

Antichrist And Antichrist Systems

1

Language of Prophecy (Part One)

We give thanks to the Lord for quickening us to share a word from His presence respecting some unfolding events in the church world. These events set the stage for understanding prophecies on the subject of anti-Christ.

None can come to a full understanding of predictive prophecy concerning divinely fixed events in the Church age until their due time of fulfilment. Mere scholarship does not confer on man the ability to unveil things hidden by the almighty GOD.

Revelation of things associated with God's plans and purposes are given and received only by the workings of His sovereign Spirit. This, among other things, is inferred by the way Rev. 1: 1 is worded.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

What apostle John received to be passed on to the churches was given by JESUS CHRIST at the very instance of the almighty GOD. John himself, though constantly living in devotion to Christ, was at the

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material time not having his mind occupied with the specific Kingdom issues being revealed to him.

In the same vein, one may rightly posit that human attempts to open up a sealed prophecy will be futile and at best, mere guess work devoid of sanctifying power. This is why all kinds of wild conjectures and widely conflicting expositions trail the subject of anti-Christ.

However, when it pleases GOD to break the seal and to open the book of redemption the servants of Jesus Christ may with all humble earnestness seek His face for the unveiling of Truth as due to be given. Only then can the ministries speak with a degree of certainty that will bring clear light and proper counsel to the Lord's people.

In these closing days of the gospel age the Lord is graciously releasing so much help in this regard to facilitate our preparation for the His glorious return. May His great name be praised forever and ever. Blessed be His holy name.

Let us also remember that scriptures are the only sure means of interpreting Scriptures. The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is received in the medium of the written Word which is in the first place authored by Him. What is claimed as revealed truth must be consistent with all scriptures in both the Old and New Testament writings.

Before going to our subject proper, it will be beneficial to take an introductory survey of an important feature associated with the prophecy of scriptures. The Prophets in their writings employed a language register that was peculiar to them. The apostles of the Lamb in the prophetic portions of their epistles also used this same pattern of words. This should be expected however as the same Mind is behind all scriptures. (2 Tim. 3:16).

In the first part of this book, we will examine the Language of Prophecy. This will come in the first two chapters. The book of Revelation is a classic example of prophetic writing. It is rich in the use

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of imageries, signs, symbols and figurative expressions that are known features of Old Testament prophecies.

Of the many symbols employed in the book of Revelation five or six will be studied, relying also in their usage elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures. This will enable us to have a good entrance into what follows in the subsequent chapters.

In Rev. 1:1 we find the following words

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.

In the third verse, we are told that a blessing is placed upon those who read this book, and upon those who hear the words of the prophecy of this book. We invite you into this exciting survey of the scriptures to discover the style in prophetic writings, that is, their language register. This study will help us gather tools that will enable an understanding of what God is speaking to His people today.

For a start, in the above passage (Rev. 1:1), our attention is drawn to the word "*signified*". It is intended to convey the fact that the things that are to be revealed (and which are now given to us in the book of Revelation) will be communicated using signs, illustrative symbols, spiritual imageries, and figurative expressions. The purpose is not to mystify the message it carries, but, to bring it forth in such a dramatic manner that it leaves a lasting impression on those who are admitted into its understanding. It is good in the sight of God, and, we trust it is safe for the Lord's people that this approach was adopted.

As stated earlier, our burden in this introductory part of this book is to examine the meaning of some of biblical symbols especially those that relate to the subject matter under study. We shall be doing that in

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the next two chapters. May the Holy Spirit greatly illuminate our hearts and minds as we carry on, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We shall be examining five or six symbols: the first is *star*, the second is *sun*, the third is *moon*, (these three shall be taken together). Then, the fourth of these symbols is *sea*; and the fifth figure is *beast*.

In relation to Scripture's use of the first three symbols, recall that Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, had two dreams, which he told to his parents and his brothers. We shall take the second dream.

In Gen. 37, it was recorded that Joseph had this dream in which he saw the sun, the moon and the eleven stars bowing down to him. We know that the brothers had an understanding of the dream. So were also his parents. They were acquainted with the prophetic.

It is quite interesting that when we come to Revelation 12:1, we meet these three symbols again: a woman clothed with the sun, standing upon the moon, and having a crown of twelve stars upon her head.

Now, what was the interpretation given to the dream that Joseph had? We are told that the father rebuked him and said, "*What is this dream that thou has dreamed? Shall I and thy mother, and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? Will you indeed rule over us?*" (Gen. 37:10). So, in that dream, the *sun* stood for the person of Jacob, the *moon* stood for the person of Joseph's mother, while the eleven *stars* stood for the eleven brothers.

