



# **The Visions of The Book of Revelation**

**Rev. Dr. Botros Botrosdief**

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May God be praised and His name highly exalted for all good things that come from Him and to Him and for Him!

***Soli Deo Gloria***- To God be Glory

**Botros**

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## Introducing Revelation

This book is based on a series of talks on the visions of the Book of Revelation at Mernda and Whittlesea Presbyterian Church. Each vision of this amazing book shows us many glimpses that will help us to get a balanced view, not to panic, not to fear, but to face the future calmly and with great hope.

To introduce the book of Revelation to the reader, it would seem best, at the start, to get the answer of four common questions people may ask.

### ***Q.1: Why Do We Read The Book of Revelation?***

**Firstly**, to focus on Jesus; who He is and what He is. Verse 1 in chapter 1 reads “*Revelation of Jesus Christ.*” He is the chief subject of the book. In chapters 1-3, Christ is seen as the exalted Eternal Lord ministering to the churches. In chapters 4-5, Christ is the glorified Lion/Lamb reigning on the throne. In chapters 6-19 we see that the course of all history rests in His hand. In chapters 20-22, He is the heavenly Bridegroom with His bride, in the New Heaven and in the New Earth.

**Secondly**, we read the book of Revelation to get the Blessings of God described in it. Verse 3 in chapter 1 reads “*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near*”. To be blessed, we must read, hear and keep what is written in this great book. Seven times blessings are given in this book (Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14).

**Thirdly**, we read this book to share the victory of Christ over Satan and his agents. The book of Revelation shows the conflict between God and Satan; the Lamb and the dragon; and the church and the world. It also shows us the conflict between those who marked on their foreheads with the name of the Living God, of the Father and of the Lamb, and those who are marked with the name of the beast. The book's perspective is that Christ has conquered already and that his people are meant to share in his victory. Through eyes of unbelief, Jesus and His Church are defeated in this world; but through eyes of faith, He and His people are the true victors.

## **Q2: *Why Was the Book Written?***

This book was written at a time when Christians in Asia were being persecuted because of their faith in Jesus as their Saviour, Messiah, and Eternal Lord.

Apostle John wrote to them in Chapter 1:9 saying *“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ”*.

The focus of the book is to give Christians hope and encouragement and to urge them to remain faithful to the end, because Jesus is the king of kings and the lord of lords. He is coming to Judge Satan and his followers and rewards His faithful people with the blessing of the New Heaven and of the New Earth.

### **Q3: How Do We Understand The Book of Revelation?**

The book of Revelation has a very special style of writing called *Apocalyptic* which means revealing the truth **through the use of symbols**.

The very first verse of the book reads “*Revelation of Jesus Christ*”, which means the unveiling of Jesus Christ; who He is and what He is.

Then the book is addressed to the seven churches in Asia and to those who have ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Verse 4 in chapter 1 reads “*John to the Seven Churches which are in Asia*”. At the end of the book verse 16 in chapter 22, reads: “*I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches*”.

**Jesus Christ** and **the churches** are the two keys in understanding this amazing book which can be summed up in this phrase, “*Revealing Jesus Christ to His Church*”.

The story of the book is revealing Jesus Christ: Who He is; What He has done for His Church; What He is doing now; and what He will do for her. The book of Revelation shows us the victory of the eternal Jesus, as King of kings and Lord of lords. The book ends with the glorious everlasting wedding of the Lamb of God to His bride when He comes in power and great glory, to dwell with her forever in the New Heaven and in the New Earth.

#### **Q.4: *Why is Revelation full of symbolism?***

John is writing in highly symbolic language about the suffering of the early Christians for their refusal to worship the emperor of Rome. John is telling of the overthrow of the Roman Empire. This would have been regarded by the authorities as seditious. Those who suffer for their faith in Christ understand the message of this book more than those who did not suffer for this faith. The book was written for those who are going through suffering.

We must be careful not to allow our imagination to run wild. Some symbols are obvious and explained: the seven stars (the ministers of the churches), the seven lambstands, (the seven churches) and the dragon, which stand for the devil (1:20; 4:5; 5:8; 12:9).

Others symbols are understood from Old Testament books. Nearly 300 references to the Old Testament are found in the book of Revelation (2:7; 17; 4:7). This means that symbols are to be understood not visualized; and that we must focus on what God has already revealed.

John could have written: “Rome is persecuting the church,” but instead he described it as a beast, spiritual code only understood by the Christians.

The Book of Revelation is the book of the throne. The message is that ***“The LAMB who was slain and rose again has conquered and all who trust Him are overcomers. No matter how dark the day, no matter how severe the opposition, God’s people can be VICTORIOUS”***.

# The Vision of The Glorious Christ

## Revelation 1

Years after Jesus' ascension back into heaven, the apostle John was arrested and sent into exile on the island of Patmos, suffering for the word of God. There, the Spirit of God took hold of him on the Lord's Day, on Sunday, and heard a great voice behind him. When he turned, he saw the Lord Jesus again, but in glorious vision. John describes Jesus in highly symbolic language. The description of Jesus in this vision is the only description of the Lord in the New Testament. The same Jesus who had walked and talked with John on earth, but is now glorified.

**This vision answers the question: Who is Jesus and what is He for His Church!?**

The Apostle John saw three things in this vision: **Firstly**, he saw seven golden lampstands. **Secondly**, his attention is caught by the person standing in their midst, "*One like a Son of man*". He describes him in highly symbolic language. **Thirdly**, the figure of the Son of man identifies himself through His Titles as Yahweh, Almighty God himself.

**The person, like a Son of man, identified the seven golden lampstands**, as the seven churches of Asia- present day Turkey. They were badly in need of hearing the voice of God. They were suffering from three basic problems: Jewish hostility, false teaching, and severe persecution from Satan and his allies. The Lord commanded John to write to them encouraging and assuring them that He was watching over them.

Apostle John also describes **the person standing in their midst** as “*One like a Son of man*”. In highly symbolic language, he writes, “*Dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance*” (Rev 1:12-16).

John describes two kinds of symbolism: Symbols of his function “***Dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest***”. That refers to His authority, and the glory of His presence. This is exactly what Isaiah saw, “*I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim... one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory!”*”(Isaiah 6:1-3).

John describes also **7 Symbols of his character** “His head, his eyes, his voice, his hand, his mouth, his feet and his face”. These symbols parallel “the Ancient of Days” in **Daniel chapter 7. Daniel says,** “*I saw in my vision by night, and behold ...the Ancient of Days ... His garment was white as snow, the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, and behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! His dominion is an*

*everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed”.*

These symbols tell us that Jesus is The LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, the Eternal king. How do we know that? The titles He gave to John are the same titles of God Yahweh, the Almighty God himself in the Old Testament.

**Thirdly:** the person like a Son of man identifies himself through His Titles as Yahweh Almighty God himself. He said *“I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. ... And I have the keys of Hades and of Death”.*

The Apostle John was frightened almost to death at this glimpse of the glorified Christ, but our Lord Jesus laid His right hand on him, saying *“Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. ... And I have the keys of Hades and of Death (Rev 1:17-18).*

John recognized that the same Jesus he knew was “Yahweh”, the “Almighty God Himself” (Rev 1:8). He is always there standing among His churches, and here today, watching over us.

The Lord commanded John to write to the Churches and the Apostle John wrote: *“Look, He is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen.”* The Lord said: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty”* (Rev 1:7-8).

The glimpses we are given of the Lord in this first vision of Revelation gives us the same comforting retreat for the churches of the first century and is available for us today. It is Reflection on the sovereign glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in remembrance of His loving death, His resurrection, His deity, and His glorious state as the First and the Last. It is He and He alone who holds the keys of death and hell. And *If God be for us, who can be against us and what shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (Rom. 8:31-39).

This is how John, the aged Apostle and criminal of the state of Rome on Patmos, was commissioned to write the Revelation. It was directly commanded by the unveiled, glorified Son of man, the Lord God almighty, the king of the universe, who is watching over us. His gentle touch over us says to each one of us, *“Do not be afraid, I am with you always to the end of the age”*.

The apostle John praises the Lord saying, *“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father- to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen (Rev 1:6)*

## Christ's Letters to the Seven Churches

The vision is now focused on what the glorious Eternal Christ has to say to the churches. In the seven brief letters to the churches, each letter has a familiar pattern. Firstly, a symbolic title of Christ **describes** an aspect of His character which that church needs to consider. Secondly, it **praises** the good in each church (but not in Laodicea). Thirdly, it **rebukes** them for their shortcomings, followed by **a call to repent** (but not Smyrna and Philadelphia). Finally, it advises each church **to hear** His voice, with **a promise** for the one who obeys His message.

But before we **listen to what the Lord has to say to** the seven churches, I want to mention what the seven churches are not. The seven churches are not representing seven periods of the church history as some may think; from Ephesus as the apostolic Church to Laodicea as the last church of today. Rather, they represent seven different kinds of church which were in existence in the first century, and they also represent all types of church today.

The glorious Christ unveiled Satan's three strategies to quench the Light of the Church to the world.

1. Satan uses persecution against the Church to silence the witnesses of the Church - 2:8-11.
2. He uses false religion or teaching to distort the truth of God's Word to deceive the world - 2:12-29.
3. Satan attempts to force the Church to have a morally compromised attitude to make her lukewarm.

***First: Satan's first strategy to quench the light of the Church through Persecution.***

From the first century until the third century, the Church suffered severe persecution from the state and from the Jews who rejected Jesus. The Jews reported to Romans false accusations against Christians which made their life so hard. Christians suffered not only financial poverty but also physical persecution as well.

Hear what Christ our Lord said to the persecuted Church: *“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write; these things say the First and the last, who was dead, and came to life. I know your works, tribulation, and poverty but you are rich; and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days”* (**Revelation 2: 8-11**)

The **symbolic** description of **Satan** in the book of Revelation showed him as **a dragon, who uses a scarlet woman**, sitting on *a scarlet beast, holding a cup in her hand and she is drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus* (Rev 17). **The Church is described** as a beautiful woman, clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. The dragon wages war against the Christian Church, because they keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus (Rev 12).

But the Lord, who walks among the churches, knows their afflictions and encourages them saying: *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death”* (2: 8-11).

Our Lord describes Himself to the church of Smyrna: as *“The first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.”* The Lord is affirming who He is to this church. Just as this church had suffered persecutions and poverty, our Lord is affirming to them that He also suffered poverty and a terrible death, but He came back to life.

In addressing the church in this manner, our Lord was emphasizing the victory that is found in His resurrection. Just as He told Martha at the tomb of Lazarus, *“I am the resurrection and the life”*. He is the one who holds the very life giving power. Without Him, no life can exist.

In our Christian walk, there are going to be times that the trials and sufferings, just seem to come one after the other. There are problems that seem too big for us to handle. Our God knows! None of our sufferings have gone unnoticed. Nothing has escaped His watchful eye. It should bless us and bring us comfort to realize that our God knows all about our suffering. He knows everything about us. He also is there to help us.

Our God knew how the Church of Smyrna suffered poverty and persecution. He said to them *“I know your poverty but you are rich.”* You may not have the things that hold value to this world, but you have spiritual richness - those things that count for God. He rebuked the church of Laodicea saying, *“Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; but you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked: I advise you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes*

*with eyesalve, that you may see.*” We need our eyes healed so that you can see what God counts as important.

Also, the Lord knows how the Church suffered persecution from the synagogue of Satan, ***“Those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”*** The Jews, who rejected Jesus to be their Saviour, reported to Romans false accusations against Christians and made their lives so hard. As a result, many were persecuted, and cast into prison. The persecution of the Christians had begun under Nero. It carried on for the next 250 years. The church suffered as a body, and the individual Christians suffered as well. Those who killed and persecuted the Christians thought they doing great service to God, but God said No, they are the Synagogue of Satan, serving Satan not me. How familiar does that sound today?

The Lord encouraged the suffering Church saying: *“Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: The devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days.”* One of the martyrs of the church of Smyrna was called Polycarp. He was a disciple of the Apostle John. When he was eighty-six years old, he was burned at the stake. As the smoke and flames began to engulf Polycarp, he sang praises to God. He obeyed our Lord’s command and was faithful to death.

Our Lord knows all about your troubles and trials and He has set a limited time on it. His very words are to you today, *“Be faithful, and fear not. I will give you the crown of life”*. The crown of life is not a reference to salvation by faithfulness. It is a reference to personal reward for faithfulness. *“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death”*.

No matter what you suffer through, no matter how hard the troubles and trials, no matter how difficult the opposition, there is a very firm fact. It is not forever, and God will have the last word. Notice that He said for ten days.

When God says the suffering is over, then it is over. When God says that Satan must stop, then Satan must stop. When God says that the time for peace has come, then you will have peace. We must never forget, God is still on the throne, and He is still in control.

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen*

***Secondly: Satan’s second strategy to quench the light of the Churches through False Teaching.***

The devil changes his tactics from direct physical persecution to attack the Christian Faith with false beliefs, and then he uses a third way to quench the light of the gospel by convincing people to have compromised lives; to go with the crowd if you want easy life (the church of Laodicea).

Some of the Christians in the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira were falling into false teaching. They were letting pagan beliefs and pagan behaviour influence them more than they realised.

The Lord said *“To the angel of **the church in Ephesus** write: you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate”*. *“To the angel of **the church in Pergamum** write; I have a few things against you, because you have there, those who hold **the doctrine of Balaam**, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols. Thus you also have those who hold **the doctrine of the Nicolaitans**, which thing I hate. Repent. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (2: 12-17) “To the angel of **the church in Thyatira** write; I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman **Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants ... and eat things sacrificed to idols. But hold fast what you have till I come. (2: 18-29).*

Three of churches had been infiltrated by false teaching. The churches of **Ephesus**, **Pergamum** and **Thyatira** were troubled by **Balaam**, **Nicolaitans** and **Jezebel** (symbolic names for satanic teaching and wickedness). You may have heard of Balaam’s donkey that spoke. You may have heard of Queen Jezebel who forced God’s people to worship pagan gods and wanted to kill the prophet Elijah, but who are the Nicolaitans?

If we know the story of Balaam, and Queen Jezebel, we will know who the Nicolaitans are. Balaam was called by Balak king of Moab, who was against God’s people, to curse Israel to help him to win a battle, offering Balaam a lot of money to do so. Every time Balaam tried to curse God’s people, the Lord turned the curse into a blessing.

Balaam thought of evil ways to curse Israel. He taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to

eat things sacrificed to idols. How did he do that? In the book of Numbers chapters 22-24, the story tells us how the Moabite women began to attract the men of Israel, and men of Israel began to get interested in their pagan religion. They worshipped their idols, breaking God's first commandments "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me*" (Exodus 20:2-3).

