Himself as "the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John 3:13), was no "dweller" in this world. Truly He walked on earth, but He dwelt in heaven. Scripture makes it abundantly plain that the world is the place of our pilgrimage, where we are left for a time to "shine as lights in the world." To dwell in the world is to attempt to settle down in this scene as if it were our abiding home.

Such then was the solemn condition of the Church in the period of its history depicted in the address to Pergamos. It was no longer a witness in the world, but a dweller in the world. Dwelling signifies the moral character of the profession, just as the expression "earth dwellers," afterward used in the Revelation, sets forth the character of a certain class. The angels visited Sodom in the way of testimony: Lot dwelled there, he found his home there; and his character was formed by the place he dwelt in.

Having settled in the world the Church ceases to be a witness for Christ, and the world ceases to persecute the Church. When the world and the Church associate together, there is nothing left to persecute. From this period the Church, as a whole, lost its heavenly character, never to be regained throughout its history on earth; and worse, for Christianity has become amongst men simply a means for the betterment of the masses, and the advancement of temporal interests.

Nevertheless, there was still that which the Lord could commend, for we hear the Lord saying, "Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith." Name in Scripture is ever the expression of what a person is, and would thus set forth the truth of Christ's Person. "My faith" sets forth the great truths of Christianity concerning the incarnation, death, and resurrection of our Lord.

In spite of the fact that the professing body had settled down in the world, and thus given up its heavenly character, the Church, at this period still held fast to the truth of the Person of Christ, and refused to be drawn into any denial of the faith of Christ.

This, however, implies that at this period there was an attempt to wrest from the Church the great truths of Christianity. Arianism, that denied the deity of Christ, Apollinarianism that attacked His humanity, and Nestorianism that made of our Lord two Persons, arose in the Fourth Century. The Church by condemning these heresies in its different councils, held fast to the truth of Christ's Person, some even laying down their lives rather than surrender the truth. Antipas was a bright example of one of whom the Lord speaks as "My faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." No longer could the Lord speak of the Church as a whole as My faithful witness, but there were still faithful individuals.

How deeply encouraging that the Lord lets us know that however great the general decline, however dark the day, He still sees individuals of whom He can approve, and speak of them as "His," and not only as witnesses for Him, but as being "faithful witnesses." So, too, the Apostle Paul, when instructing us as to a day of ruin, evidently contemplates the existence of such, for he can charge Timothy to commit the truth to "faithful men" (2 Tim. 2).

The faithfulness of Antipas led him to a martyr's death. He was a bright witness to Christ in Satan's world, and thus a shining example of what the whole Church should have been in this world, and by contrast was a condemnation of the Church in its low condition. It is true that the Assembly was not in acknowledged association with the Satan-ruled world that had already shown its true character by martyring the Lord's faithful witness; nevertheless, the Lord's words would seem to cast a deep reproach upon the fallen Church, for He says of this faithful witness, he "was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." It is as if the Lord said to the Church, "You live where Satan dwells, but My faithful witness died where Satan dwells."

(Vs. 14). Thus we realize that while the Lord will ever have His faithful witnesses, from this time forward, the Church as a whole has settled down in the world. The next step downward is to compromise with the world in which it has settled. It might have been argued that the world, having ceased to persecute the Church, was a changed world. The only change was outward, in its manners. It covered its nakedness with an outward profession of Christianity; at heart it remained the same in its love of sin, and hatred of Christ. Nevertheless, the Church having left its first love was ready to fall a prey to its allurements.

This further decline is illustrated by the history of Balaam. This desperately wicked man is brought before us in Num. 22 to 24. He was hired by Balac to curse the people of God. Unable to assist Balac in destroying the people of God by curses, he taught him how to encompass their fall by corruption. Compelled to utter the mind of God as to Israel, he had said, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." It was this separation between Israel and the world, that Balaam sought to break down. Association with the world in its Moabish character is the doctrine of Balaam. In order to secure "the wages of unrighteousness," he teaches Balac how "to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel," by breaking down the wall of separation, and thus establishing intercourse between Israel and the nations (Num. 31:16). Balac acts upon this evil advice; the result is seen in Num. 25. Instead of seeking to raise further opposition to Israel, Balac allows them to settle in his land. Thus we read, "Israel abode in Shittim," a town in the plains of Moab (Num. 33:49). Having settled in the world of Moab, the people of God fall into the unholy and idolatrous ways of the world. As with Israel, so with the Church that has settled down to dwell in the world; it forms an unholy alliance with the world, and adopts its idolatry. Thus at this stage of the Church's history, men were tolerated who taught that it would be to the advantage of the Church, and the world, if Christians mingled with the men of the world. Individuals might protest, but the mass no longer resisted these false teachers. The Lord does not say, as to the Church in Ephesus, "Thou hatest," or "Thou hast tried them " and "found them liars," but, "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." Evil teachers were tolerated, and evil practices followed. As ever, bad doctrine leads to bad practice.

(Vs. 15). The teaching of Balaam was association between the people of God and the world. Furthermore, the Pergamos stage of the Church's history, was marked by those that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Apparently, their evil was turning the grace of God to licentiousness. It first showed itself by immoral deeds brought into the Christian circle from the heathen world. These licentious deeds were hated and refused by the Church in Ephesus. In Pergamos this fearful evil had taken a more subtle form, inasmuch as this wickedness was now defended by doctrine. Probably Peter refers to the teachers of this evil doctrine, when he warns the Church that "There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in destructive heresies," and he adds, "Many shall follow their dissolute ways."

The allusions to the sect of the Nicolaitans in profane writings are so utterly unreliable, that it is difficult to glean anything certain as to them from this source. For this reason, some have thought that the word is used in a symbolic sense. Such say the word means "conquerors of the people," and indicates the rise of clericalism. Against this view we have to remember that the etymology of the word is purely conjectural.

The allowance of these false doctrines paves the way for the inevitable union of the Christian profession, in its later stages, with the world; the result being that the Church debased itself by falling into the world's idolatry, and the world put on an outward veneer of respectability by the adoption of the Christian profession.

(Vs. 16). Warnings follow. Opportunity is given for repentance. If there is no repentance, the Lord would come to the Church, as a professing body, in the way of judgment, and that quickly. This is not the actual coming of the Lord to take those who really form His Church-His body-to heaven, which is also said to be quickly, but a moral coming, in which the Lord acts judicially against those who are corrupting the Christian profession. The Lord does not say I will fight against "thee," but against "them." If the Church had no longer power to deal with evil teachers, and evil doers, the Lord may act directly to purge out the evil and maintain the honor of His Name. This judgment would be with the sword of His mouth. These evil teachers would be exposed and condemned by the Word of God. The Word that is a light and comfort, to those who obey it, becomes a sword to condemn those who slight its warnings and instructions.

(Vs. 17). Following the appeal to the one with the opened ear, there is the promise to the overcomer, connected with "the hidden manna," "a white stone," and "a new name."

The manna was God's provision from heaven to feed Israel in their wilderness journey. Spiritually we know that Christ is "the bread that came down from heaven" to be the food of His people in their wilderness circumstances. The manna sets forth Christ come, not only in Manhood, but also into wilderness circumstances, to enter into all that we have to face in a fallen world, apart from sin. The "hidden manna" refers to the manna that was placed in the ark for a memorial. Christ is now exalted on high; He is no longer seen in humiliation. The privilege, however, of the overcomer, is to know that the One who is now in glory, was once in this wilderness scene, and trod a lonely path as the meek and lowly One; that He once faced the scorn of a hostile world, and the contradiction of sinners.

Alas! the professing body had settled down to find its home in this world; it was entering into an unholy alliance with the world and eating things sacrificed to idols. The overcomer refused to be drawn into the world: to him the world was still a wilderness, and he but a stranger and a pilgrim. Having refused to eat of the things sacrificed to idols, the Lord says, "I will give him to eat of the hidden manna."