In the same way, Queen Jezebel forced God's people to worship Baal. Elijah challenged them to know who the real God was. "*How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.*" (1 Kings 18:21)

That is what happened here in the churches of Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira. The church members were being encouraged to adopt beliefs and practices which were common in the non-Christian society around them. Here we see the group of the Nicolaitans, operating. Their teaching could be stated simply as, "we must not be narrow-minded; we must not lose our relationships with non-Christians. If we don't accept them, we will be forced out of business!" They were saying; there was nothing wrong in accepting beliefs and practices of non-Christians, because it would not affect our souls and our spirit. They misused the teaching of the Apostle Paul about the greatness of the grace of God to forgive sinners who believe in Jesus and repent, "*where sin increased, grace increased all the more*" (Romans 5:20).

The result of these teachings, was that the Christians of these churches, while they still worshiped Jesus, were forced under pressure of these false teachers from within the church

itself, to follow the crowd. They became mixed up with idol worship, and with lower moral standards.

**Thirdly: Satan's third strategy** to quench the light of the Church is that, he wants us to lose our first love and be lukewarm so that we are compromised with the world.

**The Lord said to the church of the Laodicea** *“These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. You are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I have need of nothing’ and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (3:14-22)*

Satan wants us to be Christians on Sunday, but do what everyone else is doing from Monday to Saturday. The worldly wisdom says; compromise that you can live with everyone. Our Western society is post-Christian and secular- what does it look like for Christians to live out their faith in this context; to be salt and light in the workplace, and to share their faith with their colleagues?

But we need to remember that our Lord sees His Church as seven golden lampstands, and He is always in their midst, and watching over them.

# The Vision of the Throne

## Revelation 4

Once again, Apostle John hears the voice like a trumpet, not behind him as in the first vision, but from above where he saw a door open in heaven. John saw the throne room of God. In the first vision in Revelation, we saw the glorious Christ standing among the seven lampstands. The vision describes who Jesus is and what he is for His Church! We saw Him speaking to his Church, praising the good works and rebuking the bad deeds, caused by Satan's strategy to quench her light, through persecution, false teaching and a compromised life. We saw also how the Glorious Christ assured his Church that He was staying with her, strengthening her so that her light shone brightly in the darkness, with promises of rewards to those who obey His voice and overcome.

The vision of the throne in Revelation chapter 4 and 5 **has two scenes; firstly, God's Throne and secondly, a Scroll in his right hand is given to the Lion Lamb.** This vision answers the question: Will the Church of Christ survive? Are political forces stronger than the Church of Christ? Are satanic forces able to eliminate the Church of Christ?

In this vision, we are invited to join the Apostle John to look beyond what we see. John is told to come up in his spirit into the presence of God to look at things from heaven's eyes. What do we see as we join him there?

Apostle John saw the throne room of God, the symbol of absolute power. It is the supreme headquarters and the control room of the whole universe. What he sees there leaves him in

no doubt about the final outcome: the victory of Christ and His Church over all satanic forces!

In this vision, we are given a big view of God. This is what the Bible means by magnifying the Lord - getting a bigger view of God, using a magnifying glass for our faith and seeing God is much greater than we thought he was.

God is on the throne. What does it mean that God is on the throne? What does God's throne speak of?

In modern time, we know what it is called of "constitutional kingdom"; where the queen or a king has very little power. In this kind of kingdom, it is not easy to get the real meaning of the word throne. But there was another kind of kingdom; it was called a traditional kingdom. In traditional, ancient kingdoms, the king or the queen had absolute power.

There are two important things about the throne. **Firstly**, the throne is the highest authority in the land. It is a place of power and also a place of judgement, a place from which orders are issued and to which appeals are made. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 8:4 "*Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"*"

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "*I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.*" (Genesis 41:41-44) This is what the throne means; absolute power.

**Secondly**, God's throne speaks at least of three things; (i) of majesty and authority; (ii) of mercy and of judgement, and (iii) of music and worship.

God's throne speaks of majesty and absolute authority. God is splendid in majesty, as the precious stones of jasper and ruby indicate (4:3). *“Around the throne are twenty four other thrones seated on them were twenty- four elders. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle”*.

We need to remember, that Revelation is full of highly symbolic language and we cannot here attempt to interpret every detail, but the overall impression is important. This is a symbolic picture speaking to us about God's majesty and His absolute authority.

God's throne speaks of His great mercy as, *“A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne”* indicates. *“From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder”* and these speak of God's judgement.

God's throne speaks also of the sound of music. The vision stimulates our worship. In John's day, it looked as if the Roman Empire had absolute power. But our Lord Jesus revealed to John and to us that is not so. The Almighty God is on the throne and He will have the last word. The angels around the throne never cease to sing, always giving glory to God, for what He is and what He does. What a glorious vision!

Listen to the sound of music, do not get lost in the details of the vision, but rather, see the whole picture. Here we have a worship song. Angels around the throne sing about what God is, *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”* And they also sing about what God does, *“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*

And these are the two great themes about God. We worship God for what He is; He is Holy, Mighty and Eternal. We worship God also for creating us and for redeeming us (we will see this song in chapter 5). We worship God, because He is our Creator and also our Redeemer. He is worthy to receive honour, because of everything he has made, and because it was by his will that we existed.

This vision is telling us that this universe is not the result of chance but of choice; the universe is not in man’s hand, it is in God’s hand; it is His will alone that allows anything to happen.

Friends; are you discouraged or depressed by what you see on earth and around you? Listen, the voice of Christ our Lord, the One who is sitting on the throne, is telling us “Come up here” and look beyond what you see on earth, look from Heaven’s eyes and see God’s throne. He is in control. He has the whole universe on His hand. This is reality: this is what must take place. Say to unbelief, ‘be gone’. This is what John saw in his vision, and this is how we need to think about our great God.

Sometimes, when we look above, there is no apparent sight of the throne of God. The sky seems closed off and yet it is not closed off for us. By faith, we know God and His rule. God's Word assures us that there is a purpose being worked out. God is in control. Christ our Lord is returning. Goodness will finally triumph. We are on the winning side!

Therefore, let us join the angels of heaven and praise Him *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who was, and is, and is to come...You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*

# The Vision of The Lion/Lamb

## Revelation 5

In the first scene, we have seen at the vision of the heavenly throne - God is on the throne, Revelation 4. Now we are going to see the second scene in that vision; a Scroll with seven seals in Revelation 5, and only Jesus Christ, in the symbol of Lion and Lamb is worthy to open it.

Let us not forget that the Churches of the first century were small and struggling, the might of Rome seemed invincible, and the power of darkness seemed to be closing in on them. Yet they had no need of fear as at the centre of the universe stands a throne. God is in control of everything. Everything John saw in his vision was related to the throne.

**Now our attention is directed from the throne to the Scroll and to the Lion/Lamb who is worthy to open it.**

The Lion and the Lamb are symbolic pictures of our Lord Jesus Christ that speak of three things about Him; **who He is; what he did and how he did it?**

**At the Throne Room,** Apostle John saw in the right hand of the One who sat on the throne, a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And he saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, *“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”* But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. Apostle John wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to him, *“Do not weep! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

**Now comes the great surprise. John looks for a lion but he saw a Lamb** *“looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

Then John looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying, *“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”* Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: *“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!”* The four living creatures said, *“Amen,”* and the elders fell down and worshiped”.

**Who Jesus is?** The symbols of Lion/Lamb speak of Jesus as the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, and the God who appeared in the flesh. **He is the son of man and He is the son of God.**

**What did He do?** He redeemed us and won the battle over Satan, sin and death. Our Lord Jesus Christ has conquered sin (Hebrews 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:56) and death (2 Timothy 1:10, 1 Corinthians 15:25, 56) and Satan (Hebrews 2:14-15; Colossians 2:15). And he did it when he took the role of a Lamb and died for us. Hebrews 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* The Bible declares in 2 Timothy 1:10 that "Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel".

**How did He do it? Through His death** *"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

**How did David kill Goliath?** He used Goliath's sword that Goliath thought that he would use it to destroy David. In the same way, the Bible explained how our Lord Jesus overcomes Satan by his death in Hebrews 2:14-15 *"Since the children have flesh and blood, Jesus too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death"*.

Also in Colossians 2:15 we read, *"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"*.

As the Lion/Lamb, He prevailed through the temptation in the wilderness, through the garden of Gethsemane, through the pain of crucifixion and finally over death by his resurrection.

John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God..." and now all of heaven cries, "Worthy is the Lamb". This verse summarizes the Old and New Testaments. The Lamb of God was slain and was crucified and through His blood, all of creation is now going to be released from the curse of sin.

**Christ, the Lamb is worthy to open the Scroll, and execute God's plan of Human destiny.** When He took the scroll, all creation reacts at that moment, as God allowed John in a supernatural way, to see the beasts, birds and trees join in heaven's praise, giving honour to the Lamb, because their hope in Him was to liberate them from the curse of man's sin!

At the centre of God's throne, is the slain Lamb, a symbol of weakness. Yet it represents the cross of Jesus which speaks of the power of His redeeming love, His victory over sin, death and Satan. He is worthy to open the scroll and control history.

**What is this scroll with its writing on both sides and its seven seals?** The scroll represents the decrees of God concerning what has happened from the time of the early Church until the coming of our Lord and the end of this world, with God creating the new heaven and the new earth.

The scroll is telling us that the Almighty God has a plan for this universe. A blueprint has to be put into operation. The Lion/Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, has opened its seven seals, and He is executing God's plan and putting it into operation.

**The Scroll contains** a glimpse of the Eternal Glory of the redeemed and a glimpse of damnation for those who persecuted God's people and rejected His love.

**If there is no one found who is worthy to open the scroll, then there will be no good news of the gospel**, no heaven and new earth, no eternal life, but only weeps without Christ. But the loving God is telling us Do Not Weep, Behold Your Saviour, the Lion/Lamb, worship and love Him, because He loves you first and He is the only one who makes your future bright.

Look at Jesus the Lamb and "*Do not weep*", behold your great Redeemer, the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And if we wonder "Why don't other people worship Jesus as we do?" The answer, "They don't know him yet." That's why Christians should proclaim His great love to all, "Behold the lamb of God who loves the world".

The Lamb is exalted, because He has purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. He will bring them in time, and heaven will be populated with redeemed people from all the earth.

**Today, let us worship Christ, the Lamb our Redeemer!** And let us be a part of the redeemed forces of the earth who proclaim His name!

- We worship Him for His glory, but even more because his glory is mingled with humility;
- we worship Him for His majesty, but even more because it is a majesty in meekness;

- We worship Him because of His great love, but even more because He gave his life for us to save us.
- and we worship Him because He could still the storm, but even more because He refused to use that power to get Himself down from the cross.

Let us exalt Him saying, *“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased us for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and we will reign on the earth.”*

## Opening The Seven Seals

In Revelation chapter 6 and 7, we are invited to join the Apostle John in the Heavenly Throne room, to watch our great Redeemer opening the Seven Seals Scroll, one by one. In this vision, our Lord Jesus reveals to us what is happening between his first and second coming. In His great mercy, He has told us the bad news and the good news, so that when we experience or see bad things happen, we should not be disturbed as we know the best is yet to be. That is why we have been given the book of Revelation.

The seven seals begin with four coloured horses; white, red, black and pale, symbols of four different things.

**The white horse and crown** stand for the victory of Christ. Apostle John says: *“I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seal and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer”* (6:1-2).

Throughout the book of Revelation white stands for righteousness; crowns and conquest belong to Christ; and in Revelation 19:11-15 the rider on a white horse is named “Faithful and True,” “The Word of God” and even “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

The Lamb has triumphed over Satan, sin and death. He is ascended, and He is crowned. Under the leadership of victorious Christ, the Church must take heart! He encourages us to preach the Gospel in His name, and we should expect victory over the gates of Hell, because Christ is the Conqueror, and He will bring us into heaven, safe and victorious all who believed in him from *“all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues and they will stand before the throne and before Him, clothed with white robes, and will cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”(7:9-17)*

**Then comes three more horses, Red, Black and Pale** following the white horse. John says: *“When He opened **the second seal**, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see” **Another horse, fiery red**, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. When He opened **the third seal**, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, **a black horse**, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.” When He opened **the fourth seal**, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, **a pale horse**. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, **to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth”** (6:3-8)*

It is not difficult to see what these three horses stand for. They indicate, war, famine and death. These tragedies were foretold by our Lord in Matthew 24 *“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places”*.

These disasters are common to every generation and could describe any period from the time of the early Church to our time. We as Christians are not to be surprised by these disasters; because our Lord said, *“See that you are not troubled; for all these things must happen, but the end is not yet”*(Mark 13:7).

**When the Fifth seal is opened,** John saw *“under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed”*.

**The souls of the martyrs** represent all persecuted Christians, past, present and in the future until the coming of our Lord. Christians have always had to face opposition from Satan and his allies, and our Lord warned us in Matthew 24, *“They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake...But he who endures to the end shall be saved”*.

The cry of the martyrs, ‘*judge*’ and ‘*avenge*’, is a call for justice to be done (not for personal revenge), and indeed justice will be done in due course according to God’s promise.

**Then comes the sixth seal**, that describes in highly symbolic language, a glimpse of the Day of wrath and what will happen at the second coming of Christ, regarding the unbelievers. It will be a day of absolute terror and great fear for unbelievers, no matter what their social standing is, slaves or kings.

John said: *“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”*”

**What is happening to God’s people on that terrible day?** Before the terrifying winds of judgment are released upon unbelievers on the day of wrath, John is given a wonderful picture of the absolute security of two groups of God’s people- the believers from Jewish people and the believers

from Gentiles. What is God going to do? He commands his angels to seal his people and take all the redeemed to heaven, in what we call **the rapture** (Revelation 7).

The first group is a limited number of 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. The number *one hundred and forty four thousand* is **not a literal number**, but a symbolic number representing all who believed in Christ from the Jewish people. John said: *“Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed”* (7:1-8).

The second group is a huge, unnumbered multitude from all nations, languages and tribes. John said, *“I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”* ... Then one of the elders asked me, *“These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”* I answered, *“Sir, you know.”* And he said, *“These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, “they are*

*before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water. 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes'.*"

How did they get out of the troubles into glory? The Lamb of God who was slain for them is their Shepherd and He looks after them. He shelters them and takes them safely into His glory.

There are **two very important things** in the message of the Seven Seal Scroll: - (i) The purpose of God is sure. Our Lord Jesus is in control of everything. He is executing God's eternal plan. Nothing can stop him. (ii) The people of God are safe. **The main emphasis is not the sufferings and the troubles we see on earth, but on the safety of those who are washed in the blood of Jesus.** This gives us comfort, and when we see bad things happen, our heart may not be troubled. Our Lord said "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" (John 16:33; Matt 28:18-20).

Let nothing trouble us; we are in the winning side. We are safe and secure in the hands of God who loves us. Amen!

## The Vision of The Seven Trumpets

We finished chapter seven, where we looked at the sealing of God's people- those who were washed by the blood of the Lamb of God and received the grace of His salvation. We know now that the purpose of the seal of the Living God on them is to protect them and bring them into the eternal glory.

Now we look at the vision of the seven trumpets in Revelation chapters **8 and 9**. We are looking at God's dealing with those who did not receive the seal of God, those who reject God's grace of salvation and those who continue to persecute God's people.

We are now moving into weird and complicated symbolism, but let us make no mistake, the symbols in Revelation are to be understood, not visualized. Look to its result and you will understand its meaning.

### **Q: What is the vision of the Seven Trumpets all about?**

1. Trumpets are blown as a warning. *“Who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head”* (Ezekiel 33:3-4)

2. Trumpets blowing announces the coming Day of The Lord *“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming”* (Joel 2:1).

3. Trumpets are answers for the prayers of the saints who were slain. *“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel, who had a*

*golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake”.*

4. They are a divine warning intended to bring people to repentance. Unfortunately they repented not, *“The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk”*

5. The trumpets speak of the justice of God and the mercy of God.

**The first four trumpets describe damage to nature; they tell us about disasters against nature (8:6-13).**

**The first trumpet** tells us about scorched earth, with trees and grass burned up. *“The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.*

**The second trumpet** tells us about economic chaos, the destroyed ships. *“The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed”.*

**The third trumpet** speaks of human tragedy with a shortage of fresh water. *“The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water, the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.*

**The fourth trumpet, the fifth and sixth trumpets describe damage to people,** *“The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes” (9:1-5).*

*“The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates... A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.”*

Let us remember that the symbols of seven trumpets are not to be taken literally, but they are much more likely to be figurative, describing God's warning to people and calling them to repentance, before the coming of Judgement Day.

These trumpets speak of two things: the justice of God and the mercy of God. The justice is clear: these trumpets tell us that man who does evil, rejecting God and persecuting His Church will one day pay for it. As the farmer said, "*God does not settle his accounts every October, but he does settle them*".

The trumpets also tell us of the mercy of God. They may sound like terrible events, and they are, but God's will is to save people, so He uses the trumpets as a warning of His final wrath on the great judgment day. The trumpets are used to serve as a wakeup call to unbelievers to repentance.

Sometimes we wonder: why does God not just destroy evil men once and be done with it? The answer is that He wants to save them. He does not want anybody to perish. He does not take any pleasure in the death of the wicked. So God gives warning after warning, he is pleading with men. If He destroys a third of mankind, will the other two-thirds at least begin to seek Him? That is the picture here in these six trumpets. The saddest thing about unbelievers is that they did not repent, even after going through all these divine warning (9:20-21).

**The seventh trumpet** tells us that *the mystery of God will be accomplished*, and the second coming of Christ will happen, "*In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets*" (Rev. 10:6, 7).

**Q: What is the mystery of God that will be accomplished in the days of the seventh trumpet?** The *seventh trumpet* is the last trumpet, and the mystery is the gathering of the whole church of God- those who passed away, and those who are still alive at the second coming.

This mystery is mentioned also in I Corinthians 15 “*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed... then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Read also **I Thessalonians 4**).

At the 7th trumpet, Our Lord Jesus rules and reigns forevermore, He says, “*Yes, I am coming soon*”. Let us join John and say together, “*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus*”.

## The Vision of the Little Scroll

The Apostle John saw an angel telling him to come and take a *little scroll* and eat it and said to him “*It will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth ... And you must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.*” Then John said: “*And I took the little scroll out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter*” (Revelations 10:10)

We may ask; why would John be instructed to eat the scroll? What does it mean?

Eating the scroll is a picture of being ready to speak and tell God’s message to others. This scene of eating a scroll is familiar in the Old Testament. Jeremiah and Ezekiel had both similar experiences with eating a scroll (Jer 15:16; Eze 3:1-3). God said to Ezekiel “*Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.*” Ezekiel said; *I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey*” (Ezekiel 2:9–3:3)

In His great mercy, God gave John a message to the church for the period before the second coming of the Lord. What should the church be doing until the second coming? When the seventh trumpets shall sound, which is called the last trumpet of the Lord, the redeemed will receive the blessing and glory of the eternal life and the unbelievers will receive their final doom.

But in God’s mercy and love for all people, He commissioned the Church to continue to preach the gospel to

all nations even in the midst of a world marked by tyranny, persecution and chaos upon one third of nature and a third of men. What we should do during the period is in the symbolism of the six seals, six trumpets and six vials. What should we do?

The Little scroll in Revelation chapter 10 tells us the task of the Church remains the same. John and all the people of God, receive the “little scroll” as to recommission them again to preach the Gospel to all nations.

When John eats the scroll he also finds it as sweet as honey in his mouth, but after he had eaten the scroll his stomach was made sour.

The little scroll is the Word of God. It is the message of the gospel of salvation. It is at once sweet and bitter-sweet because to the believer it brings the message of forgiveness and the blessing of the eternal life. Yet it is not pleasant to proclaim a message of doom for the unbeliever; it is not sweet to tell people about hell, wrath and judgement. It is, however, an inevitable part of the message the church must proclaim.

John was recommissioned to take the gospel to all nations, but was at the same time, warned that the sweetness of the message of salvation would be followed by the bitterness of judgment for those who rejected God’s Word.

The bitterness comes because of the judgments that are still to come upon many peoples and nations and languages and kings.

The promises of the Word of God are sweet to taste. There should be nothing sweeter to us than reading God’s promises. It should be our delight. The word of God is described as

sweet. *“More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb”* (Psalm 19:10).

The Word of God really tastes sweet in the mouth. We all like to hear and read the part where the Scripture says, *“cast all your cares on God – He will take care of you”* or *“those who wait upon the Lord will mount up on wings like eagles”*.

God’s Word is compared to food: bread, milk, meat, and honey (Matt 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Cor 3:1-2; Ps 119:103).

God will not force us to eat it. He hands it to us and we must take it and receive it. God’s Word contains sweet promises and assurances.

We love to hear how our sins are forgiven and that death is not where everything ends. The promise of living eternally without any danger or sickness makes us all want to jump up and down with joy!

But, oh, how the sweet turns to bitter in our stomachs when we learn that God’s Word demands us to do something; to change our ways and become Christ-like in word and deed!

God’s word also contains bitter warnings and prophecies of terrible judgment.

The message of the gospel has two faces- life to those who believe it and death to those who reject it. We should not water down the message of the Gospel to please those who do not like it (2 Cor 2:14-17; 2 Tim 4:1-5).

God said to Ezekiel, *“But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' Whoever will listen let them listen,*

*and whoever will refuse let them refuse; for they are a rebellious people” (Ezekiel 3:27).*

Are you waiting for the seventh trumpet? Then do your work until the coming of the Lord. The merciful God has told us of the future glory of the redeemed and doom of the unbelievers. We know how this will happen at the coming of the Lord. *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1 Thess 4:16-18).*

We should eat the book and preach it. God is counting on us; let us labour for the master until He comes.

## The Vision of The Two Witnesses

We are now in Revelation chapter 11, that tells us about three important things that must happen before the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the Second Coming of our Lord.

1. Measuring the Temple.
2. Opposition to the two witnesses of the Church.
3. The world will give glory to God at the Second coming of our Lord Jesus.

### Measuring The Temple

*“I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months”.*

The “**temple**” and the “**city of Jerusalem**” must not be taken in literal way, because when Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation they both were in ruins. It is best to take it as symbolic. The temple represents, God’s people, the Church as Apostle Paul says *“The house of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and structure of the truth... You are the temple of God”* (1 Tim 3:15;1Cor 3:16). The great city stands for those outside the temple, which means the world who lives in sin and persecutes God’s people, as John indicates, *“the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified”* (Rev 11:8).

So what does it mean to “*measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship there*”?

Those who are inside the temple are numbered, sanctified, sealed and safe, they are known to God and under His care. But this does not mean that there are no troubles and martyrdoms; there are. But the Church remains intact throughout this limited time of trouble of 42 months.

Forty-two months is equivalent to 1260 days or 3 ½ years, or time and times and half a time. This signifies a short time of persecution and reminds us of the persecution of God’s people by Jezebel the evil queen for three years, when she forced them to worship idols and she killed those who dared to worship God. The Apostle John used this symbolic number to refer to the suffering of the Church who continues to preach the gospel in spite of her troubles. Our Lord said to us, “*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

In the midst of trouble and persecution of God’s people; God is watching over His Church. The Church is sealed and kept by the power of God for eternal life as Peter says,

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Peter 1:3-5)

**Now, the two witnesses; who are they? What is their mission?**

*“And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”*

Some say, they are Moses and Elijah, others say Elijah and Enoch, and many others speculate. But let the Word of God speak for itself. The Bible says ***“They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth”***.

The olive tree and the lampstand are representing the Church, the temple of God which consists of the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles. Our Lord said the lampstand is the Church (Revelation 1-3).

How does the lampstand get its light? Zechariah 4:1-6 & 11-14 tells us that an angel appeared in a vision to Zechariah and asked him: *“What do you see?”* He answered *“I see a gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven channels to the lamps. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.”* Then Zechariah asked the angel, *“What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?”* *“What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?”* The angel said *“Do you not know what these are?”* *“No, my lord,”* Zechariah said. So the angel said, *“These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth.”*

The light of the lampstand comes from the olive tree, which signifies spiritual Israel as God says to Israel, *“You are my witnesses says the Lord”* (Isaiah 43:10). The Apostle Paul

confirms that and states in Romans 9, that we the Gentile believers are grafted in Israel; the olive tree shares in the nourishing sap from the olive root, we do not support the root, but the root supports us (Romans 11:16-18).

The two become one body which is the Church *“you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”* (Eph 2:11-22).

So what is the mission of the two witnesses? The Church should preach the sweetness and bitterness of the Gospel of Christ. The Apostle John, in highly symbolic language, says *“If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and torments those who live on the earth and devours their enemies”* (Rev 11:5 & 10).

Fire coming from the mouth is a symbol used for the fiery powerful message of repentance and the wrath of God. The image was used of Jeremiah’s preaching. God said to him, *“I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes”* (Jer 5:14). That was the only **“fire”** that came out of his mouth. He *“tormented”* Judah with his spiritually sharp words, which his hearers could not bear.

### **Opposition and silencing of the Church.**

The nearer we get to the second coming of Christ, the more we preach His Word, and the more opposition there will be to silence the witnesses of the Church. We see Satan’s war

against the Church in the symbol of a “*beast that comes up from the Abyss*” which attacks, overpower and kills the two witnesses.

The Church’s voice will appear to have been silenced. Look at this symbolism. The great city who rejected the Lord, is Sodom and Egypt and will appear to have gained the victory. The silence of the Church is seen in the killing of the two witnesses. The vision says: “*Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth*”.

No longer will the consciences of unbelievers be troubled by the preaching of the Church (v10). The celebrations of the unbelievers begin as we see in our time with the new laws that go against the Word of God. They think that the Church is dead! But then comes the turning of the table.

At this point; just before the seventh trumpet sounds, something unusual will happen. God sees that the world has rejected His message of warning, just as Pharaoh had hardened his heart and refused to repent. The defeat of the Church is short-lived. It is heaven that has the last word, as God acts on behalf of his own Church in victorious and vindicating power.

**The martyred silenced church will be resurrected** by God (its testimony revived), causing terror in the watching world, and it finally will be exalted to heaven (its rapture). This is the rapture of the Church where the Lord will appear in the clouds, accompanied by a severe earthquake which spreads terror among the survivors.

**The world will give glory to God** by submission on that Great Day, but it will be too late for them. The Bible says at this point, *“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever... your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”*

This will be the happiest day ever, when we see our Lord and king coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him. He will take us to the eternal glory, where there will be no more pain, no more suffering, and no more death. We are looking for the day of rapture, as the apostle Peter says: *“As you look forward to the day of the Lord and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”* (2 Peter 3:12-13)

Until this occurs, may the light of the gospel of Christ shine through us to the world, telling others the good news of salvation until He comes. Amen, come Lord Jesus (28:19-20).

## **The Vision of the Woman and The Dragon**

In Revelation 12, the Apostle John saw a great vision in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. A red dragon stood before her ready to devour her son. Her son however, was caught up to God and to his throne. John then saw the dragon cast out from Heaven to earth. Heaven sang with great joy and celebration of this victory. The dragon became very angry and went off to make war against the woman and against the rest of her children—those who keep the commandments of God and bear their witness to Jesus.

### **Who do the woman, the son and the dragon represent?**

This vision is a marvellous condensation of the gospel story; from the birth of Christ to his ascension, and on to the time of the persecution, and protection and victory of His Church.

**Who is the woman described as being “*clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head twelve stars*”?** The woman represents God’s people, as in Joseph’s dream (Genesis 37:9-10). From them, Christ was born. As the Bible says, “*Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, and forever praised! Amen*” (Rom 9:5).

The woman is not a symbol of all of physical Israel **but of the true Israel**, in particular those who are waiting the coming of Christ. The Bible called those who were awaiting the birth of Christ and believed Him, “*the Israel of God*”.

From them, the Church of Jerusalem was established and is called “*Jerusalem above*,” and “the mother of us all” (Galatians 6:16; 4:26, Hebrews 12:22-23). This woman, the Church of Christ is described as “*a holy nation, His own special people*” (1 Peter 2:9).

The woman is described as **giving birth to a “*Son who was caught up to God and His throne and He will rule all nations with a rod of iron*”**. **Who is this son?** The language here makes it clear that Jesus is the “*Son*,” who was born into this nation. Jesus is the One who is prophesied to judge and strike the nations “*And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron*” (Rev 19:15). He is also the One who, after His resurrection, was taken up in a cloud to heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

**Who is the “*great, fiery red dragon*”** described as having drawn “*a third of the stars of heaven*” and standing “*before the woman to devour her Child*”?

**This dragon is clearly identified as Satan:** “*the great dragon was cast out, the serpent of old, which is called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world*” (verse 9). He is the one who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden and this reminds us of the age long “*enmity*” between the seeds of the serpent and the seeds of the woman (Gen 3:15). He is the cause of all trouble in the world. He is behind the suffering of God’s people. The Bible, in Isaiah 14:13-14, explains that Satan had been involved in a rebellion against God in which he attempted to exalt his “*throne above the stars of God*” and “*be like the Most High*”.

Revelation 12:3-17 is a brief history of Satan’s efforts to lead a third of the angels, “*a third of the stars of heaven*,” in a

rebellion against God, attempting to have Christ killed as a child (Matthew 2). He works to deceive the entire world and persecute God's people. **What does the dragon try to do?**

In the vision, we see the dragon is doing three things:

1. Making war against Christ.
2. Making war against the woman –the mother Church of Jerusalem.
3. Making war against her offspring -The churches in Damascus, Asia, in Rome and everywhere they are.

### **The dragon tried to destroy Jesus.**

In Revelation 12:4, we read that “*the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Son.*” This appears to be a historical reference to King Herod's effort to destroy Jesus as a young child by ordering the death of all male children from two years old and under who lived in and around Bethlehem (Matt 2:13-18). An angel, however, warned Joseph to flee to Egypt with his wife and Jesus, to keep him from being destroyed (verse 13).