Further, the Lord can say, "I will give him a white stone." This appears to be a figure drawn from the voter's urn, in which a white stone was put when approving a candidate, or a black stone when disapproving. As a figure it carries the thought of the Lord giving the overcomer the sweet sense of His approval. The overcomer may indeed meet the disapproval of man as he stands against the unholy alliance of the Church and the world; nevertheless, he will be cheered with the thought of the Lord's approval as set forth in the white stone.

Moreover, in the stone there is a new name written. Names in Scripture are not used simply to distinguish one person from another, but to set forth the individual character of a person. Does not the new name indicate the character which Christ sees and appreciates in the individual to whom He gives a new name. The world may defame, and seek to impute evil motives to the overcomer who refuses to go with the crowd to do evil. The Lord, however, gives the overcomer the secret joy of realizing that his true character is known and valued by Himself.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Thyatira: Revelation 2:18-29

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 2:18-29) In order to rightly interpret the address to Thyatira, and the addresses that follow, it is important to see the characteristic differences between the first three addresses and the last four.

It is clear that the first three Churches set forth the condition of the whole professing Church at three successive periods of its history. Moreover, the general condition set forth by these Churches does not continue throughout the Church's history; though, indeed, the evils that develop, during the periods set forth by these Churches, continue to mark the Christian profession for all time.

Thus the united testimony of the Church that marked the Ephesian period has passed away; though the loss of first love has ever since marked the Christian profession.

Again, the Church as a whole is no longer persecuted as in the Smyrna period; though the leaven of Judaizing teachers continues to work throughout Church history.

Moreover, the Church as a whole is no longer marked by holding fast the Name of Christ, and maintaining the faith, as in the Pergamos period; while, alas, it is still true that the profession as a whole has lost the heavenly calling and become utterly worldly.

Coming to the last four addresses, it will be noticed that, in the main, three things distinguish them from the first three addresses. In the first place we find in the last four Churches the coming of the Lord is either directly presented, or implied, for encouragement or warning. Secondly, in each of these Churches we have a remnant distinguished from the main professing body. Thirdly, in the last four Churches, the call to hear what the Spirit says to the Churches, comes after the promise to the overcomer.

These three facts are deeply significant. The first-the fact of the Lord's coming being brought before the Churches-would indicate that the conditions set forth by the last four Churches will continue to the end of the Church period. Furthermore, the fact that a remnant is distinguished leads to the conclusion that there is no longer any hope of recovery for the Church as a whole. In the first three Churches there

is held out the possibility of repentance, and thus a return to a right condition. In Thyatira there is indeed the call to repentance, but it is definitely stated "she will not repent" (JND). The increasingly corrupt mass passes on to judgment, though out of the corruption God secures a remnant for Himself. Finally, the fact of the appeal to the one with the hearing ear, coming after the promise to the overcomer, is a further proof that the Christian profession is so hopelessly corrupt that the one who hears will no longer be found in the Church at large, but only amongst the overcomers.

While, however, it is important to see the distinction between the first three and the last four Churches, it is equally important to see the connection between the first three Churches and Thyatira. In the period of the Church's history set forth by Ephesus, there was still a united testimony before the world.

There was, however, the root of all failure—the decay of first love to Christ. This solemn loss of first love paved the way for the Church to descend to the level of the world.

In the following period of the Church's history—set forth by Smyrna—the downward course of the public professing body was, for a time, arrested by persecution from the world.

In the Pergamos period, persecution having ceased, the decline in the condition of Christendom was rapid. Already the Church had given up first love to Christ, now the Church gives up her heavenly calling, and, ceasing to be a separate company, settles down in the world where Satan dwells. The Church having thus accommodated herself to the world, the world ceases to persecute the Church. The unholy alliance between the Church and the world, leads the Church to adopt the practices of the world, while the world puts on an outward profession of Christianity. Thus, in this period, we see the formation of the worldly religious sphere known as Christendom.

In the period set forth by Thyatira there is a further advance in evil. Under the figure of the woman Jezebel, we see the development of a worldly ecclesiastical system which seeks to become the universal mistress of Christendom. Throughout the Middle Ages, for well-nigh a thousand years, the condition set forth by Jezebel characterized the public professing body. With the development of the Sardis condition, the Thyatira condition, while still persisting, ceased to be representative of the Church as a whole.

Keeping in mind these characteristic differences between the addresses to the Churches, we shall be better prepared to consider the details of the address to Thyatira.

(Vs. 18). Christ presents Himself to this Church as "the Son of God who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass." The title Son of God in this connection is deeply significant. We know from the Lord's own words to Peter that Christ as the Son of God is the rock on which the Church is built. Commencing with the Thyatira period we find the rising up of a system that sets aside the Son of God and exalts a man to be the rock on which the Church is built.

Further, Christ is presented as One whose eyes are as a flame of fire, speaking of the searching penetrating gaze from which no evil is hidden, and whose burning condemnation evil must encounter. His feet are like fine brass, reminding us of the absolute firmness, and inflexible righteousness, of the way He takes in dealing with the evils discovered by His penetrating gaze.

(Vs. 19). Following upon the Lord's presentation of Himself, we have the Lord's commendation of His own. He says, "I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, and thine endurance, and thy last works to be more than thy first" (N. Tn.). It is exceedingly blessed that, in this dark day of the Church's history, the Lord finds so much to commend. Neither in the Smyrna or Pergamos period were there any works for the Lord's commendation.¹ In the Smyrna period bitter persecution called forth suffering for Christ's sake; but would hardly lead to active works. In the Pergamos period, the Church, having found its dwelling in the world, would hardly bring forth "works" that the Lord could commend. In the Ephesian period there were indeed works that the Lord commends, but the "love" and "faith" that were lacking in their works, are found in the works of Thyatira. Moreover, the Lord says, "I know... the last works to be more than the first" (N. Tn.). Their activity did not wither under the prevailing corruptions, nor fade with the passing of time.

That such high commendation was found in a day when the general condition of Christendom was so low, only illustrates the truth that the greater the corruption of the professing mass, the greater the energy and devotedness of the faithful few. The greatest saints are found in the darkest day. Never was a darker day in Israel's history than when the wicked Jezebel ruled. Idolatry filled the land; false prophets and idolatrous priests swayed the mass; all was in disorder. Nevertheless, in that dark day, there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and there were devoted men of God, like Elijah and Elisha, who were famed for "works" that exceeded the works of any other saint of that dispensation. In the story of the Church, history repeats itself. Again a period arises which the Lord likens to the dark days of Jezebel, and again amidst the wickedness of that time, there shine forth, against the darkness, faithful individuals whose devotedness to Christ exceeds, perhaps, that of the saints of any other period since Pentecostal days.

Of these devoted saints, one has written, in moving words, as follows:—"How have the sorrows and sufferings and labor and painful devotedness of the hunted but persevering witnesses in the dark ages, occupied the mind and feelings of thoughtful Christians! Nowhere, perhaps, is there a more deeply interesting story; nowhere longer and more unwearied patience; nowhere truer, or perhaps so true, hearts for the truth and for Christ, and for faithfulness to Him against a corrupt church, as in the saints of the middle ages. Through toil and labor, hunted and punished in spite of a system far more persevering, far better organized, than heathen persecutions, violent as for a time they surely were; with no fresh miraculous revelation, or publicly sustaining body, or profession of the church at large, clothed with universal acknowledgment as such, to give them confidence; with every name of ignominy that people or priest could invent to hunt them with, they pursued their hemmed but never abandoned way, with divinely given constancy, and maintained the testimony of God, and the promised existence of the church against the gates of hades, at the cost of rest and home and life and all things earth could give or nature feel. And Christ had foreseen and had not forgotten it. Weakness may have been there, ignorance marked many of their thoughts, Satan may have sought to mix up mischief with the good, and sometimes succeeded; and men, at their ease now, delight in finding the feeble or faulty spot, and perhaps succeed too; but their record is on high, and their Savior's approbation will shine forth, when the books ease-loving questioners have written on them will be as dust on the moth's wing when it is dead; and shame, if shame can be where we may trust many of them may meet those they have despised, cover their face. This the Lord owns in Thyatira. It made no part of the church for men then. It makes none

for many wise people now. It is the first part for Christ" —John Darby.