Satan did not give up attempting to destroy Jesus. He roused the people against Jesus's ministry over three and half years. Finally, the devil tried to kill him on the cross. Tragedy strikes. The Messiah is dead. Darkness sweeps in, the dragon has won .... But no, he hasn't!

Revelation 12:5 says, “*And the child was caught up to God and to his throne*”. The triumphant Resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ is what we read about here.

Christ's resurrection and ascension decisively defeated the devil's plans to destroy the Messiah. The Cross completed his

saving work. Resurrection confirmed it. The Ascension celebrated it. The dragon had been frustrated.

### **What is the effect of the cross and Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus on the Satanic forces?**

The dragon was cast out from heaven to earth and has no more authority to accuse the believers of Jesus. Here in a beautiful symbolic language we see, *“War broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was cast down to the earth and his angels with him.”* This vision echoes the words of our Lord Jesus before his crucifixion, *“Now shall the rule of this world be cast out; and I when I am lifted up from the earth (in crucifixion/ascension) will draw all men to myself”* (John 12:31-32).

Christ’s victory and his people’s victory arise from the one source, the shedding of the Lamb’s blood. By His blood they are released from their sins. This is the foundation of our assurance. John heard a loud voice in heaven say, *“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they did not love their lives unto the death”*.

After Satan was cast out from heaven, what did he do to the Church? The devil was cast down to the earth through the redemptive work of Christ. Finding himself limited to the earth, he persecuted the mother Church of Jerusalem.

*“When the dragon saw that he had been cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman ...From his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the flood. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. The river- like flood from the dragon’s mouth symbolizes the persecution of the Church. Psalm 124 is good illustration of the persecution of God’s people. Acts 8 describes the persecution of the Church of Jerusalem “a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and many were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.*

**When Satan failed to destroy the Church in Jerusalem, what did he do?** He did make war against her offspring; the churches in Damascus, Asia, in Rome and everywhere they were. *“Then the dragon went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold to the testimony of Jesus”.*

Acts 9 says, *“Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest<sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem”.*

The Roman Empire and the fanatical Jews persecuted the Church in Asia where the seven churches were, in Rome and

everywhere they were. But thanks be to God, He is keeping His promise to build the Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church.

Satan hates you and me and will do everything possible to keep us from loving God our Redeemer. The Apostle Peter advised us and said, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8).

### **How long will the persecution of the Church last?**

Although there was persecution of the Church from the earliest days of the New Testament Church, until now, God won't allow Satan to destroy His people. The time is limited by the symbolic number of “*one thousand two hundred and sixty days*” (verse 6).

**1260 days.** This refers to Elijah period again (Rev 11:3), a short time, not forever. Elijah went through a period of 3½ years which is equal to 1260 days, being fed and maintained in the wilderness by a Raven and then by the woman of Seraph. Likewise, the Church was and will be maintained and protected by God Himself. Like Elijah, who boldly witnessed to the Word of God before King Ahab, so the Church will continue to be the Lampstand in the world.

Just as 7,000 were kept safe through the three and half years of Queen Jezebel's persecution, likewise, the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. If God is with us, who can be against us?

## The Vision of The Two Beasts

In Revelation 12, we saw Satan, in the symbol of a dragon, trying to destroy Christ. The victorious Christ, however, is seated on the throne of God, and the enraged Satan has been cast down to earth and attempts to destroy the mother Church in Jerusalem and her offspring. God rescues the church and it spreads to Judea, Samaria, Damascus, Asia Minor and Rome. In Revelation 13, we see the two forces Satan uses to attack the offspring of the mother Church, that is, the Church of Christ.

***Q: What forces did & does the Dragon use in his war against the churches in the world?***

Satan uses two beasts against the Church; the first comes out of the **sea** and the second comes from the **land**.

***Q: What do the two “beasts” represent?***

The first beast of the sea is a symbol of the political, persecuting power of the Roman Empire against the early Christians. It is also referring to any power that persecutes the Church today.

The second beast of the land has “*two horns like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon*” (v11). He looks and sounds good, but he is truly evil. This beast symbolizes the religious pagan power that works against Christian Faith. This beast of the earth is referred to any “false religious teaching” or any “ideology” in our days too, that deceives the world away from the God of the Bible and His salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

The dragon uses these two beasts as the enemy of the Cross in his war against Christ and his Church.

**Q: How was this war expressed first, and how do we see it operating in the world today?**

Let us see four scenes of this war:

The first scene of this war was expressed in Jerusalem. The dragon tried to destroy Christ, and through Judas Iscariot and Jewish religious leaders, they betrayed him and delivered him to the Roman governor. When the High priest and leaders of the Jewish people were faced with the choice between Caesar and Christ, they shouted: “*We have no king but Caesar!*” (John 19:15). In this moment, Jewish leaders changed their allegiance from the God of Israel to the Caesar of Rome. They bowed down to the Roman beast of the sea and in turn became allied with the beast of the land against the Church. Jesus was crucified, and died, but He rose and ascended to the throne of God.

The second scene of satanic war was still occurring in Jerusalem. Jewish religious leaders, along with Roman officials planned persecution against the early Church as it is shown in the book of Acts (13:6-11). Saul persecuted the Church until his conversion, and he himself suffered from his fellow Jews and their “plots” against him (20:19), describing them as “wild beasts” (1 Cor 15:32).

The third scene of satanic war against the Church in different places around Jerusalem as Satan tried to destroy the offspring of the mother Church of Jerusalem. God rescued His people and the Christian Church spread to Judea, Samaria, Damascus, Asia Minor, Rome and to the end of earth (at that time, the Roman Empire).

The fourth scene of satanic war against the Church occurred in Asia Minor and Rome. All the Apostles, except John, along with hundreds of thousands of Christians were killed as the result of that war. This continued until the conversion of Constantine, the Roman emperor. He ended the persecution of Christians in A.D. 312.

**Q: Why did Romans officials persecute the early Christians?**

In general, Christians were persecuted for their refusal to worship the gods of Rome or take part in sacrifices which were expected of those living in the Roman Empire. By 80-95 AD, persecution was also for their refusal to worship the emperor Domitian who claimed to be both Lord and God. The “Land Beast”, Roman Pagan priests sought to force Christians to worship “the Sea Beast”, the Roman Emperor, and refusal to do so was punishable by death.

In the Roman Empire, deity was ascribed to the emperor and coins bore his divine names. Nero was ascribed as “*Lord and Saviour*”. Domitian demanded to be called “*our Lord and our God.*” In every city in Asia Minor, a great statue of Domitian was erected in the pagan temples, and people were directed to worship his image and receive his mark in order to buy or sell.

It was the role of the land beast, the pagan Romans priests, to make all people of Asia Minor worship the first beast of the sea, the image of the Roman Emperor, to show their loyalty to Rome. The land beast uses two methods to make all people worship the image of the Emperor.

In the first method, the land beast used magical tricks. Priests made fire come down from heaven and somehow

caused the image of the emperor to speak (13:13-15). **Secondly**, financial sanctions were applied to those who were unwilling to participate in the pagan worship of the emperor image.

We may recall the story in Daniel 3, and how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow to the image of the statue of Nebuchadnezzar (13:7-8, 14-15, 18). The early Christians were tempted to compromise because the Romans officials were saying to them, *“You do not have to die for your faith, show a little respect to our emperor as Lord- It is only a form of words. Just say the word “Caesar is god”. Just add one more god beside your God, in this way no harm will come to you. Do not make your life hard”*.

Christians refused to do so, saying *“Jesus is only our Lord and our God”*. All other people did worship the beast, *“whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”*. Christians fail to show the mark of the beast and they were severely persecuted and suffered financially (Hebrews 10:32-39)

### **Q: What then does the mark of the beast means?**

We do not have to look for a literal ‘mark’ on the right hand or forehead to identify followers of the beast. It is when people’s actions (the right hand) and people’s thinking (forehead) are controlled by any kind of belief that deny Christ and his salvation, that you could say that Satan has stamped his mark on their lives.

Those who yielded to worship the emperor image and participated in the sacrifices of the pagan temple were identified by a “mark” of the beast upon their right hand, or upon their forehead. Possibly they received a certificate or

token to be able to buy or sell. By way of contrast, those who did not receive the mark and remained faithful to Christ were unable to buy or sell; they suffered hardship in their lives.

**Q: What does the number 666 of the beast means?**

Attempts are often made to solve the identification of the number 666. In his book on Revelation, *“More Than Conquerors”*, William Hendrickson says *“Number six means missing the mark or failure. Seven means perfection. The Number of the beast is 666, that is, failure upon failure upon failure”*.

**In Revelation 13:9-10 & 18, there are two calls upon us in the time of trouble and persecution of any kind** *“If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints... This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man”*. The call upon us is not for speculation, but for ‘patient endurance and faithfulness’, regardless of what trouble we may be in. Satan must fail, in his war against us, and we are victorious over him by the blood of the lamb who said, *“the gates of hell will not prevail against my Church”*. *“Those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ ... They overcame the dragon by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death”* (Revelation 12:11, 17).

In brief, the Book of Revelation is the story that tells us what the Church of Christ did and how it overcome Satan and his two beasts. It is the story of the New Jerusalem from above which is the Church, the beautiful bride of Christ and how she overcomes evil through suffering. As the Bride of the

Lamb, who was slain and redeemed and protected his Church, let us trust Him, hold our anchor in our Rock who keeps our soul steadfast and sure until He comes and takes us home.

## **THE SEAL OF GOD ON THE 144,000**

The scene in Revelation 14 is the assurance to all believers in Christ, that God cares for them and He will take them to glory. The Apostle John saw some of them; in the symbolic number of 144,000. The question is, who are they and why is their number 144,000?

They are the martyrs who died in the Lord, and suffered the pain of persecution and were killed because they identified themselves with Christ and refused to receive the mark of the beast. In verse 14, Apostle John says; *“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”*

The number of 144,000 is a symbolic number which means a complete number of all the martyrs throughout the history of the Church on earth. In Revelation 6, the Apostle John says; *“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of **(Jewish Christians)** those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, **until the full number of their fellow servants, (Gentile Christians)** their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.”*

So here in this vision, we catch a glimpse of the Christians martyrs in heaven. Are they down-hearted? Are they sad that their lives were cut short? No, they are singing their heads off!

They now have a new song, “the Redemption Song” that even the angels of heaven cannot share. *“And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth”* (14:2-3)

There are four things said about them: (i) they were sealed on their foreheads; (ii) they were redeemed; (iii) they were pure in their worship, and (iv) they were faithful to Christ to the point of death.

### **1. The 144,000 are sealed on their foreheads, not with the mark of the beast, but with the seal of God**

*“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads”* (v1)

Some have interpreted the mark of the beast as an actual tattoo of 666 or a microchip injected into the hand or the forehead. Others think it might be connected to a credit card, health card or bar code. **So what is the mark of the beast?** It is not literal ‘mark’ on right hand or forehead. It is a symbol of spiritual reality, in John’s time, to the coming of the Lord.

**The mark is identification to whom or what you belong to.** It is when people’s actions (the right hand) and people’s thinking (forehead) are controlled by a kind of belief that denies Christ and his salvation. This is to say that Satan has stamped his mark on their lives.

On the Christians' foreheads, God has stamped His seal. God's seal is not a physical seal or 'mark' on our foreheads, but it indicates that we belong to God and we believe His Word. It is when our deeds (the right hand) and our mind (foreheads) are directed and guided by God's Word, and we believed in the Lamb of God who revealed the Father's love for us and we receive Him as our Saviour and Lord. This is to say, our God and Lamb has stamped his seal, his name on our lives.

In 2 Cor 1:22, the Apostle Paul says, "*God has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*". And in Ephesians 1:13; 4:30, "*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*", "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*".

## **2. The 144,000 are redeemed**

Two times in this vision, the 144,000 are identified as redeemed, "*They had been redeemed from the earth. They were purchased from among mankind*" (vv3-4) that is to say, they are safe for eternity. Praise the Lord.

"Who are they, and where did they come from?" We have the answer in Revelation 7:13-17 "*These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The Lamb will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water. 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'*"

### **3. The 144,000 are pure in their worship**

The term, *“They have not defiled themselves with women”*, does not mean that marriage is evil, because it is not. Marriage is holy (Heb13:4). It merely indicates that these Christians martyrs kept themselves from the pagan system of worship. They did not participate in sacrifices to idols, and did not worship the image of the beast. In the Bible, adultery is picture of idolatry (Ex 34:15, James 4:4). These Christian martyrs lived without compromise, they did not worship God with Caesar, but they worshiped God alone.

### **4. The 144,000 are faithful to the Lamb who purchased them.**

*“They follow the Lamb wherever he goes... No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless”*

At the time of John, God’s call to the believers was *“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown”* Rev 2.

While most of people bowed down to the image of the “beast”, the 144,000 were faithful to the One and only true God. While others saved their necks by lying and denying Christ and his salvation, the 144,000 kept their integrity and confessed Jesus as their Saviour and Only Lord. Even to point of death by sword, burning at the stake or being thrown to the wild beasts, they remained faithful.

These Christian martyrs are the “firstfruits” of the beginning of the big and great harvest which is yet to come at the second coming of Christ.

This vision also has a more general application for us today. If we are sealed with the name of the Father and of the Lamb, we too are redeemed, and will be safe for eternity.

One day we will stand with them before the throne of God. One day our sorrows will come to an end and we will sing joyful songs for ever to our beloved Redeemer. One day, we too will leave this world. We will come out of the great tribulation because we have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb of God who sits on the throne will shelter us with his presence. ‘Never again will we hunger; never again will we thirst. The Lamb will be our shepherd, ‘he will lead us to springs of living water. ‘And God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.’

Let us join the Apostle Peter praising God and say: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”*.

May the God of all grace, who called us to his eternal glory in Christ, help us in every kind of suffering we go through, for, in just a little while, He himself will restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

## The Vision of the Three Angels

Revelation 14 tells of the vision of three angels flying in heaven and telling important messages to the world. They are not literal angels; rather, they symbolize God's people, the Church, who proclaim His gospel to the world.

### **Q 1: What does the vision of the three angels mean?**

It is God's last message of love to the world. It simply means, to the very last minute, to the last trumpet, our merciful God will give people an opportunity to respond to the preaching of the gospel. Even during the persecution of His Church and the confusion of satanic false beliefs, there will still be opportunity for people to turn to God.

The first Angel calls the world to worship God the Creator and receive His Eternal Gospel of love; because the hour of judgment is near, *"I saw an angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev 14:6-7)*

Paul and Barnabas did the same calling to the Greeks to, *"Turn from these worthless things -idol worship- to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them" (Acts 14:15).*

The Second Angel speaks of the judgment of Babylon - the fate of Rome as it happened to old Babylon. He said, *"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great."* This echoes what

Isaiah 21:9 says, *“Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!”*

This was good news for the early persecuted Christians, as it is for us today. Persecution is going to vanish. The false beliefs will not last forever. Our Lord said, *“Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up”* (Matthew 15:13).

The third Angel calls us to remain faithful to Jesus and reject the mark of the Beast, *“If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury... They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever. There will be no rest ... for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name. This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.”*

So the vision of the three angels speaks of **one message**; the eternal gospel, which can be seen like a coin with two sides: one positive- the blessing of receiving the seal of God and the other negative - the eternal judgment of receiving the mark of the beast.

In addition to these two marks of Revelation, the Old Testament mentioned another three marks;

- (1) The mark of Cain in Genesis 4,
- (2) The mark of the Passover Lamb in Exodus 12, and

- (3) The mark of those who mourn over sins of Jerusalem in Ezekiel chapter 9.

**Q: What was the mark that God put on Cain?**

After Cain killed his brother Abel, God said to Cain, “*You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.*” Cain cried to God, “*My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me*”, but God in his mercy put a mark on Cain so that no one would kill him” (Genesis 4).

Some speculate that the mark was a black scar, or two horns on his forehead to scare people. But our focus should be on God’s promise that He would not allow people to punish Cain. God in his mercy protected Cain from harm.

**Q: What was the mark of the Passover lamb?**

We are all familiar with this mark and we remember that God said to His people “*The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt*”. God redeemed his people and freed them from their slavery.

In the same way God has put his mark of redemption on us and we are free from condemnation, “*For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us.*” (1 Cor 5:7)

**Q: What was the mark of those who mourn over the sins of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9)**

Ezekiel's vision speaks of God's sparing of a remnant during a time of destruction of Jerusalem in Ezekiel's own day. Ezekiel saw a man clothed in white linen who had a writer's kit containing a horn of ink at his side. The Lord said to him, "*Go through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.*"

That mark was on the foreheads of godly people who "mourn and cry" over those who sinned against the Lord and worshiped idols. Those Godly people cried out to God to intervene. God allowed the Babylonians to come and punished those who worshiped idols but spared His Godly people.

God encouraged and comforted them as He promised by his prophet Isaiah, "*comfort those who mourn in Zion*" and still God is keeping his promise to his Godly people today as our Lord Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted*".

Let us take heart as well as intercede for others, praying to God, "*Your kingdom come.*"

Now back to the two important marks in the book of Revelation; the mark of the living God and the mark of Satan the beast. The Apostle John also saw visions of God's people being marked with the name of God, the Father and of the Lamb on their foreheads. We saw two groups in the symbolic number of, 144,000- the Christian Jews (Rev 7), and 144,000- the Gentile Christians (Rev 14). The Apostle John saw them

together in another vision as one “*great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb*” because “*they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They enjoy his presence and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes*”.

God’s seal is telling us and assuring the believers of God’s care and His protection; we are safe for eternity. In contrast, God warns all people of the world not to receive the mark of the beast and He states, “*If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury.*”

Let us remind ourselves of the difference between the mark of God and mark of Satan. The mark of Satan is not a 666 tattooed, or chip under the skin, nor a credit card, or Sunday Services and many speculations. It is denying God’s Word and believing satanic false beliefs which can summed up in three things: (i) worshiping idols as God; (ii) rejecting God’s Love and His salvation in Christ and (iii) denying God the Creator and His existence.

God’s seal is not a physical seal on our foreheads. It indicates that we belong to God and we believed His Word. It is when our deeds (the right hand) and our mind (foreheads) are directed and guided by God’s Word.

In the last book of the Old Testament we have a beautiful illustration between those who worship God and those who do not. The wicked said, “*certainly evildoers prosper and*

*blessed, even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.”* But those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name. *“On the day when I act,”* says the Lord Almighty, *“they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not. “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,”* says the Lord Almighty. *“Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves* says the Lord Almighty” (Malachi 3 &4)

Throughout the book of Revelation, the two camps are contrasted. Satan tries his best to deceive all people of the earth, including God’s people (Matthew 24:24). Satan uses the two forces, the two beasts, which are the persecution and false beliefs to lead the world astray.

Everyone in the world has a chance to choose between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the beast- Satan's kingdom. But Thank God, who has chosen us in Christ and put His seal on us. He has sealed us with His Spirit, providing us Salvation, blessing, victory over the beast, and protection from harm and of the coming judgement. Blessed be His name forever and forever! Amen.

## The Vision of the Harvest of the Earth

We saw the vision of three flying angels that tells of the eternal gospel and announcing that Judgment is a sure thing and it is coming, and the followers of the beast will suffer God's eternal wrath. But the followers of the Lamb, who have the seal of the Living God, will enjoy rest with great joy forever and ever.

Now, we are looking how God will execute His judgment in the vision of the Son of Man sitting on a cloud and coming to harvest the earth. Two pictures of harvests are in this vision: the wheat harvest and the grape harvest. This is just a glimpse of judgment on the Last Day (Revelation 14:14-20)

Let us see the first picture- the wheat harvest. The Apostle John said; *"I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple (God's presence) and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe" ... and the earth was harvested"*(14-16).

The wheat harvest symbolizes the gathering/rapture of God's people- the redeemed of all the history of mankind, when the Last trumpet shall sound and the Lord comes with the cloud of heaven.

Who is the Son of man? Why is He sitting on a white cloud? Why does He have a sharp sickle in his hand? Why is the command from the temple is given to him to gather the harvest of the earth?

There is no doubt, the one like "the Son of Man", is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Apostle John saw Him in the first vision of the book of Revelation 1:12-18, '**standing** among the seven lampstands, exalted and glorious'. Now John saw him again but with "***crown of gold on his head and seated on a white cloud***" (Rev 14:14). This symbolizes his glorious coming as the King and the Judge of all earth as He said. "*All the nations will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory*" (Matthew 24:30). The Bible says in Psalm 104:3, "*He makes the clouds his chariot*" (Ps 104:3). And in Isaiah 19:1-2, "*The LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear*".

As He ascended into heaven on a cloud, He is coming again on a cloud too (Acts 1:9-11). But this time He is coming with ***a sharp sickle*** in his hand. **Why?** Because, He is coming to judge the earth as He said, "*At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn*". The Apostle John also saw a glimpse of His coming as Judge and said, "*Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen*" (1:7).

Q: Why does the angel who comes out from God's presence command the "Son of Man", "***Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe***"? Our Lord Jesus said: "*The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son ... No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*" (John 5:22; Mark 13:32; Acts 10:42; 17:31). So the angel as God's messenger, comes

out of God's dwelling place and commands the Son of Man to harvest the earth.

In this picture of wheat harvest, our Lord Jesus Christ is coming with glory and power to gather/rapture His people from the beginning of time to the end of time.

The second picture in this vision is of the grape harvest, symbolizing God's wrath of judgment upon all unbelievers in all the history of mankind.

John saw: *“Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had **charge of the fire**, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.” The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into **the great winepress of God’s wrath**. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 200 miles-322 kms (17-20)”*.

In the Ancient World, people picked grapes and dumped them into a vat. The workers would step into the vat, and trample the grapes. The grape juice would escape through holes at the bottom and would be channelled into big containers.

The **Grape harvest** is a picture of God's judgment upon all unbelievers. It is called *“**the great winepress of God’s wrath**”*. Instead of grapes, it is unbelievers. Instead of workers, it is Jesus and His angels. Instead of a vat, it is the winepress of God's wrath. Instead of juice, it is blood. What a horrible picture of judgment.

In this picture of judgment, we see the angel of fire calls the angel who has a sharp sickle to throw the grapes into the winepress of God's wrath outside the Holy City and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a long distance of 1,600 stadia = 200 miles=322 kms!!! Why?

The winepress of God's wrath outside the city, shows that those who ignore God's love have no share in God's eternal blessing of the heavenly city. They will suffer God's wrath for all eternity outside the holy city. Our Lord said in the last chapter of the Bible, "*Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to go through the gates into the city. **Outside** is everyone who loves and practices falsehood*" (Rev 22:14-15).

The weeds must be separated from the wheat; the good fish must be separated from the bad. Our Lord said, "*Collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn*". "*The fishermen collect the good fish in baskets, but throw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matt 13).

The Bible tells us of two great Judgments; the flood, and the fire. The flood was fulfilled at the time of Noah, but judgment of fire is about to come at the coming of Christ.

The Apostle Peter showed us the two judgments in his second letter chapter 3:5-7 &10, "*By God's word the heavens*

*came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was overflowed with water, and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly ... the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and everything in it shall be burned up”.*

The coming of the Lord will be **the Day of fire**, but we may ask, *How will the Redeemed be saved in the day of fire?*

As Noah and his family in the Ark went up above the Flood, so the redeemed are to be “caught up” and away from the fearful fire of God’s wrath upon the wicked. The Apostle Paul said, “*God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed”* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). He also said in 1Thess 4:16-18, “*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are*

*left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”*

So by the resurrection and the rapture, we will be saved from the coming wrath and this is our satisfying comfort.

Our Lord explained clearly what will happen to the followers of God and the follower of Satan in his parable of the wheat and the weeds as he said, *“The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Matt 13: 40-42).

Our Loving Redeemer is standing with us, leading us to overcome the dragon. He guarantees our security for eternity. In the heavenly city we will sing praises to Him forever.

As we enjoy His love, waiting for His glorious coming, let us seek the salvation of others, praying *“Lord your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom, power and glory forever and ever Amen.”*

## The Vision of the Crystal Sea

*“I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev 15:1-8).*

**Q: What is the significance of this vision?** Who are those people who are standing beside the crystal sea? Why are they singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb?

Twice in the book of Revelation, the Crystal Sea is mentioned near the throne of God - in Revelation 4:5-6 and here in Revelation 15. In Revelation 4, we read, *“In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. And in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal”*.

And in Revelation 15, we see two groups of people before the throne and around the Crystal Sea who *“held harps given them by God and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb”*. Here we see the significance of the vision of the glassy Sea.

The vision of the glassy sea answers three important questions. Firstly, what happened to the Christians who

refused to worship the emperor Nero and later the emperor Domitian - some of whom were killed and some of whom died by natural death? Secondly, what happened to God's people before Christ and those who came after Christ? And thirdly, what happened and is going to happen to those who refused to worship God and chose to worship idols?

Here in the vision of the glassy sea, we see the answer. God's judgement- symbolized by the Last Seven Plagues, on all unbelievers (Revelation 15: 1 & 5-8) while God's people are kept safe. Their place is before the throne of God and around the glassy Sea (15:2-4).

Firstly, we see two groups of God's people before the throne of God who "*held harps given them by God and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb*". Who are they? And why did they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb?

From the words of the song they sing, we have a picture of all of God's Redeemed people- the believers of both the Old and the New Testament.

The double title of the song is to make clear the difference between the two great events, the Exodus from Egypt and The Cross of Christ- the Exodus from sin.

The song of Moses and the song of the Lamb is a double title of one song, or we can say it is one song composed of two verses with a chorus. The first verse talks about the crossing of the Red Sea, and the second verse talks about the Cross of Jesus.

In the first exodus, Moses led Israel as they sang to God and rejoiced in His salvation from Egypt and their victory over Pharaoh and his army.

In the second exodus, Christ the Lamb won the victory for the believers over Satan, sin, and death, and leads them by His Spirit to enjoy this victory.

Like the Israelites after the crossing of the Red Sea, who sang “*the song of Moses, the servant of God*” (Exod 15:1-3), celebrating the triumph of God over Egypt and its powerful army, Christians too celebrate the victory of Christ over Satan, sin and death. This victory has been won by His death on the cross for us and by the faithful witness of his followers. They will be given very special harps to sing the “song of the Lamb.”

So around the glassy sea and before the throne of God, we see all of God’s redeemed people of both the Old Testament and God’s redeemed people of the New Testament.

We see that God’s salvation brought under Moses, forms the type for the greater Salvation brought by Christ the Lamb of God, the Saviour of mankind.

Around the glassy sea, we see all God’s people who had conquered the evil forces of Satan, and his allies, standing around the heavenly crystal sea with harps in their hands, praising God.

The Crystal Sea also highlights and reflects our struggle against the forces of evil which is not an easy one. We, as

God's people, must be loyal and continue to be faithful to worship Him alone.

The song reflects God's justice and His mercy. He does not want to destroy the nations but to convert them, "*all nations shall come and worship before God*" (15:4). Those who accept Him shall stand before him and sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

Those who reject Him shall suffer the final judgment. We shall see glimpses of it in the next vision of the Last Seven Plagues. God's judgement, symbolized by the *Last Seven Plagues*, on all unbelievers, is certain. God's people, however, are kept safe and their place will be forever before the throne of God and around the glassy Sea.

Let us praise the Lord for His great love and continue praying for others, that God open their eyes to see His love and receive His salvation in Christ.

We are looking to that day when we stand around the glassy sea, and sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. There will be no more sea of trouble and violent storms, but rather a crystal sea of blessings; smooth like "glass", giving the impression of stillness. No more trouble!

The human mind is too limited to appreciate all the truths of the spiritual realm. We are assured through the Word of God, that we will see the river of life, a symbol of goodness and blessing. The Psalmist says in Psalm 46, "*There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God*" (v. 4).

The last vision of Revelation tells us of the glorious future of the Redeemed, where we will enjoy "*a new heaven and a*

*new earth, and there was no longer any sea". God's redeemed people will look like "the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And we will hear a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among his people and he will dwell with them. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" These words are trustworthy and true" (Revelation 21:1-5).*

## **The Vision of The Seven Bowls**

*“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. (Revelation 15 & 16)*

This vision, described as the Last seven Plagues, that bring someone’s life to an end, then to Judgement. In this vision, we see how God judges the world when they refuse the last call of repentance.

Suppose that on a dark, rainy, stormy night you were driving your car along the highway. Suddenly, seven red lights loomed up out of the darkness from police cars, across the road in front of you. Would you stop? Of course you would! Red lights signal emergency, danger and disaster.

In the vision of the Last Seven Plagues in Revelation 16, God has stretched seven brilliant red lights across the road to Eternity. He is saying, to the world that ignores His love, despises His Word and persecutes His people “Stop! Think of what you doing! Repent! This is the Last Call before the Judgment Day”

With the seven last plagues, God is giving His last warning. For those who heed His warnings, He pronounces a blessing upon them. This is because God is loving, forgiving, caring, kind, patient and gracious beyond description. Unbelievers often try God’s patience and ignore His love. God draws lines however, and the unrepentant world ignores it. God drew a line once in Egypt, centuries ago, and sent ten

devastating plagues upon the Egyptians. The 7 Bowls are parallels with the 10 plagues on Egypt.

God always draws a line, again and again, in every generation. The purpose of these plagues that smite the unbelievers, is to clearly reveal the escape God has made possible to everyone who may listen.