(Vs. 20). Thus the Lord delights to approve of these devoted saints amidst the gross darkness of the middle ages. He will have a further word of encouragement for them; though first He turns aside to pass judgment on that of which He so deeply disapproves. In verses 20 to 23, there comes before us, under the symbol of Jezebel and her children, the appalling condition which was the outcome of a worldly ecclesiastical system that sought to rule Christendom.

To understand the spiritual significance of the "woman Jezebel," we must recall the history of Israel in the days of the actual Jezebel. Ahab was then king, who "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." His great sin was that he took to wife the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Zidonians. Having entered into this worldly alliance he lost his place and authority as king, and permitted this wicked woman to rule, even to writing letters in his name, and subscribing them with his seal. Under her rule the whole country was led into idolatry; false prophets of Baal were protected, and the prophets of the Lord were persecuted.

This evil condition of the nation of Israel, under the sway of Jezebel, is reproduced in the period of the Church's history represented by Thyatira. As the outcome of the false alliance of the Church with the world, in the Pergamos period, there arises a false ecclesiastical system that seeks to dominate Christendom; that, like a prophetess, professes to speak with divine authority, and communicate the mind of God; that takes the place of "teacher" and "leader" of God's people, for, says the Lord, "Thou sufferest... that woman... to teach and to lead away my servants" (N. Tn.). Thus the Word of God, as giving the mind of God, the Spirit of God as being the Teacher, and Christ as the Head and the Leader of His people, are set aside by the substituted teaching of this evil system.

Furthermore, under the figure of fornication, this evil system leads into unholy alliances with the world, and into communion with idolatrous things which have a direct link with Satan.

Thus in one short message to the Angel of the Church in Thyatira, the Lord sums up the outstanding features of that fearful ecclesiastical tyranny which, having its extreme expression in Rome, dominated Christendom in the dark ages, and continues in that system, and in the allied movements symbolized as children of Jezebel, to the end of the Church period.

(Vs. 21). Space was given for repentance; but, says the Lord, "She will not repent" (N. Tn.). To Ephesus it was said that unless there was repentance the candlestick would be removed. Here there is no mention of the candlestick, showing that the system represented by Jezebel was not acknowledged as a light for Himself.

(Vss. 22-23). The Lord proceeds to pass judgment upon this false system; those associated with her; and her children. This vile system will come into "great tribulation." This surely looks on to the time, foretold in greater detail, in Rev. 17 and 18, when the revived Roman Empire will, as the instrument of God, destroy this system. Two classes will share her judgment: first, those who are found in unholy association with her—the kings of the earth, and the merchantmen who, to further their interests in this world, recognized, and entered into alliance with, her (ch. 18:9). Second, there are those who are spoken of as "her children." It is not inferred that any of God's children are found in this company. They are the direct offspring of this vile system—a class that, like Jezebel, make a profession of religion, but are pure idolaters. Such come under absolute judgment. They are killed with death—complete separation from God. They are not permitted to subsist longer on earth.

It is in vain that men throw a halo of religious fervor around this system, or seek to hide its fearful evil under an atmosphere of human kindness, and the glamor of false sentiment, for all the Churches will know that the Lord is One who searcheth the reins and hearts. His eyes, as a flame of fire, will discover the guiding principles, and the hidden motives, that determine the policy of this fearful system. And the One whose feet, like fine brass, tread a path of absolute righteousness, will give unto every one according to his works.

(Vss. 24-25). Having condemned this terrible evil, the Lord turns again to those, whose love, and faith, and patience, He has already approved. Here for the first time we have a remnant distinguished from the corrupt mass. They have refused the idolatry, and worldly alliances of this false system, by which they are surrounded; they have not known the depths of Satan that are concealed in a system under which Jesuitism, the Inquisition, indulgences, and the confessional can flourish.

In the midst of the gross darkness of this satanic system it was much in God's sight that any should be found, marked by faith, love, endurance, and works, that have the Lord's approval. Upon such the Lord will lay no other burden—words that would imply they had heavy burdens to bear. Refusing the doctrine of Jezebel, brought them into constant suffering and persecution. In such circumstances all that the Lord looks for is that they "hold fast" that which they have until He comes.

They were hardly in a position to make any advance into the deep truths of Christianity; but the Lord does lay upon them the responsibility of holding fast the light they have. This was a measure of light that enabled them to refuse the teaching of Jezebel, escape the depths of Satan, and walk in practical piety.

Here, too, for the first time, in the course of these addresses, the Lord holds out the hope of His coming. The Lord's coming was ever the proper hope of the Church; the mention, however, of this blessed hope at this juncture indicates that the decline of the Church has reached a stage at which there is no longer any possible recovery for the mass of the Christian profession. Whatever revivals the Lord may grant, for the Lord's people, as a whole, there will henceforth be no recovery, until the Lord comes. There is nothing but judgment for Jezebel, and nothing but the Lord's coming for the godly remnant. To such there is no promise held out of any amendment in the Church; their hope is directed to Christ outside this scene, and His coming to take His people to Himself.

(Vss. 26-28). The promise to the overcomer reveals a blessed prospect to the one who "holds fast" amidst the abominations of Jezebel. The Church in Thyatira is the only one to whom the Lord adds an additional charge to overcoming. Thus He says, "He that overcometh and keepeth My works." It is as if the Lord would leave no question as to what is implied in overcoming this fearful system. It would seem that amidst the gross darkness of a system that takes the Word of God from believers, the Lord does not expect the overcomer to be distinguished by a deep knowledge of His Word; but this at least He does look for, that they should be marked by practical piety, and thus keep His works until the end. Moreover, in speaking of "My works," the Lord reminds us that, in His path, He ever did the will of God, as He

could say to the Jews, "I do always those things that please Him."

Such will have power over the nations. The power over the world by which this ecclesiastical system sought its own advancement and glory during the absence of Christ, the godly persecuted overcomer will have at the coming of Christ. The overcomer will moreover, not only have power, but he will exercise power; he will rule with a rod of iron in the day when Christ deals with His enemies in absolute destruction, even as the vessels of a potter are broken to shivers.

Moreover, such will have "the morning star." Not only will they share the glorious reign of Christ, but they will enjoy a present knowledge of Christ, before He comes. The day star will arise in their hearts. Christ, as the Sun of righteousness, will arise upon this world with healing in His wings, but the day star shines before the rising of the sun. The overcomer will know and enjoy Christ as the Morning Star, before He shines before the world as the Sun of Righteousness.

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 3:1-6: The Address to the Church in Sardis

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

To this church the Lord is presented as the One "that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." However much Romanism may have assumed "power over the nations," it still remains true that the fullness of power, set forth by "the seven Spirits of God," is with the Lord; and, however great the departure from the truth, there are those, symbolized by the seven stars, through whom He can give heavenly light to His people. Thus we know that in spite of the power and assumption of Rome, there arose those who withstood the evils of this system. Alas! whatever resistance to error, and whatever revival of truth there was in this movement, which we speak of as the Reformation, in the hands of man it has broken down. As ever man fails in responsibility. The result has been the development of Protestantism which has indeed "a name" that it lives, and thus stands for the truth before men, but the Lord has to say, as to fact, that in His sight, "Thou... art dead." We may, indeed, be thankful that through this stand against Romanism an open Bible has been won for God's people and the great truth of justification by faith re-asserted. But, alas! content with mere orthodoxy, the Bible has become to the mass little more than a dead letter, and its truths not being received in personal faith, leave the lives of the mass unchanged. One has said, "Nothing is more common among Protestants than to admit a thing to be perfectly true because it is in the word of God, without the smallest intention of acting upon it."