In general, God's Judgment on Unbelievers in the Book of Revelation is pictured in 3 sets of 7. These judgments are revealed in 7 seals, announced in 7 trumpets and executed by 7 bowls. If we ask why God's judgment falls upon the unbelievers, we see that it because they persecuted God's people, rejected God's love, and did not repent of their sin.

The connection between the three is not chronological but logical, (first one happens in history, then the next, and finally the bowl series). God warns unbelievers in the midst of these tribulations. As they resist, the plagues intensify. If they continue resisting it, it will ultimately be too late.

God's Judgment, pictured in all 3 sets of 7 in Revelation, has its foundation in the Old Testament. God says, "*If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions **seven times over**, as your sins deserve*" (Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24 & 28).

**Q: What is the purpose of the Seven Bowls Vision?**

***1. It speaks of God's justice and His wrath upon the world that persecute His People- Revelation 16: 5-7.***

2. *It speaks of the divine Last warning intended to bring people to repentance - Revelation 16:9-10*
3. *It speaks of God's warning to His people who are tempted to conform to the world, to watch and be ready for His coming. (16: 15)*

The vision of the Seven Bowls speaks of God's justice and His wrath upon the world that persecute His People. *"Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve" And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments" Rev 16: 5-7.*

The vision of the seven bowls speaks of the divine Last warning intended to bring people to repentance.

*"They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done"*

The vision of the seven bowls speaks of God's warning to His people who are tempted to conform to the world, to watch and be ready for His coming (Rev.16: 15).

In the midst of darkness and confusion and satanic deceiving of unbelievers, God is calling His Church to wake up and be ready for His coming, *"Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed."*

God longs for repentance and as long as history continues, God seeks repentance. Some people however refuse to change, no matter what God might do to influence them. They *"blasphemed the God of Heaven ... and repented not of their deeds"* (Rev. 16:10,11,21)

Acts of punishment and judgment, like the plagues, are so foreign to God's nature that the Bible calls them in Isaiah 28:21 *"His strange work ... His strange act."* He has *"no pleasure in the death of the wicked"* (Eze. 33:11). On the other hand, He is not soft on sin *"and will not at all acquit the wicked"* (Nahum 1:3).

Let us have a general look at these seven plagues; The first four plagues, incurable diseases, sea disasters, calamities on inland rivers and drought and scorching, remind us of the plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7-11). In their context those plagues preceded God's act of deliverance for His people.

What might for some be catastrophe that brings them to the judgment of God, will for others simply be the gateway to life with Christ that lies beyond the grave.

The darkness, the 5th plague, is poured out on the throne of the beast's kingdom. When the world ignores God's values, they are lost in darkness, and doomed.

The sixth plague is not to be taken literally, but more likely to be figurative, describing an evil invasion from the East; the demonic spirits that gathered the world of unbelievers against God - the battle of Armageddon. It is not literal, but spiritual. We are in the realm of spiritual vision, not modern photo-journalism.

When the unrepentant world stands against God, sooner or later they sign their own death warrant. The final plague sweeps away time and history. Everything that has been constructed out of rebellion against God is destroyed.

Most of John's references to God's wrath refer to the fall of Babylon, the Roman Empire (16:19). The catastrophe that John is seeing is a social and political catastrophe, not a natural one (as in 6:12-17). Afterwards, its victims are still there to blaspheme (16:21)

To sum up the vision of the 7 bowls, we say that the vision makes it clear how extremely important it is to avoid receiving the mark of the beast. The wrath of God is for those who receive the mark of the beast (Rev. 16:2). Everyone will receive one of two marks. To receive God's mark is to be saved. To receive the mark of the beast is to receive the plagues and be lost. This is a solemn, solemn thought. No wonder Revelation says so much about these two signs or marks. Lack of repentance brings judgment. Turning from sin

brings refreshing, renewal and increasing intimacy with God. Let us continue to bless the Lord for His great mercy and grace toward us. He is our God and His mercy endures forever.

## **The Vision of the War Frogs of Armageddon**

The Apostle John, on the Island of Patmos, saw many visions intended to comfort and prepare the churches in what would soon take place and continue until the second coming of Christ. In Revelation 16: 12-16, we are looking at a vision of the three frogs of Armageddon that came out of the mouths of a three beasts *“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty”*.

**This vision speaks of satanic deception upon unbelievers and persecution against Christians,** which took place during the time of the Roman Empire. This is still happening today and is going to intensify before the second coming of our Lord.

Many ask, *what is Armageddon?* How is the Armageddon vision to be interpreted? Is it literally, a military war that will be waged in the Middle East? Or is it a spiritual and social

attitude against God's people? What do the three frogs stand for?

The vision of war frogs of Armageddon has become a subject of popular curiosity and speculation. We must never forget that the Apostle John is seeing a vision.

**We should not imagine that, at some stage in the future and before the day of the second coming of Christ, all the armies of the world will set out with guns, tanks and rockets, either to attack Heaven or Israel.**

**It is much more to do with spiritual, social attitudes rather than military actions. It is rebellion against God, rejecting His love and persecuting His people.**

**Armageddon** is connected to the ongoing war against the Church and it will intensify until the Day of the coming of the Lord. When Satan turns his full wrath upon the church, because he knows that he has but a short time, he will find himself crushed by the appearance of the glorious Christ and cast into the lake of fire. On that glorious day, at the end of the age, our Lord will judge the world, raise the dead and make all things new.

The battle of Armageddon has to do with the on-going war between the dragon and his allies and Christ and his church. The final outcome is never in doubt. For when it appears as though Satan will overcome the church, our Lord will return and destroy the dragon and his allies, casting them all in to the lake of fire where they will be tormented forever and ever.

Now let us look at the symbols of this vision, three frogs, three beasts and the drying up of the Euphrates River.

**Q: Why frogs? What do the three frogs stand for?**

In the vision, the three frogs weren't literal frogs, but rather, *“three evil spirits that looked like frogs. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.... to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon”* (Rev. 16:13-16).

**Frogs** were the last plague the Egyptians magicians were able to duplicate. The next plague God sent upon Egypt, the magicians were not able to copy. They told Pharaoh, it was the finger of God. **The symbolic meaning is that frogs are associated with the deceit of Satan.** The three frogs - the spirits of devils - symbolize **satanic deceptive teachings** that lead the whole world astray (Rev. 16:14).

This deception is also pictured by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1, *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”*

In the vision, we see the three evil spirits that looked like the frogs came out from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the first beast that come out from the sea, and from the mouth of the second beast who came out from the land. Here Satan uses two forces; (i) the political power to persecute Christians and (ii) false worship, ideology, beliefs and philosophy to deceive the unbelievers.

It is clear from history that Satan, the dragon beast, persecuted the woman (the early church), and used two beasts of Rome (the sea and the land beasts) to destroy the Church with severe persecution and the imposing of pagan worship upon the Christians and all people of the Roman Empire. The Lord, however, helped his people and they triumph over the beast and his image and the Roman pagan religion falls.

Satan continues to use his two beasts even now, with persecution and false religion, or with ideology and philosophy that denies God and His Word. The early Christians were persecuted and martyred because they fought their Armageddon against the land beast who also was called the False Prophet who looked like a lamb but spoke like the dragon- Satan (Rev.13). The frogs war of Armageddon is a spiritual, social war whereby Satan planned to deceive the whole world, turning it away from God and His salvation of mankind.

In fact, we all experience this *spiritual* battle. The Bible says, "*Be alert! Your adversary the devil, prowls like a lion roaring, seeking someone to devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). The Apostle Paul spoke of the spiritual battle represented in the visions of Revelation. He warned us of "*the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms*". He tells us to "*therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand your ground*" (Ephesians 6:12-13).

Some days in our lives are described as "*the day of evil*" whereby Satan gets to fire his "*flaming arrows*" against us. This is why we need to take our shield of faith and put our trust in the Lord Jesus, and then Satan's "*flaming arrows*" cannot harm us.

The frogs war will not go on forever as "*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet*" (Romans 16:20). The frogs of false belief are being defeated wherever the truth of the Gospel of Christ is preached and accepted.

### **Q: What about the drying up of the Euphrates River?**

Things seen in dreams and visions should always be interpreted symbolically and in the light of what is written in the Old Testament. The drying up of "the Euphrates River" symbolizes the deliverance of God's people and the judgment of their oppressors as we see throughout the redemptive-history of God's people of the Old Testament.

God dried up the water and parted the Egyptian sea so that Israel could pass safely through while the Egyptian army perished.

Cyrus the king of Persia liberated Israel from her Babylonian captivity after his army diverted and dried up the Euphrates River that ran through Babylon. His army invaded and defeated Babylon and Cyrus allowed God's people to return to Israel their home (Isaiah 44:26-28)

In this vision, the drying up the water of the Euphrates River refers to the direct intervention of God in delivering His Church from Satan and his allies. Satan deceives the kings of the east (that is, the kings of the whole world- Rev 16:14) to make war against the Church.

The Christians in Rome were promised, "*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under their feet*" (Romans 16:20). Likewise, as God's people today, we will overcome all these challenges, as long as we stay firmly on the Lord's side.

The frog's war of Armageddon signifies the solid truth that the glorious Christ in Heaven is supreme. The Bible says, "*You are of God little children and have overcome [the spirits of antichrist] because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

Christ is coming again, and He has already defeated Satan on the cross. The three evil spirits, like frogs, are being defeated wherever the truth of the Gospel of Christ is preached and accepted. The church will be triumphant and will meet the Lord in the air and we will enjoy the eternal glory in the New Heaven and in the New Earth.

As God's people, the bride of Christ, the glorious beautiful woman, we continue our struggle with Satan, enduring his sea-persecution and rejecting his earthly deceptive teachings. Next, in Revelation 17 & 18, we will see the third instrument Satan uses against the Church; a scarlet woman sits on the scarlet beast, who is called Babylon, the great city.

Until then we must stay awake, watching for the Lord's return. Our Lord will return like a thief and deliver us from the wiles of Satan, taking us to our eternal, glorious home in the New Heaven and in the New Earth. And with all the hosts of heaven, we cry out, "*Hallelujah! Yes, Lord God Almighty, just and true are your judgments*".

Our Lord says: "*Yes, I am coming soon*" and our hearts desire as His bride is to say, "***Come!***" *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus*".

## The Vision of the Mystery Woman

The story of the visions of the book of Revelation tells us about the tale of two cities: the city of God and the city of man. Jerusalem versus Babylon. These two cities, represented in symbols of two women; **one** in Revelation 12, a beautiful woman “*clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head twelve stars*”. She represents God’s people, the Church, who are called the city of God. People of this city are sealed with the seal of the Living God, of the Father and of the Lamb.

This woman is persecuted and suffers from a red dragon who is clearly identified as Satan, “*the great dragon, the serpent of old, which is called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world*” (12: 9). Her suffering in the world, because of her light, is limited in time to 10 days or 3 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years, 42 months which are equal to 1260 days. “*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*” Her glorious destiny will be in the New Heaven and in the New Earth.

**The second woman**, in Revelation 17 and 18 is clearly identified as the great city of Babylon that symbolized the Roman system of life at the time of the early Church. She represented the world of unbelievers, who have the mark of the beast. She is sitting on a scarlet beast, and she is drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, who keep God’s commands and bear testimony to Jesus Christ.

She is the third instrument that Satan uses to deceive the world and persecute the Church. We have seen two instruments that Satan uses in his war against the Church in

Revelation 13, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the land. They represent two things;

1. Persecution by political power. Satan uses persecution against the Church to silence the witnesses of the Church (Rev 2:8-11).
2. False worship, religion, ideology or any teaching to distort the truth of God's Word and to deceive the world (Rev 2:12-29).

The third instrument that Satan uses to quench the Light of the Church is the scarlet woman. The essential character of this woman is one of seduction and attraction which appeals to all nations. So Satan, in every age, uses three beasts; persecution, false worship and a morally compromised attitude the world which seeks comfort of life in a godless way. By these three powers, Satan deceives people into unbelief and seduces them away from an interest in the true Living God of the Bible.

Now let us see what the vision of the Mystery Woman of Babylon means! Without getting bogged down with strange words and symbols, let us gain the main message by asking four questions. (i) What does this woman represent? (ii) What does she do? (iii) What does she do to God's people? And (iv) What happens to the city in the end?

The vision identifies the symbols for us to understand the meaning of the vision. She is not a real woman! She represents a city. She sits on many waters, seven hills and on a scarlet beast which had 7 heads and 10 horns. On her forehead she has a title, "*Mystery Babylon the great*". The waters are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The seven hills are seven kings. The ten horns are ten rules. The beast is the political power of the world. Babylon is understood in the

context of The Old Testament by the early Christians as referring to Rome (1 Peter 5:12-14)

*“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life. There are seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other (No 7) has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition”.*

There are two interpretations in solving this mystery. The first interpretation states that the 7 kings represent the 7 empires which have persecuted God’s people since the creation of the world until the second coming of Christ. Five have fallen, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo- Persia. One is, (No 6) at the time of John which is Rome. The 7th is the Ottoman Islamic empire. No 8, which is one of the seven, will be the revived Roman Empire after the secret rapture of the Church.

Within this interpretation, there is another view that ignores the Islamic empire which came after Rome and replaces it with the Papacy, the Roman Catholic Church. They believe it will revive again within European Union as the kingdom of antichrist after the secret rapture of the Church.

The second interpretation states that the 7 kings represent the 7 Caesars of Rome that ruled the world until the time when Revelation was written. Five have fallen, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and **Nero**, who persecutes the Church. One is, Vespasian (No 6) at the time of John. The 7th

is Titus. No 8, is **Domitian**, (who is considered to be one of the seven, as Nero), because he persecuted the Christians as Nero did.

**I wonder what these two interpretations mean to a Bible reader who does not know the history of the Roman Empire or others empires who ruled the world!?**

It is a vision, and we are not to despise any speculations but rather understand the message of the vision. Things seen in dreams and visions should always be interpreted symbolically and in the light of what is written in the Old Testament.

The main message of the vision is this: The city of man falls because of two things: (i) what the woman on the scarlet beast does to the world and (ii) what she does to God's people. Her leaders persecuted the Church "*She is drunk of the blood of the saints all that were slain upon the earth*". God is saying: "*Babylon the great is fallen.. Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins... for by her sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth*" (Revelation 17 & 18).

The city of Babylon is not a real woman! But is the satanic system of materialism which, in godless way, seduces and attracts all nations away from an interest in the God of the Bible in any age. Rome adopted the Babylon system and developed it to seduce and attract all nations under her dominion. This system operates today.

As far as Satan/the dragon is concerned, the Babylonian satanic system seduces people away from an interest in God, and devours them in the deceitfulness of wealth and materialism by choking out the Word of God. This is why God is calling to us to come out of her.