Such a condition can only lead to the judgment of the Lord. His coming will find all lifeless professors asleep even as it will find the world (1 Thess. 5:2-6).

Nevertheless, as in corrupt and idolatrous Romanism there is found a devoted remnant, so amongst the dead orthodoxy of Protestantism there are "a few names" that form a remnant, of whom the Lord can say that they "have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." In the midst of a lifeless profession they personally walked with Christ, and their names will be retained in the book of life, and publicly owned before the Father and His angels.

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 3:7-13: The Address to the Church in Philadelphia

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

To this assembly the Lord does not present Himself in a judicial aspect as about to judge, nor in an official way as directing the assemblies, but rather in His moral attributes as "the Holy" and "the True." This is blessedly in keeping with the moral condition of the assembly of whom the Lord can say, thou "hast kept my word, and hast not denied my Name." In the midst of general departure they cherished and obeyed the Lord's word, and above all they jealously maintained the glory of the Person of Christ, and refused every "denial" of His Name.

The Lord who holds the key can use it on behalf of such. In spite of all the power of the enemy He opens doors of service for them, in accord with His will, and closes doors that would lead into a path contrary to His mind. Such may have but a little strength and make no great appeal to the world as in the case of Thyatira; nor have they any name for a great reformation as in the case of Sardis. But if not marked by anything that the world can wonder at and admire, they had the approval of the Lord, and in the day to come every opposer will learn that they are loved of the Lord.

In this assembly have we not the Lord's forecast that in the midst of the increasing corruptions of Christendom, and before the end of the Christian period, a testimony would be raised to the truths of Christ's word, and the supreme authority and preciousness of His Name?

If, however, amidst the prevailing gloom, God raises up this fresh testimony, we are also warned that Satan will seek to raise up a counter-testimony by a revival of Judaism with its forms and ceremonies. We know that the revival of the truth of the church contained in Christ's word was at once met by a great outburst of ritualism and superstition by which Satan has sought to nullify the word of Christ, and draw hearts from the Person of Christ, and thus rob the Christian of all true service and worship.

If such are warned of the opposition they will meet from Satan, they are also encouraged to patiently endure, knowing that if they are kept through present trials, they will be kept from the hour of tribulation that is soon coming "upon all the world."

Owing to their "little strength," and the constant conflict entailed by the opposition of Satan who seeks by false religious systems to rob the saints of the truth, this assembly is especially exposed to the danger of giving up standing firmly for the truth that has been recovered to them. To meet this danger they are exhorted to "hold fast" that which they have—the truth, the preciousness of the Name of Christ, and the

love and approval of the Lord. To let go these great blessings will result in the loss of their crown of reward in the day to come. To encourage such to "hold fast" the Lord sets before them His coming, for which they will have to wait but a little while, for He is coming quickly.

The overcomer—the one who "holds fast," will have a bright reward in the day of glory. Taking heed to the Lord's warning to "hold fast," and being content with a little strength and thus to be of small account in the world's esteem today, he will have a position of power in the day to come. Making everything of the Name of Christ in the day of His rejection and in a world that increasingly slights that Name, he will have the Name of Christ displayed in him in that home of glory, the New Jerusalem.

Revelation: An Expository Outline, Revelation 3:14-22: The Address to the Church in Laodicea

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

In the last address we learn the solemn end of the increasing failure of the church in responsibility throughout the whole church period. We see, too, how the reviving grace of the Lord has been abused, and how little His warnings have been heeded. Nevertheless, we learn that amidst all the failure the Lord remains the unchanging resource of His people, and that in the darkest day there is richest blessing for the individual believer.

In striking contrast to the great Christian profession that has been neither faithful to God nor a true witness before men, the Lord presents Himself as "the Amen"—the One through whom every purpose of God will be fulfilled; as "the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God," where all will be according to God.

Then there passes before us a solemn picture of the last stage of the professing church. The failure that commenced with the loss of first love to Christ, ends in such utter indifference to Christ, that the church is unmoved even though Christ is outside their door, and deaf to every appeal by which He would seek to win their hearts. The grace that has restored to us an open Bible, and revived the great truths concerning Christ and the church, is so abused by the Christian profession that it ends in the great mass using the truth to exalt themselves and boast that they are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. As ever, the vanity of boasters blinds them to their true condition. The self-complacent mass know not that in the sight of the Lord, they are spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The condition of such is nauseous to Christ and can only end in the entire rejection of the Christian profession by Christ.

Nevertheless the grace of the Lord counsels them to turn to Himself to find in Him that which will meet their desperate need, that they may obtain the true riches, their shame be met and covered, and their eyes opened to see in Christ One that can not only meet their need, but One that is altogether lovely.

Then we learn that in the midst of these last dark days there will be true souls that the Lord loves, manifested by the very rebukes and chastening that love may see is needed to recall them to Himself. The Lord is found at the door of such, patiently knocking, as He seeks to find a place in their affections. To open the door to Him surely means that we give Him a place in our hearts, and thus get back to first love. To such the Lord says, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." He will enter into all our exercises and trials, and He will lead us into His heavenly things.

Are we not then to learn that, in the closing days of the Christian period, the path will grow exceedingly individual, but that it is possible for the individual to get back to first love, and thus enjoy the highest spiritual blessing of secret communion with the Lord, even though there is no return to public, or united testimony from the great profession?

The overcomer who makes no boast of spiritual wealth, who seeks no public recognition, and is content with the secret approval of the Lord will, in the day of glory, be displayed with Christ on His throne.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Sardis: Revelation 3:1-6

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 3:1-6) In the prophetic view of the Seven Churches, it is important to remember that the first three Assemblies are representative of conditions of the whole Christian profession, at three successive periods of its history; conditions, moreover, that have passed away with the periods represented by these Churches.

In contrast to the first three Churches, the last four prophetically present conditions which, though they come successively on the scene, do not displace one another, but continue to the end. For this reason, the last four Assemblies, in as far as they exist together, do not represent the condition of the whole Church at any given time.

If Thyatira sets forth the condition of Christendom during the dark ages, from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500, when dominated by the Papal system, it is hardly possible to resist the conclusion that in Sardis there is set forth the condition of the professing Church under Protestantism. Here, however, we must carefully distinguish between the work of the Spirit of God at the Reformation, and the work of man which resulted in Protestantism. The address to Sardis does not set forth the Reformation, but rather the condition which marked those who, under the impulse of this movement, developed an ecclesiastical system in opposition to Rome.

At the commencement of the Reformation there was a mighty work of the Spirit of God whereby the Scriptures were recovered for all, and justification by faith was preached. A vast number who received spiritual blessing under this movement broke with the Papacy. A still larger

number, groaning under the tyranny of Rome, threw in their lot with this movement for political motives, apart from any work of the Spirit in their souls. Thus a movement which at its commencement had been, under the guidance of the Spirit, a powerful witness to the truth, ended in becoming, under the guidance of men, little more than a protest against the tyranny and abominations of Rome.

This protest aroused the hostility of Rome. In turn, the opposition of Rome led the Protestants to range themselves under the protection of the world in order to defend themselves in the conflict with Rome. Thus, in contrast to the Romish system that sought to rule the world, there arose, in Protestantism, a system that sought the protection of the world, and has become dominated by the world. The resulting condition is set forth in Sardis.

It is instructive to mark the relation of the professing Church to the world, as set forth in these different addresses.

In Ephesus the Church was separate from the world, and so far was a witness to the world, though the root of all decline was there.

In Smyrna the Church was persecuted by the world, and thus, for the time, further decline was arrested.

In the Pergamos period the persecutions ceased. At once the Church settled down in the world, while the world put on the profession of Christianity. Thus, Christendom was formed.

In Thyatira the professing Church assumed to take the upper hand and rule this Christianized world.

In Sardis a section of the professing Church put itself under the protection and rule of the world.

In Philadelphia there is presented a remnant separated from the corrupt religious world.

In Laodicea the professing mass of Christendom becomes the world, and is treated as the world.

(Vs. 1). Confining our thoughts to Sardis it will be seen that the Lord presents Himself to this Church as, "He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." This surely would be rebuke to the Church, but encouragement for the godly remnant in the Church.

The seven Spirits of God would speak of the fullness of the power of the Spirit at the disposal of the Lord. What a rebuke to those who have turned aside to seek the protection of the world's power; but what an encouragement to the godly in a day of spiritual weakness amongst the people of God. Moreover, the Lord has the seven stars. When the professing mass are turning to the world and seeking its power and patronage, it is good for those who are responsible to represent Christ in the Assembly, and who are responsible to Christ for the condition of the Assembly, to remember, that they still belong to Christ, and are thus encouraged to own His authority and count upon Him for His support and guidance.

Following upon the presentation of Christ to the Church, we have the Lord's judgment of the condition of Sardis. He says, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Thus, in Sardis, we see the condition of a large section of the professing Church which, having escaped the abominations of Thyatira, falls into spiritual torpor, contented with a public profession of orthodoxy. Mere profession may make a name before men, who only look on that which is outward: it is not life before Christ, who reads the heart. In Protestantism there is the reputation for maintaining the vital truths of Christianity, as opposed to the corruptions of Rome, but, in the sight of the Lord, there is no vital link with Himself in the vast mass of those who make this profession.

There is no vital power in Protestantism as such. Life is found in faith in the living Christ, not in protesting against evil. Hence any movement that depends for its existence upon protest against evil is bound to sink into spiritual torpor and death. The Reformation was indeed a protest against the evils of the Papacy; but it was much more than this. It was the powerful assertion of positive truths. In a short while, however, great masses of people identified themselves with the Reformation movement, not because they loved the truth, but because they hated Rome. Thus a condition has arisen that is characterized by the reputation for orthodoxy before men, without life before God.

(Vs. 2). Having passed judgment upon the condition of Sardis, the Lord utters some solemn warnings. First, He says, "Be watchful." The call to watchfulness implies that there had been a lack of watchfulness. The Church, while bidding for the power and patronage of the world, had been so engrossed with its present advancement in this scene, that it had ceased to watch against dangers that were imminent, and had ceased to remember the truth they had received. Paul, in his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus, links together watching and remembering, for having warned them of coming dangers, he says, "Therefore watch and remember." Thus too the Lord bids the Church in Sardis first to watch and then to remember.

Further, the Lord exhorts the Church to "strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." In His sight the mass is already dead: the truths recovered at the Reformation are ready to die.

Moreover, the Lord rebukes the Assembly for their lack of practical piety. He says, "I have not found thy works perfect before God." God does not lower His standard because of the decline in the spiritual condition of the professing mass. The works He looks for are still measured by His perfect standard. The love was not perfect in Ephesus; the works were not perfect in Sardis.

How solemn is the condition of the Protestant profession as set forth in the Assembly in Sardis. The mass of profession dead; the truths once recovered, dying; practical piety and holiness at a low ebb. Alas! is it not notorious that the Protestant system is utterly powerless to maintain the truth, or to deal with evil, or restrain lawlessness, within its bounds. Their works are not perfect before God.

Nevertheless, Christ presents Himself to this Church in a way that clearly shows all the resources of power and government are perfect in His hands. Therefore, there is power available for the Church to bring forth perfect works in a day of ruin. Alas! Sardis having turned to the world for its power, cannot avail itself of the resources in the Head of the Church.

(Vs. 3). To remember “how” they had received and heard, would recall to them the earnest condition of soul in which the truth had been received, and open their eyes to the present condition of deadness into which they had sunk. They lacked the power of the seven Spirits of God for the maintenance of the good: and the restraining power of Christ's ministers of light and truth against evil. To “hold fast” would encourage them to cling to the great truths they were insensibly letting slip. To “repent” would involve self-judgment for their low spiritual condition, and poor walk.

The Lord's warning follows. “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.” Thus the Lord rebukes the low condition of His professing people in two ways: first, He calls them to remember the past. Have they declined in conduct from those early days when the truth was first received? Then He recalls them to watchfulness. Let them not only look back, but look on, for He is coming. Are they in a state suited for His coming? If not, His coming would mean judgment rather than blessing. Thus it is the Lord presents His coming in the aspect it will take towards the world, “as a thief.” The Apostle Paul could write to the Thessalonians, “Ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” Nevertheless, he adds, “Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” Alas! in the day of Sardis the professing Church had ceased to watch, and was fast falling into darkness and deadness. Having appealed to the world for its patronage and power, the professing Church had become like the world, and is in danger of sharing the world's judgment. The coming of the Lord instead of bringing into blessing, as it will for all who believe unto life, will overwhelm in judgment this dead Church, in common with a dead world.

(Vs. 4). Amidst, however, the deadness of Sardis, the Lord sees, and delights to own, that there are those faithful to Himself. In Thyatira there are those that the Lord distinguishes from the corrupt mass, and of whom He speaks as “the rest.” Here it is hardly a company, but only “a few names,” that He can own. It would suggest that they are isolated individuals amidst the mass that are sunk in spiritual torpor.

The Lord gives them a threefold commendation. First, they have not defiled their garments. With all their orthodox profession the mass had defiled their garments. Their practical walk and ways were marred and defiled by association with the world, by bidding for its power, by accommodating themselves to its tastes, by adopting its methods. There are, however, faithful individuals—a few names—who maintain their separation from the world. The Lord knows their names, and says they have not defiled their garments.

Secondly, the Lord says of such, “They shall walk with Me in white.” Separation from the world has its blessed outcome in a walk with Christ. Nevertheless, the walk is of an individual character. The Lord does not say they will know the blessedness of that word which says, “Where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them,” but “they shall walk with Me.” Whatever their ecclesiastical associations, their practical ways are suited to the Lord, for, they shall walk with Him “in white.” Lastly the Lord says of such, “They are worthy.” The orthodox mass is dead, the truths they profess are dying; their works are not perfect, their garments are defiled by the world; they are utterly unworthy of Christ, and are passing on to the judgment of the world. In contrast to the condition of the mass, the Lord finds in these “few names” those who are worthy to be in His company now, and to share His glory in a day to come.

(Vs. 5). The first promise to the overcomer is to be “clothed in white raiment.” There were a few names in Sardis of those who had not defiled their garments; they had walked in practical separation from the evils by which they were surrounded, and the Lord encourages such with the promise that their walk will have its suitable reward in a day to come. They will be clothed in white in the day of glory. The robes they wear in glory are woven in the path that leads to glory. The few names of those who had not defiled their garments represent only a handful of obscure individuals amidst a great lifeless profession; but they had the Lord's approval in the day of their obscurity, and their faithfulness will be brought into display in the presence of the Lord in the day of His glory.

Further, the Lord says of the overcomer, “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.” How many names held in high honor by Sardis, and written in its registers, would be found to represent mere lifeless professors, whereas the few names of those who had not defiled their garments were held in small esteem by Sardis, and even struck off its registers. Even so—whatever men might do—the Lord says, “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.”

Finally, the Lord says of the overcomer, “I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.” Does not this high honor imply that before men the overcomer's name had been of little account, if not derided, and show, moreover, how great is the Lord's approval of one, who, in the midst of a lifeless profession boldly confesses His name?

(Vs. 6). The address closes with the appeal that, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” It is the Lord's desire that we should listen to the Spirit, as, throughout the ages He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, and thus profit by the Lord's words to each Church.

An ever-present snare to which believers are exposed is the attempt to maintain a religious reputation—“a name to live”—before one another, before our fellow Christians, and before the world, while neglecting to cultivate the fruits which are the outcome and evidence of life. In the midst of a vast profession we are to “watch,” “strengthen the things which remain,” to “remember how we have received and heard,” “hold fast” and “repent” of any departure.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Philadelphia: Revelation 3:7-13

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 3:7-13) The study of the addresses to the Seven Churches leads to the conclusion that the last four Churches, in contrast to the first three, set forth conditions that continue to the end of the Church period. Further, it will be found that in the last four Churches, there is a general distinction between the first two and the last two.