The Bible says, *“Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away (1 Cor 7:31). Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:15-17).*

Our Lord said in Luke 21:34-36, *“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.”*

The vision of the fall of Babylon is all about the clearing of the site and the soon coming of the city of God- the New Heaven and the New Earth, for the first heaven and the first earth will pass away. There will be no more sea. John saw the

holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

John heard a loud voice from heaven saying, *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

We don't belong to Babylon. We belong to another city with foundation - whose architect and builder is God. Let us heed God's call to us and come out of the city of man *“for here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come”* (Hebrews 13:13)

It is coming soon, welcome it by faith, and admit like those believers who have gone before us that we are foreigners and strangers on earth. The Bible says, *“People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own, longing for a better country, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them”* (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Our Lord says: *“Yes, I am coming soon”* and our hearts desire as His *bride is to say, “Come!” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus*”.

## The Vision of the Two Feasts

Revelation 19 tells us what it's going to be like, when our Lord Jesus comes again. At His coming, there will be two great feasts. The first is called "*The Wedding Supper of the Lamb*". The other is called "*The Great Supper of God Almighty*".

All people of all nations, since the creation of the world, will be divided in two groups. The first will be at the wedding supper of the Lamb, and the other will be at the great supper of God Almighty.

What is the difference between the two suppers?

At the wedding supper of the Lamb, the coming of the Lord will be as a bridegroom coming for His bride. The bride of the Lamb represents all God's people through the ages. It will be a time of excitement and glorious joy such as we've never known or experienced before.

All this will take place to fulfil what Lord Jesus has promised, "*I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*" (John 14:3). The Apostle Paul wrote about this promise in Ephesians 5:25-27, "*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*"

At the great supper of God, the coming of the Lord Jesus, will be as a Just Judge King coming to condemn those who rejected his loving invitation to be at the wedding of His Son.

For unbelievers of all ages, the coming of Jesus will be the most fearful and terrible misery. The Bible says, *“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:15-17)

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb speaks of the glorious songs of praise that all angels of heaven will sing on that day. The Apostle John hears the voice of all the angels of heaven, *“what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

The song speaks of fine linen robes that were given to the bride to make her ready to meet her bridegroom, *“his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear”*. This is what we sing here on earth. We worship our Lord who loves us and has redeemed us. We will continue to sing the song of redemption till we see Him face to face. *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels”* (Isaiah 61:10).

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb speaks of the eternal blessing for those who accept the invitation to this great feast. The angel said to John, "Write this: *Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!*" And he added, "*These are the true words of God*" (Rev19:9). This is what our Lord Jesus said in His parable of the great king who gave invitations to all of his subjects to attend his wedding celebration and said, "*Come to the wedding banquet*" (Matthew 22: 1-14).

The Great Supper of God Almighty however speaks of the doom and judgment on those who reject the King's love invitation to be at His Son's wedding, to "*Come to the wedding banquet*". They paid no attention, they said to the king, "*No we do not want to come*" and went off, and some of them seized the king's servants, mistreated them and killed them (Matt 22:1-14 & Luke 19:11-27).

The birds eating the flesh of men symbolize their judgment. We saw in the Baker's dream in Gen 40:16-23 how Joseph's interpretation of birds eating the bread from the three baskets from the Baker's head meant his doom.

The Apostle John saw in the vision, an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "*Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small....* They were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh (Rev 19: 11-21).

The Great Supper of God Almighty speaks of the end of all evil. The rider on the white horse, who captured the two beasts, throws them in to the fiery lake.

It speaks of Judgment of all forces of evil, in symbols of “*the two beasts and the mystery woman, Babylon*”. These symbols represent: persecution, false worship or ideology and moral compromise to gain the comfortable life of Babylon. The judgment will be on all the kings of the earth who persecuted God’s people, also on all false religious leaders, who distorted the truth of the one True God and taught doctrines of demons. The Babylonian system of materialism that was forced on all nations and seduced them away from an interest in the knowledge of the True God will also be judged. Yes, those who blaspheme the name of God and war against His people will be overthrown; they will be doomed forever.

At the second coming of Christ, all angels of heaven will sing the Hallelujah song that says, “*Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned (the Mystery woman- the great Babylon who corrupted the earth by her adulteries- (false worship and ideology))*”. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

So at the coming of the Lord at the end of the age, there will be an eternal blessing and eternal misery. Our Lord Jesus will be as a bridegroom to his people and as the Judge King to unbelievers.

The question in the symbolic language is: Will you eat at the wedding supper of the lamb and enjoy? Or will you be eaten at the great supper of God Almighty by the birds and doomed?

Yes, when the Lord comes, evil will be no more. No more persecution, no more false beliefs, but Happy Ever After for the bride of the Lamb, because the Lord intends to fulfil what he had promised and He is going to do so for His name is Faithful and True, The Word of God and King of kings and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah! Amen.

## **The Great White Throne and The Book of Life**

*“Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.”*

**Revelation 20** speaks of the final judgment of Satan and his followers and answers the question, what is the basis of God’s final judgment? The Apostle John saw the vision of the “*great white throne*” and all people who have ever lived stood before God. John understood that God’s final judgment is based on what is written in the Book of Life.

Whether our name is in the Book of Life or not, is the most important question we should concern ourselves about in relation to eternity. The Bible says, “*Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death*” (Rev 20:15) “*Only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life will enter the City of God*” (Rev 21:27)

The Apostle John now sees three events that lead up to Judgment Day. Firstly, he saw Satan bound for 1,000 years. Secondly, John saw the martyrs rest in heaven for 1,000 years. Then thirdly, he saw Satan and his followers (the nations of the earth - Gog and Magog that symbolise the forces of evil) failed to destroy God’s people and John saw their doom in the lake of fire. After this, John saw some more details about Judgment Day.

First of all, we must not interpret the visions literally but see its symbolism in the light of the whole Bible as we focus on what the Lord Jesus said.

Whether you believe that the thousand years is literally in the future or symbolically in the present time, the Apostle John told us four truths about these visions.

The First truth: The thousand years are not forever. When the Apostle Peter refers to a “thousand years”, it is only to show how insignificant such a period is in the mind of God. “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet 3:8). It is not the focus of the Bible.

The Second truth: Satan bound and doomed. John saw "*an angel coming down out of heaven, holding in his hand a great chain. He seized Satan, and bound him for a thousand years*". And then at the end of the vision he saw "*The devil, who deceived the nations, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever*" (20:10).

Here is the whole truth- God is in control, and Satan has limited power; his days are short and his doom is coming soon. Because of this he is doing his best to deceive whoever listens to him.

**Q: In what sense is Satan ‘bound’ at the present?**

He is still active; his agents are still able to deceive many and he attacks and kills some of God’s people!. The Bible says that our Lord Jesus "*He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage* (Heb 2:14-15). By His death and resurrection, our

Lord Jesus has “*disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*” (See also, Col 2:15).

Satan used to deceive the nations, but God’s light, when Jesus came the first time, and then after His death **is no longer** confined to physical Israel. Many from all nations see the light and come to Jesus. Satan can make every attempt to attract us and lure us to his ways, so “*Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you*” (1 Peter 5).

The third truth: The martyrs enjoy, right now, the blessed eternal rest. The Apostle John saw only their souls without their bodies. “*I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of they had not worshiped the beast and had not received his mark. They reigned with Christ a thousand years*”. In Revelation 6:11, “*They were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been*”.

Those who died in the Lord and had not died in sin, enjoy, right now, the blessed eternal rest. “*The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ .... Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.*”

*Yes says the Spirit that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”(Rev 20: 4-6 & 14:13).*

The fourth truth: All who ever lived will stand before God and those whose names are not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death.

The Apostle John wants to have our attention focused on the most important thing that goes beyond the thousand years - eternity. He saw “*a great white throne*” and before the throne “*the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. And they were judged, each one according to his works... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*”

The most important thing in this vision is whether your name is written in the book of life! The Bible says, “*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*”

Q: Did our Lord Jesus speak about Judgment Day, and describe what it’s going to be like? Did He speak about the Book of Life?

The seventy disciples of Jesus returned with joy, saying, “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!*” And he said to them, “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and*

*scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).*

Praise the Lord, Satan has limited power and is under the feet of those who belong to Jesus.

Our Lord also spoke about the Judgment Day, and described what would happen. He said, *“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. The unrighteous will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

How will He do this? He said, *“This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear” (Matt 13).*

The Apostle Paul confirms what our Lord said about His coming at the Judgment Day. *“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the*

*Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people” (2 Thess 1: 6-10).*

The Apostle John said in Rev. 11: 15, *“When the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.”*

Our Lord Jesus said, *“I am coming soon”* The bride of the Lamb is saying, *“Amen Come Lord Jesus”*. So the most important question now is whether your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life for certain.

**Q: How can we be sure our names are in that Book?**

Simply accept Jesus' invitation for you, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God (John 3:16 -18).*

It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, what you did or how old you are. It doesn't matter if you are a man, woman or child, black, white or yellow, or follow a different religion. All that matters is whether you receive His invitation and come to Him trusting in what He did for you. He took your place and died for your sins. Trust Him as your Lord and Saviour, and then you will find that your name is written in

His Book. *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him. John 3:36*

There is no other way to get to Heaven, for our Lord said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me”* John 14:6. The Apostle Peter confirms what our Lord said in Acts 4:12, *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”*.

Because your name is in the Book of Life, then watch and live a godly life. Pray and intercede for others. Preach the Gospel whenever and wherever you have the opportunity to do so.

## The Vision of the New Jerusalem

We are getting so near the new heaven and the new earth. Our glorious home at last, when we can say, “Heaven comes to earth at last”! The last two chapters of Revelation are indeed good news concerning the glorious eternal state. The Apostle John saw the vision of visions, the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Now John says, *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (21:1-4)*

What a beautiful vision! Vision, yes, full with symbols, but its message is crystal clear, **“God will dwell at last and forever with his people on the new Earth”**. That is heaven!

**In this vision the Apostle John told us five things**; firstly, there is to be a new earth and a new heaven. Secondly, in it will be the New Jerusalem, described as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Thirdly, it will be the dwelling place of God forever with His redeemed people. Fourthly, its beauty, size and its life is beyond description. Fifthly, the invitation to enjoy this glorious city is still open and we are told who will be there and who will not be there.

**First: There is to be a new earth and a new heaven.**  
*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea”.*

**Q: What is heaven?**

“Heaven” is used in three ways in the Bible: “In the beginning of the Bible, Genesis 1:1 says, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* First: The **aerial or atmospheric heavens** as our Lord says in Matthew 6:26 *“Behold the birds of the heaven”*. Second: **The sidereal or starry heaven** *“the stars ... of the heavens... the highest heaven, cannot contain you”* (Matt 24:29 & 1 Kings 8:27.) Third is **“The eternal abode of God”**. *“The Lord is on his heavenly throne”* (Psalm. 11:4), and as our Lord Jesus command us to pray **“Our Father in heaven”** (Matthew 6:9)

God promised His people that He would create a new heaven and a new earth. This is what we look for according to the Apostle Peter, *“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter 3:13).

In this New Heaven and in the New Earth, God will fully make known His presence in the New Jerusalem and dwell forever with His redeemed people.

It is the Apostle Peter who tells us what will happen to the present heavens and earth. *“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. And the earth and the elements and everything in it will be destroyed by fire”* (2 Peter 3:10).

That ends the old heavens and the old earth as God promised long ago by his prophet Isaiah, *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create”* (Is 65:17).

**Second: In it will be the New Jerusalem, described as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.** *“I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”*

This new city is called both a city and a bride. A bride speaks of intimacy, and a city speaks of community. So we have a picture here of God’s redeemed people, each one given a body of glory empowered with limitless energy. God said, *“Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; Behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress”* (Is 65:18-19).

There, we will live in close intimacy, not only with the Lord himself, but with each other as well. The Apostle John says *“It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when our Lord appears from heaven we will be like Him”* (1 John 3:2). Usually we keep looking in the mirror for signs of change in ourselves. But what do we see? Wrinkles--and zits! But it won't be like that then. We will have bodies of glory and beauty that will be like the glorious body of the resurrected Lord.

**Third: It will be the dwelling place of God forever with His redeemed people.** *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he*

*will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”.*

Isn't that marvellous! The home of God with us! This is when the name "*Immanuel-God with us*" will be totally fulfilled. This is Heaven. It is the place of "*no more.*" No more death, no more sorrow, no more parting, no more pain, no more tears, no more evil!

A wonderful hope! Yes it is! It is so beautiful that it is even hard to believe. God has given us, at this point, certain words of assurance to help us with our possible doubt. "*He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!.. These words are trustworthy and true "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End."*" (Revelation 21:5-6)

Our Loving God brackets all of time in the phrases, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.*" Everything in between comes from him. These are words of truth that help us to believe. Life there, with God's presence among us, will be far more wonderful. Yes, God "*will wipe every tear from our eyes... no more shall there be heard the sound of weeping and the cry of distress*".

**Fourth: The character of the city, its beauty, size and its life beyond description.** John said "*the city shone with the glory of God.*" *It had a great, high wall with twelve gates.* On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. *There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names*

*of the twelve apostles of the Lamb... The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. Its measure found it to be 12,000 stadia -that is about 1500 miles- in length, and as wide and high as it is long. The wall was made of jasper, and the city and its street of pure gold. Its foundations were decorated with every kind of precious stone... (21:9-21.)*

**Q: Is this literal or is it symbolic?** These are symbolic images, and need some interpretation. The angel said to John, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And then he showed him “*the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God*”. The bride of the Lamb is the city of Jerusalem, the city is the bride. Both images represent all the redeemed people.

**Three main characteristics of this glorious city:** Firstly, it is a city that shines with the glory of God. It is a city brilliant in light and colour like that of a very precious jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. “*It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal*”. The foundation of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone and the walls as well as the foundations were made of jasper. The twelve gates were made of pearl. The city and its streets were made of pure gold. John is saying that the city is perfect in beauty.

**The second characteristic of the city is its size.** It is shown as a perfect cube, measuring 12,000 stadia-that is about 1500 miles =2250 kilometres, long, wide and high. The size of the city is difficult to imagine in literal terms but the symbolism conveys the idea of splendour and glory.

**The third characteristic of the city is founded on God’s redemptive acts.** The twelve gates had on them the names of

the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve foundations of the city wall had on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This shows that God's redeemed people are one and the same; the New Testament Church is the continuation of the Old Testament people. The gates which face in all directions tell us that God's people come from every tribe and nation, and are made up from all periods of the world's history.

**The life in this city is perfect.** God's redeemed people are portrayed as a beautiful bride and as a shining city. God dwells with His people. Christ is united with His Church, in perfect unity, purity and beauty. With perfect harmony, there is pleasure in drinking from the river of life and eating from the tree of life. The paradise of Eden is restored; and "no longer will there be any curse".