In reference to Thyatira and Sardis, we see prophetically set forth conditions that are publicly represented before the world by the two great ecclesiastical systems known, respectively, as the Papacy and Protestantism. When, however, we come to the last two Churches, it is clear that the conditions we find therein do not correspond to any definite ecclesiastical systems which can be recognized in, or by, the world. These Churches set forth certain conditions of which the Lord takes account, either as having His approval, as in the Church of Philadelphia or, as being utterly nauseous to Him, as in the Church of Laodicea.

Thus in Thyatira and Sardis we have great ecclesiastical systems which have a large place in the eyes of the world, and, in each of these systems, a godly remnant under the eye of Christ. In Philadelphia we see set forth a godly remnant, not in, but, apart from Thyatira and Sardis, having certain, moral traits approved by the Lord, who wait for the coming of the Lord, and who make no pretension to a humanly devised ecclesiastical system of which the world can take account.

It is the greatest encouragement to those who desire to be true to the Lord, in a day of ruin, to see that these addresses present the great fact that when the condition of the Christian profession has become utterly corrupt and dead, there will be found under the eye of Christ those who are apart from the corruption and have His approval, and that such will be found until the end. Thus from the address to Philadelphia it is our high privilege to learn what has the Lord's approval in a day of ruin, so that we may seek grace to answer to His mind.

(Vs. 7). Christ is presented to this Church as "The holy and the true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." No longer does the Lord present Himself in His official capacity in relation to the Churches, as holding the seven stars and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, but in His moral perfections as the One who is "the holy" and "the true." Not only is He absolutely holy, but He is true to His holy character, true to God, and true to His own word. If, however, He thus presents Himself to His people it is in order that they should exhibit a character in keeping with Himself. If He presents Himself in a moral way it is that they should be morally like Him. He does not ask them to set up an ecclesiastical organization, or attempt to make a model Church in the midst of the ruin, but He does desire that, amidst the increasing gloom of Christendom, there should be found a people who set forth the excellencies of His character as the holy and the true. This will surely involve, on the one hand, separation from the corruptions of Christendom, and, on the other, the maintenance of the whole truth.

Moreover, the Lord is presented as having the key of David. The allusion is to Isa. 22:21-22. The Prophet, using Eliakim as a type, speaks of the government of this world being given to Christ, for Jehovah says, "the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." There are two symbols of government, the sword and the key. The sword speaks of the government dealing with, and restraining evil: the key speaks rather of government opening a way for right to prevail. The key hardly expresses administration in the Church, but rather government in the world—a government that no man can resist, producing conditions even in a hostile world, and in spite of the state of the Church, in which the Philadelphian can act according to the Lord's mind. The time has not yet come for the Lord to use the sword, but does He not exercise His governmental power, in as far as it is necessary, to open a door to those who seek to answer to His mind, in order that they may carry out His service? If they are seeking to wear the character of Christ, will they not have the support of Christ, and find that He will direct their steps, opening a door here or closing a door there, as He in His perfect wisdom decides? It is theirs to see that by separation from vessels to dishonor, and the cultivation of a character suited to Christ, they are fit and meet for the Master's use. Then will they not find that He will open a door to carry out His service? And He assures such that no man, however powerful in this world, or however much opposed to the truth, will be able to close the door that He has opened. What a comfort to know that the Lord holds the key and that, in spite of corruption within the Christian circle or opposition from without, He can make a way for His people that nothing can resist.

(Vs. 8). Following upon the Lord's presentation of Himself we have the Lord's commendation of the Philadelphian Church. There is nothing that meets with the Lord's condemnation. There are three characteristics that have His approval.

First, the Lord says, "Thou hast a little strength." This Church is not marked by any display of power that would attract the notice of the world. In the beginning of the Church's history there had indeed been a display of power that arrested the world. The gift of tongues had confounded the multitude; mighty works had amazed the world, and the power of the gospel had turned the world upside down. Apparently, all the sign gifts, so impressive in the eyes of the world, were entirely absent in Philadelphia, so that we may judge miraculous, display will not be found among those who have the Lord's approval in a day of ruin. "A little strength" is not a quality that appeals to the flesh, or attracts the world. The world delights in a strong man; God delights to carry out His work through weak vessels. Thus, in Philadelphia the Lord associates Himself with, and uses those, who have but a little strength. He says, "I have set before thee" -the one with a little strength "an open door." Their wisdom then is not to assume power that they do not possess, nor covet gifts that have passed away, but rather own their true condition—that they have but a little strength—and thus find the support of the Lord, the One who has all power, who holds the key, and whom no man can resist.

Thyatira represents a system that arrogates to itself a power that would rule the world: Sardis a system that bids for the power and resources of the world. Philadelphia represents a little remnant apart from the world having but a little strength, though behind their weakness there is the mighty power and support of the Lord.

Secondly, the Lord can say of Philadelphia, "Thou... hast kept My word." Not simply the Word as a whole, however true that may be of the Philadelphians, but Christ's word. Is not Christ's word the whole revelation of Christianity communicated to us by Christ Himself when He was on earth, and afterwards through the revelations made to the apostles from Christ in the glory? His word covers the whole circle of Christian truth and suggests that, in Philadelphia, there is, not merely the recovery of certain truths, as in Sardis, but the recovery of all Christian truth. Further, "keeping" the word implies that it is treasured in the heart and obeyed in the life. The Lord does not say thou hast expounded or taught the word, though this may be true; but He lays emphasis on the great fact that His word is kept. Those with little strength may have little gift, but they can be marked by that which is of far higher value in the eyes of the Lord—obedience to His word. Surrounded by a great profession that has abandoned the Word for the traditions of men, or science falsely so called, or ingenious handlings and applications of the Word to support their fanciful ideas, there are those who, shaking off the shackles of tradition, get back to Christ's Word, treasure that Word in their hearts, and seek to carry it out in their lives.

Thirdly, the Lord says of this Church, "Thou hast not denied My Name." Name in Scripture sets forth a Person's renown. Christ's Name is the perfect expression of all that He is in His glorious PERSON, as well as all that He has done in His mighty work. His name JESUS speaks of His

saving work: His name EMMANUEL speaks of His glorious Person. Thyatira represents a system that arrogates to itself the place and power that belongs alone to Christ the Head of His Church, and thus usurps the renown that belongs to Christ. Sardis assumes that Name to make a fair profession before the world, and thus degrades the Name of Christ to add luster to herself. In Philadelphia there are those who may not be able to unfold all the glories of that Name, nor refute and answer the unceasing attacks upon His Name, but this at least can be said of them, that, in the midst of all the attacks of the enemy upon the renown of Christ, they have refused to deny that Name. They have not denied the glory of His Person, not the greatness of His work.

It might not appear that there is much commendation in not denying His Name. There is nothing of a directly positive character in such testimony: nevertheless, it is precious in the eyes of the Lord to find in a day of ruin that there are some who refuse to deny His Name. Even so in the dark and apostate days when Ahab reigned in Israel, and Elijah stood for the glory of the Lord, it might seem a small thing that seven thousand had not bowed the knee to Baal, but it has the Lord's commendation.

(Vs. 9). We are next warned that those who are drawn together in brotherly love, in separation from the corruptions of Christendom, in obedience to the Word of Christ, will meet with opposition. Keeping the Word of Christ would suggest that this godly remnant had returned to the principles of the Church as unfolded in that Word. This would naturally arouse the hostility of those who had departed from the Word and sought to mold the Church into a Jewish form.

This opposition, however outwardly religious, would appear to be satanic in its origin. If there are those who have been brought back to the truth of Christ's words, and thus walk in the light of the Church as revealed in those words, Satan will oppose such, not by persecution as in Smyrna, but, by raising up those who claim to be the true Church, with a hereditary priesthood after the Jewish pattern. Such may look with unconcealed contempt upon a feeble company who seek to obey Christ's Word, but the time will come when they will be compelled to recognize that the love and approval of Christ rests upon those that they despise.

Thus in this Philadelphian remnant there is a complete absence of everything that makes a show in the eyes of the world; while there is that which is exceedingly precious in the eyes of the Lord- "I have loved thee." In connection with this Church there is no mention of any great labor as in Ephesus; no mention of charity, and service, as in Thyatira; there is no great ecclesiastical system that men can take account of, as in Sardis. In the sight of men all is weakness that calls forth their contempt. Nevertheless, the very weakness that men deride secures the support of the Lord; and the moral traits of Christ, that raise the opposition of Satan, makes this little remnant very precious in the sight of Christ and very dear to His heart.

(Vs. 10). Furthermore, if this feeble remnant is preserved from the present opposition of Satan, they will also be kept out of the hour of trial that will come upon all the world. The fact that the Lord can say to Philadelphia, "Thou hast kept the word of My patience," would suggest that with the recovery of the full truth of the Church there had been a revival of the hope of the Church -the coming of the Lord to reign in glory. In the present time the form that the coming Kingdom takes is "the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Such wait for the Kingdom and manifestation of Jesus Christ; and Christ waits, seated on His Father's throne, until His enemies are made His footstool. Those who keep the word of His patience enter into the truth of Christ's present waiting attitude. They know this is the waiting time, they look forward to the reigning time.

Between the waiting, and the reigning, there has to come the hour of trial that will overtake the habitable world. These saints who keep the word of Christ's patience, are taught that the Church will be kept out of the hour of trial. How this will be we learn from other Scriptures. The word of Christ by revelation to the Apostle Paul tells of the rapture, by which the Church will be taken out of the scene of the trial to be with Christ, and thus come with Him when He appears to reign.

While it is specially said, in connection with these saints, that they will be kept from the hour of trial, it is equally true that every saint of the present time, will be kept from the coming world-wide judgments. In the same way it is surely true that no saint will be hurt of the second death, and yet this promise is only stated in connection with the overcomer in Smyrna. The fact being these promises are true for all believers; yet particular saints are especially reminded of certain promises that are suitable for their comfort and encouragement in their peculiar circumstances.

(Vs. 11). There follows a further word of encouragement and warning. "Behold," says the Lord, "I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." In the presence of those who oppose, the Lord encourages this remnant with the thought of His near coming. It will not be long that they will have to face opposition and endure conflict—He is coming quickly. The time is short; let them see to it that they hold fast and do not surrender that which has been recovered to them, nor give up in the conflict, in the last moments before the Lord returns.

The very warning to hold fast, implies that an effort will be made to induce them to let go that which they have. They must not be surprised if they are tempted in different ways to surrender the truths of Christ's word recovered to them, and to abandon the place of separation from the corruptions of Thyatira and Sardis.

Further, the warning indicates that they are faced with the grave danger of not holding fast, and thus of losing their crown. It is not simply "a crown," that they are in danger of losing, but "thy crown"-that is, their own distinguishing crown. The distinction of the Philadelphians is, that they cherish the truths concerning Christ and the Church in a day when, on every hand, these truths are denied. Having returned to the apprehension and practice of the truths concerning Christ and the Church, their ever-present danger is, that they may surrender these truths and be drawn aside into the surrounding corruption, unreality, and self-sufficiency of Christendom. Hence the exhortation is, "Hold fast." Every effort of Satan will be made to lead the Philadelphian to give up what has been so blessedly revived to him. The enemy will gladly plead the help of saints, and the need of sinners, if by so doing he can get the Philadelphian to abandon what he has. He will argue, "There are a few saints in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and there are needy sinners in Laodicea who are poor, and blind, and naked. Go into Sardis to help those saints; go into Laodicea to reach those sinners." Nevertheless, to go back under any plea to that which the Lord condemns, is to abandon that which the Lord approves. All the seductions of the enemy are met by the Lord's warning words, "Hold fast." If the Philadelphian "holds fast," the Lord will doubtless open doors to help His people wherever they may be, and meet the need of sinners wherever found. Does not the exhortation to "hold fast" suggest that times of revival may be followed by times of declension in which many

may drift and lose their crown. Blessed indeed, to be a Philadelphian, but Philadelphia is no haven of refuge where saints can settle down, but rather a company blessed with the approval of Christ, and for this reason, the special object of the enemy's attacks, and hence there is the constant need to contend for the faith, and "hold fast" that which has been received.

(Vs. 12) In common with the other Churches there is in Philadelphia a promise to the overcomer. The mention of an overcomer might seem remarkable, seeing that in this Church the Lord finds nothing to condemn. There is, however, opposition to overcome, and the necessity of holding fast would imply overcoming the temptation to give up.

Very precious are the promises to the overcomer. The one who remains true to Christ in the dark days of the Church's history; who is content to remain in obscurity, with but a little strength, in the day when the Church is growing unto an holy temple in the Lord, will become a pillar in the Church when the temple of God is complete. If, in a day when the Christian profession is competing for the power and approval of the world, any are content with the secret approval of the Lord; if they keep His word when religious profession is making everything of man's word; if in such a day they set His Name above every name, then in the day of glory He will put upon them the name of His God, the name of the city of His God, and His own new Name. If they do not deny that Name in the day when men only profess the Name to dishonor it, they will wear His Name in the day of glory when all the world will have to bow the knee at the name of Jesus.

(Vs. 13). The address closes with the usual exhortation to the one that hath an ear to hear, to heed what the Spirit says to the Churches. There may be nothing to condemn in this Church, nevertheless, it is incumbent upon the Philadelphians to hear what the Spirit has to say to the other Churches as well as to themselves. If they are to have the mind of the Lord they must heed the message of the Lord to each of the Churches. No attention to what the Spirit has to say in one particular Assembly can absolve from responsibility to hear and act upon His ministry and administration in other Assemblies.

The Addresses to the Seven Churches, Laodicea: Revelation 3:14-22

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Rev. 3:14-22) In the address to Thyatira we have, under the figure of Jezebel, the prophetic announcement of the uprising of a great ecclesiastical system that would seek to rule the Christian profession. History plainly shows the fulfillment of this prophecy, in the development of the Papacy in the Middle Ages. Today this system still exists. In Sardis we see another ecclesiastical system which was formed by men as a protest against the Papal system; and though marked by outward orthodoxy, is characterized by spiritual death. This system also has its present-day existence.

Thus before men there are these two great ecclesiastical systems—the Papal system, including the Greek Church, finding its extreme expression in Rome; and the Protestant system embracing the National Churches and the Nonconformist sects. In the eyes of the world every professing Christian belongs to one system or the other.

In the address to Philadelphia we see a remnant of God's people that have the approval of the Lord, in separation from the corruptions of Thyatira and Sardis. Thus we see a state which exists under the eye of the Lord, but presents no distinct ecclesiastical existence before men.

When we come to the last Church we find, in contrast to Philadelphia, a state that is wholly abhorrent to the Lord, though like Philadelphia it does not appear before men as a definite ecclesiastical system apart from the Papacy and Protestantism.

Thus we conclude that before the world there are the two great ecclesiastical systems represented by Thyatira and Sardis. Before the Lord there is a remnant in Thyatira, a remnant in Sardis, a Philadelphian remnant apart from Thyatira and Sardis, and lastly the terrible condition, set forth by Laodicea, into which the great mass will fall who, apart from these remnants, form the Papal and Protestant systems.

(Vs. 14). The Lord presents Himself to Laodicea in a way that utterly condemns the condition of the Church; and yet is of the greatest encouragement to the overcomer. He is "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." As the Amen, He is the One in whom all the promises of God have been taken up and affirmed in all their bearings, to bring to pass every good, and overthrow every wrong, and eternally glorify God in so doing. As the Faithful Witness, He was ever loyal to the One who sent Him. He loved the Father, and came to do the Father's will. Whatever the cost to Himself, He never deviated from that will, and never flinched from carrying it out. In doing that will He proved Himself to be the beginning of the creation of God which, in all its vast extent, will be marked by the will of God.