We are going to enjoy three blessings in this wonderful city. (i) We will worship Him; "*his servants will serve him.*" Our eyes will be upon the lamb who sits in the midst of the throne as we worship Him and sing "Worthy is the Lamb...." (ii) We will see His face; "*They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.*" That will be our great comfort and nothing will stand between Him and us. Only those who belong to Him, those who have His name on their forehead will see His face, something that had not happened before (Exod 33:23; John 1:18). (iii) We will reign for ever and ever, without end in this glorious place of "**No More**". No longer any sea, the symbol of trouble, storm and danger (Isaiah 57:20), but in the New Earth where there will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more parting, no more pain, no more tears. We truly will be happy ever after!

Can we picture it? Not really! The Apostle Paul says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:9). We will be like the Queen of Sheba who came to Jerusalem to see the glory of King Solomon. When she had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and everything beautiful in his kingdom, the Bible says *“There was no more breath in her. And she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. **And behold, the half was not told me...** Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel!”* (1 Kings 10:1-10)

**Now, we can do no more than wait for that day to be in this beautiful city of God** as Peter said, *“According to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter 3:12-13). And as Paul says, *“our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body”*(Philippians 3:20-12)

**The New Jerusalem is God’s invitation to enjoy this glorious city which is still open until the day of the coming of the Lord. And we are told of who will be there and who will not be there.**

The Loving God closes His Bible with an open invitation to all people: *“Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life”*(22:17). Why? That is because the Loving God does *“not want anyone*

*to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Yes, the Loving God “wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Tim 2:4).*

**God tells us who will not be there!** In Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15 we read; *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death... Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life... Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”*

The above underlined words describe three attitudes of heart which result in the visible deeds that mark the lost which might be the reasons why some will miss this beautiful city.

Firstly, **the cowards**. The fearful head the list. Who are the fearful? They are those who fear to confess Christ, as they think that they might lose the comfort of life. They shrug their shoulders and turn away from the offer of life. The fearful are those who care more about what man thinks of them than what God knows about them. They don’t have the courage to stand for Jesus and say they are Christians. They are fearful that man may call them fanatics, or Christians. But listen, Jesus suffered the name calling for you and me and never had a second thought.

Then there are **the unbelieving**; those who know the truth of salvation in Christ alone, but don't want it and refuse the evidence, deliberately turning their backs on truth.

Thirdly, there are **the liars** who know the truth but deliberately laugh at the things of God and mock the cross. Not only that, but they deceive others and love and practice falsehood. From this cowardly, unbelieving and deceitful mind, come all other sinful deeds such as, murder, fornication, adultery, occult practices, hypocritical living and idolatry.

**The vision says in verse 26:** *“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”.*

**Who are they?** The book of Revelation tells us, that those who did not have the seal of the Living God, have the seal of the dragon –Satan- and his beast. *“There will be no rest for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name ... they will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever”* (Rev 14:9-11).

Remember the symbolic meaning of the mark of the beast! It is not literal ‘mark’ on right hand or forehead. It is when people’s actions (the right hand) and their thinking (forehead), are controlled by beliefs that deny Christ’s love, salvation and His Lordship. This is to say, Satan has stamped his mark, as a beast, on their lives.

Two groups of people will have their names in the Book of Life and be able to reside in the New Jerusalem. Firstly, the complete number of the believers of the Old Testament, *“They*

*are 144,000 sealed on the foreheads with a seal of the Living God from all the tribes of Israel” (Rev 7:1-8).*

Secondly, the complete number of the Christians believers, “The 144,000 sealed with the name of the Lamb and of the Father’s name written on their foreheads” (14:1-5)

**Both groups are described as** “the great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, *“they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God” (Rev 7:9-14)*

The Bible says about them; *“They are before the throne of God and serve him; and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; ‘he will lead them to springs of living water. ‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”* (7:9-17)

They will sing the song of Redemption before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn their song. They are the whole community of the redeemed from the earth. The Bride of the Lamb

The final message of the book of Revelation is for His people, for every Christian in every age. It is **God’s Final Call to His Bride**, a call for endurance “to keep His Word, to serve Him and, to keep expecting His coming”. The experience of the Christian in the world is often one of

hardship, persecution and perplexity (2 Cor 4:8-12). However, our hope is not in this world but in the world to come, the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Apostle Peter says, *“Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, ... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter 3:12-13).

Three times, the Bridegroom promised His Bride in this closing chapter of His Bible, *“I am coming soon”* (7, 12, 20)

### **What does it mean that Christ is coming soon?**

We need to remember that with the great events of Christ’s first coming, death, resurrection and exaltation, the new age had already dawned. There is now nothing on God’s timetable before His second coming to us. His coming for His bride is the very next event on His timetable. Comparing the time left to eternity, this is what we call theologically correct.

### **Yes, Our Lord is right, “He is coming soon”**

The book of Revelation leaves the bride waiting for her bridegroom who promised three times in this closing chapter of His Bible *“I am coming”* (vv. 7,12,20).

She is encouraged by the hope in **inviting others**, *“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”* **And always our prayers, as His bride, we are to call to Him “Amen! Come Lord Jesus”.**

## Summary of Visions of Revelation

At the beginning of the book of Revelation, we read *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ... to show His servants things which must shortly take place... “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.” What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia”*.

At the end of the book of Revelation, our Lord said to John, *“I, Jesus, give you this message for the churches. “Surely I am coming soon”*.

From this we understand that the whole message of the book of Revelation is about Christ and His church and from Christ to His church.

In the beginning of the book we also read what the Apostle John says, *“I John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.”* At the end of the book John says *“Amen. Come Lord Jesus”*.

The **underlined** verses above are the key words that tell us the message of the book of Revelation. Firstly, Christians live with tribulation in the world as our LORD said, *“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33)

Secondly, The Sovereign God is in control of everything and we live in His spiritual Kingdom. Thirdly, Christ at the end, will come with a blessing to His Church and judgment to the world.

Now let us begin with the First Vision of Revelation which is the Vision of the Eternal Glorious Resurrected Christ in the midst of the seven churches. The glorious Christ unveils to the 7 churches, Satan's 3 strategies to quench the Light of the Church to the world. *1. Satan uses persecution against the Church to silence the witnesses of the Church. 2. He uses false religion or teaching to distort God's Word and to deceive the world. 3. Satan attempts to force us to have a morally compromised attitude and to make us lukewarm.*

The glorious Christ, however, *who lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last*, encourages His Church to overcome Satan's strategies and to be faithful to God's Word, keeping our light shining in this dark world until He comes.

In the second vision, we see our Lord sitting on the throne of God which means that **He is in control of everything** and worship and praise are given unto Him, the Almighty God the Creator and Redeemer. Yes we worship the Sovereign God, because He is our Creator. And we worship God because He is our Loving God, the Redeemer.

**In the third vision**, at the centre of God's throne, we see the Lion/Lamb who is worthy to take the sealed scroll and open it. He is worthy because of His perfect sacrifice for our sins on the cross and His victory over sin, death and Satan. The Lion/Lamb is telling us, in the symbols of the four horsemen, that the suffering in the world is because of man's

sinful desire for power which then causes war, plagues, famine and death.

The main emphasis of the seven seals is not the sufferings and the troubles we see on earth, but on the safety for eternity for those who belong to God in Christ. Our victory in the world is because we washed our robes in the blood of Lamb and the seal of the Living God, the name of the Father and the name of Lamb is on our foreheads.

The seven seal vision gives a glimpse of the glory of the redeemed in spite of their suffering and also a glimpse of God's wrath upon unbelievers.

**In the fourth vision, we see the seven trumpets.** It tells us how God warns the world and calls them to repentance through the witness of the Church.

When the witness of the Church is completed as it shown **in the scene of the two witnesses**, the seventh trumpet sounds and Christ then comes in his great glory to take us to our glorious eternal home. Here is the happy ending of the story of the Church on earth.

**The story of the Church in Revelation, in chapters 1 through 11**, can be summarized as follows: The Light of Christ suffers persecution in the seven Churches. There a struggle to defend the truth of God's Word against satanic false religions, teaching and ideology. We are to keep our light shining in the world, in spite of temptations with materialism, which entice us to do compromise, and to be lukewarm. The Spirit of God, however, restores our souls so we can complete our witness to the world. Christ will come when the mission of the Church is completed.

Through the first part of the book of Revelation chapters 1-11, Christ our Lord is telling us *“You are the LIGHT of the world... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”* (Matt 5:14 & 28:17-20.)

**From Revelation chapters 12-22**, we see the story of the Church recapitulated from another perspective. The glorious Christ, who walks among His Church and sits on the throne, unveils to the Church, what is happening behind the scenes. The invisible forces of evil continue to work against God’s people to quench their light to the world.

**We are given 4 symbolic visions** of Satan’s invisible forces in his war against the Church in Revelation 12 to 17. The Dragon is identified as the old serpent which is called Satan and the devil, who wants to destroy the Church. The sea beast, that represents the Roman emperor, persecutes the Church. The earth beast, which is called the false prophet, represents Roman pagan religion, which wants to deceive the whole world. And then, the mystery woman, riding on the scarlet beast is called Babylon. She represents the city of man, Rome. She is drunk with the blood of followers of Jesus Christ.

Satan, in every age uses three powers: **persecution, false worship or ideology and a morally compromised attitude** to deceive people into unbelief, seducing them away from an interest in the Living God, the Redeemer.

The story of the visions of Revelation tells us about “the Tale of the Two Cities” - the city of man and city of God, Babylon versus the New Jerusalem. These two cities are

represented in the symbols of two women; the bride of the Lamb and the mystery woman of the beast.

The Church, God's People, is called the city of God. She is sealed with the seal of Living God, and of the Father and of the Lamb.

The Church Suffers  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years =1260 days= 42 months which symbolizes the limited time of trouble for the church in the world. As John says: "*I John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.*" This limited time of tribulation is as it was in the time of Elijah, when Queen Jezebel and King Ahab persecuted God's people for three and half years.

As God protected His people from destruction in the past, so He is protects His Church today. In the vision of chapter 12, we see the dragon persecute the woman for three and half years, "*but God prepared for her a place in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of, for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. Then the dragon went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus*".

Our Lord said, "*The gates of Hell will not prevail against my Church ... These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*"

The glorious destiny of the Church will be in the New Haven and in the New Earth.

**The other woman riding** on a beast is called the city of Babylon- the world without Christ, engulfed in a materialistic life without an interest in God. Its people have the seal of

Satan, the mark of the beast. She is drunk of the blood of the followers of Jesus. Her destiny will be in the lake of fire.

We need to remember that the mark of the beast is not literal ‘mark’ on the right hand or forehead. It is when **people’s actions** (the right hand) and **people’s thinking** (forehead) are controlled by a kind of belief that denies Christ and his salvation. This is to say, Satan has stamped his mark on their lives.

When our good deeds reflect our faith in God, our Creator and our redeemer, and acknowledge Christ’s Lordship in our life, *this is to say that God has stamped His seal or his mark on our forehead and on our right hand.*

**But God** in His mercy deals with the world of unbelievers and calls them with the last call of repentance until the last breath in their life before the Judgment Day in the Vision of the 7 Bowls. The vision of the bowls brings one’s life to an end, when the last opportunity to repentance is refused. Next comes Judgement Day when Christ comes.

It is as if that God is saying to the one who refuses to listen to the last call for repentance in his life, *“You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you”* (Luke 12:20).

**We move next to the visions that speak of the end of all evil in the world.** In four scenes, we see the end of the Dragon, his allies and all who followed him. Judgment of Babylon is first, followed by the two beasts, the dragon and all men who followed him. The riding on the white horse and the great white throne bring about this judgment.

**John moves from the vision of Christ riding on a white horse to the vision of the great white throne.** Both visions

speak of the same thing; **the end of all evil**. Judgment of Babylon means the end of the city of man, to clear the site for the new Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth. Judgment of the two beasts of the sea and of the earth means end of persecution and the end of all satanic deception. Judgment of the dragon means the doom of Satan in Hell fire.

The vision says: *“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*

The scene of the rider on the white horse and the Great White Throne describes to us what it’s going to be like when our Lord Jesus comes.

There before the throne, will be two great feasts; *“The Wedding Supper of the Lamb”* and *“The Great Supper of God Almighty”*.

All people of all nations since the creation of the world will be divided in two groups. The first will be at the wedding supper of the Lamb and the others will be at the great supper of God Almighty. At the wedding supper of the Lamb, the coming of the Lord will be as a bridegroom coming for His bride. The bride of the Lamb represents all God’s people through the ages. It will be a time of excitement and glorious joy such as has never been known or experienced. We will be around the glassy sea and sing the song of redemption, of Moses and of the Lamb.

At the great supper of God, the coming of the Lord Jesus will be as a Just Judge King coming to condemn those who rejected His loving invitation for their salvation. For them it will be the most fearful time with terrible misery. The

symbolic vision tells us of an angel, standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, “*Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small ...* They were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

The birds eating the flesh of men symbolize their judgment, as we saw in the Baker’s dream and how Joseph interpretation of birds eating the bread from the three baskets from the Baker’s head meant his doom (Gen 40:16-23).

**Now the site is cleared from all evil** and God has prepared for His bride a New City and a New earth and a New Heaven. **Here** the Apostle John saw the Last Vision; the City of God, the New Jerusalem in the New Heaven and the New earth. We are to welcome it by faith, and wait for it as those who have gone before us. Yes Christ is coming soon to fulfil His promise to His people. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old things have passed away. God will wipe every tear from our eyes. **There** “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him*” (1 Cor 2:9).

The final message of the book of Revelation is for His people, for every Christian in every age; a call for endurance “to keep His Word, to serve Him and, to keep expecting His coming”. The Bridegroom promised His Bride three times, “*I am coming soon*” (Revelation 22: 7, 12, 20)

The book of Revelation leaves the bride waiting her bridegroom who promised to come soon and she is encouraged by this hope to invite others, “*The Spirit and the*

*bride say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.” And always our prayer is to call to Him, “Amen! Come Lord Jesus”.*

May God be praised and His name highly exalted for all good things that come from Him and to Him and for Him!

***Soli Deo Gloria-*** To God be Glory

**Botros**

**Christmas 2016**

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24. The Wonders of the Cross
25. The Wonders of Providence in the Book of Easter
26. The Wonders of Grace in the Book of Ephesians
27. Egypt In the Bible Prophecy
28. It Is Well With My Soul

## ***The Visions of The Book of Revelation*** **Dr. Botros Botrosdief**

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This book is based on a series of talks on the visions of the Book of Revelation at Mernda and Whittlesea Presbyterian Church. Each vision of this amazing book shows us many glimpses that will help us to get a balanced view, not to panic, not to fear, but to face the future calmly and with great hope.

My prayer is that our eyes will open to God's glorious revelation, and our faith strengthens as we see Christ revealed to us in these great visions as The King of kings and Lord of lords. He is going to bring the New Heaven and the New Earth where is no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old things have passed away. God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

Dr. Botros authored 38 books, 10 in English and 28 in Arabic. Dr. Botros is the minister of

**Mernda and Whittlesea Presbyterian Church**

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**10:30 am @ Whittlesea, 6 Lime St**

**1:00 pm @ Mernda, the Arabic Service**

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