In the perfection of His way as the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God, He eclipsed all others. He was fairer than the children of men. And yet alas! He who should have been exclusively before the Church as the One beyond compare, is the very One who is excluded by the Church of the Laodiceans, and treated with callous indifference. The Church was set to shine for Christ; to bear witness to the grace of God; and exhibit the qualities of the new creation. Alas! it has failed in all its responsibilities. It should have shone for Christ, in a dark world, by pointing to Him as the One in whom all the promises of God have their complete fulfillment—that He is the Yea and the Amen, and that every blessing that God has for man is found in Him. Then indeed, the Church was set in the world to be a faithful and true witness to the grace of God. Alas! so far from being a witness to grace, in the last stage of her history the great mass are strangers to grace, and even opposed to God.

Lastly, the Church should have been the "firstfruits of His creatures," exhibiting the fruits of new creation,—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance" (James 1:18; Gal. 5:22-23; 6:15). How little are these new creation fruits to be found in the professing Christian circle! Is not Christendom marked by hatred, misery, and war, rather than "love, joy, and peace"? Alas! is it not true, nothing on the face of the whole earth is so diametrically opposed to God as unconverted Christendom?

Thus we learn, in the way Christ presents Himself to the Church of Laodicea, the way in which the Church should have represented Christ before the world.

(Vss. 15-16). So absolutely has the Church failed in its witness for Christ, that, in the last stage, the Lord can find nothing to commend. All He finds is a state that is utterly nauseous to Him. He says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." The Lord sees a condition that has neither the coldness of death, as in Sardis, nor the warmth of devotion, as in Philadelphia. There is that which, in His sight, is more hopeless to man, and more dishonoring to Himself than the coldness of death; for the Lord can say, "I would thou wert cold or hot." He sums up this condition, in its last phase, in the solemn words, "Thou art lukewarm." What is this but indifference to Christ, and, what is always linked with indifference, toleration of evil? In the last phase of Christendom there are those who take the name of Christ, and make a profession of Christianity, but, when tested by the great question, "What think ye of Christ?" are found to be utterly indifferent to Him.

The improvement of man, the uplifting of the masses, the betterment of social conditions will deeply interest them, but the glad tidings concerning Christ, the interests of Christ, the people of Christ, awaken within them but a languid interest, and to Christ Himself, they are wholly indifferent. As long as people are sincere, charitable and respectable, the Laodicean cares not what they believe concerning Christ. His deity may be denied, and His perfect Manhood defamed; the Laodicean is quite indifferent. The atonement may be set aside, the inspired words of Christ denied, the coming of Christ made a matter for scoffing, and yet all is of the utmost indifference to the "broadminded," easy-going, lukewarm Laodicean.

Such a condition is absolutely nauseous to Christ. The Lord expresses His abhorrence by warning this Church that the end will be their final and complete rejection as a Church. He says, "I will spue thee out of My mouth."

(Vs. 17). There is, however, further condemnation, for, linked with indifference to Christ there is the most arrogant assumption and self-satisfaction. Laodicea says, "I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing." Though indifferent to Christ the Laodicean Church is full of herself and her claims. The Church that was left here to witness for Christ has fallen to such depths that it not only ceases to witness for Christ, but it commences to witness to itself. The Church ceases to speak of Christ, and talks about the Church. The Assembly is made much of, and Christ is belittled. The Assembly seeks to attract to herself and not Christ. It usurps the place of Christ by claiming to be the vessel of riches and grace. Christ is outside, and yet it can say, "I have need of nothing."

Such then is the condition of the Laodicean Church, indifferent to Christ, self-occupied, and self-satisfied; and yet withal utterly ignorant of its true condition before the Lord. "I know," the Lord can say, but, "Thou knowest not." In their own estimation, the Laodicean had need of nothing, in the sight of the Lord they needed everything, for He has to say, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

(Vs. 18). Having exposed their terrible condition, the Lord gives them counsel. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me"; words which show their need of Christ and that there is no blessing apart from Christ. They must come to Christ for true riches. What grace that invites, not simply sinners confessed, but these self-occupied, self-satisfied professors to come to Himself! Does it not blessedly set forth the attitude of grace that Christ still takes toward the Christless profession? They profess to have riches, so the Lord taking them up on their own ground, invites them to come and buy. The only cost will be the letting go of their own self-righteousness, for, after all, the positive blessings that the Lord has to dispense are without money and without price.

They are invited to buy "gold tried in the fire," speaking of divine righteousness secured through the judgment of the Cross; "white raiment," speaking of practical righteousness, that, so clothed the shame of their nakedness does not appear. Their lack of practical righteousness before men was a solemn proof of their lack of divine righteousness before God. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:15-20). Further, they need the eye salve that they may see, speaking of the anointing of the Spirit that enables us to see our need of Christ, as well as the perfection of His Person and work to meet our need, and to supply us with true wealth and suitability to the glory of God.

(Vs. 19). The Lord, however, is not content with speaking to the consciences of these lukewarm Laodiceans. He will seek to reach the heart of any true believer that may still be found in Laodicea. He says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." The Church had long since left first love; but the Lord never left His first love for the Church. No longer can He speak of their love, yet He can still speak of His love. It is not, however, the love of complacency, but a love that has to act in rebuke.

(Vs. 20). Further, the Lord lingers in grace at their door. He speaks to the conscience; He appeals to the heart; He stands at the door; He knocks at the door. There is the call to repentance; but there is no expectation that the mass will repent, for this last appeal is only to the individual. "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."

Such is the last stage of the Church's history on earth. That which was set to bear witness for Christ on earth, becomes a witness to its own wretchedness, and shuts Christ outside its door. In the condition of Laodicea, do we not see the full result of the first departure in Ephesus? The beginning of all departure was leaving first love to Christ; the end, total indifference to Christ in a Church that is well content to have Christ outside its door. The last stage of Christendom, that with calm indifference shuts the door on Christ, seems almost worse in its callousness than the last stage of Judaism that, in its hostility, nailed Christ to a Cross.

Even as Christ lingered over corrupt Judaism with tears, so He waits outside the door of Christendom with infinite patience, if perchance there is "any man" in the Christian profession that will open the door to Him. For the mass there is no hope; it is about to be spued out of His mouth; but until that solemn act of final rejection comes to pass, there is this loving invitation held out to the individual who will listen to the voice of Christ. If there is one whose conscience has been reached by the Lord's exposure of Christendom, who has been aroused by His warnings, who has listened to His counsel, and been touched by His love, let that one but open the door and, even at this last stage, Christ will come in to him, and sup with him and he shall sup with Christ. What is this but the sweet communion of first love? Does it not prove that in the last stage of the Church's history on earth, when judgment is about to fall upon the great mass of the profession, it is possible for the individual to be brought back to first love? The Lord does not speak of any recovery of public witness to Himself, but of secret communion with Himself.

(Vs. 21). To the overcomer there is the promise of sitting with Christ on His throne, even as Christ also has sat down with the Father in His throne. The one who overcomes the indifference of Laodicea and opens the door to Christ, in the day when the great mass have closed the door upon Christ, will enjoy, not only secret communion with Christ, in the day of His rejection, but will be associated with Christ in display in the day of His glory. Christ overcame a world that rejected the Father, and has sat down on His Father's throne; the one who overcomes a world that has rejected Christ will sit down with Christ on His throne.

(Vs. 22). The address closes with the appeal to the one with the hearing ear. Well for us to pay heed to what the Spirit says to the Church of Laodicea, for does it not set forth a condition that may develop even among the Philadelphians? But for the grace of God, the very light and privileges that are given, may lead to Laodicean self-complacency. May we have the needed grace to hear what the Spirit has to say to the Churches.

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