Now, in Gen. 1, we are told that God made two great lights: the sun as the greater light and the moon as the lesser light. The greater light (the sun) was to rule the day, and the lesser light (the moon) was to rule the night. They were to divide between light and darkness.

When we consider this in the light of the interpretation which Jacob gave to Joseph's dream, we come to the understanding that the sun stands for the father as divinely constituted to be a Light-giver to his

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family. Standing in this capacity, he exercises ruling functions in his household. Let us note in passing, Jacob was, in the natural sense the beggetal of or life-giver to, his children.

The moon, from what we know naturally, receives light from the sun and reflects it. It has no light of its own. In shedding the light it receives, it influences her dependants, up to and until they can of themselves bask in the direct rays of the Sun.

In the 17th verse of Genesis 1, we are told, “*and he made the stars also*”. And we know that the stars also shine light. The stars co-join the Sun and Moon in their oversight functions covering both day and night. Without doubt, as it is in the natural order so has GOD ordained it in the affairs of His Church, the Kingdom of grace. Hallelujah.

Summing up what we have discovered in the first reference to Gen. 37 and Genesis 1, we may say that the *sun* represent the Father figure in his capacity to give Light (Life). The *moon* represents the Mother figure, in her capacity to receive Life (Light) and to reflect (birth) the same. The *stars* represent the capacity to emit light particularly in the night season; bringing forth relevant day experiences. When day breaks in at dawn in the natural, the Sun, a Day Star takes over. This is a familiar scenario in the spiritual.

In Num. 24:17, Balaam, in his open vision, says “*I shall see him, but not now: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab...*” And, Bible scholars agree that the *Star* referred to is Jesus Christ. In Rev. 22:16, we know that Jesus Christ is called the bright and morning star. In 2 Pet. 1:19, he is referred to as the *Day Star*.

Again in Rev. 2:28, we are told that one of the rewards of the over-comer is that he would be given the morning star.

So it is clear to us that the star refers to persons suitably placed by divine gifting to exercise ruling functions along with others possessing,

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like themselves governmental and highly developed spiritual graces. Jesus in His message to the seven churches was seen holding the seven stars in his right hand. He said the seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches (Rev. 1:20).

These angels are later shown to be human persons who stand in ministry and bear spiritual oversight over the various churches. In chapter 1 of the book of Revelation, the Lord commanded that certain letters be written to the churches in care of these angels. This, without doubt, implies that the angels referred to were human messengers of Christ who share in the plural leadership in the named local assemblies of God's people.

The angels were to receive the Lord's message, read and meditate upon it. When sufficiently given clear insights into the Lord's mind, these ministries were to minister the contents of the letters to the several congregations in a way that they will be able to understand the Lord's instructions and respond to the same.

So these stars/angels are not spirit angels but human servants of Jesus Christ living among the Lord's people and serving the Lord's interest through serving His people. They are angels because they are messengers.

Now when we come to Ps. 19, a chapter we will be referring to in another connection, we find that the figure of the sun and that of the Bridegroom are associated. We are told that the words of life create an environment for the Son of God to tabernacle His own. He is said to be as a Bridegroom coming out of his chambers.

That connects us to the picture we see in Revelation 12:1 which was mentioned earlier. The woman is clothed with the sun, which is the Lord Jesus the bridegroom; the quickening spirit, who in his capacity as Life-giver imparts life and keeps imparting LIFE unto the woman. By this the woman is made able not only to receive seed of

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Him but also to grow that seed to fullness. Then also she receives strength to bring forth, by birth, a Life over which death has no power.

From the above consideration, it is clear also that the woman revealed in Rev. 12:1 must be the church: the bride of Christ. This is said by way of introduction. We will deal with it more fully when treating Revelation 12 in another connection.

In Isaiah 60:19, we see two contrasting verses. The first says "*the sun shall no longer be thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee...*" In the first reference, the natural sources of light: the sun and the moon are being referred to. But, in the second part of the verse which says "*...but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting Light and thy God thy glory*", the spiritual equivalence of the first of these two great lights is referred to.

Christ, the Living Word is the sun, the scriptures in its capacity to reflect the light of Jesus Christ, is the moon. We call the sun the *Logos*, using terms that are familiar to us, and the moon *Rhema*.

In the picture that we see in Rev. 12, the woman was standing on the good of God's word; the covenant that Jesus sealed with his blood. In fact, Galatians 4 tells us that the new covenant can be regarded as a woman. Thus, the figure of the moon represents the scriptures, that is, the old and the new covenant writings, in their capacity to reflect the Person, power and purpose of the Son of God.

Let us follow the thoughts on the figure of a 'star' a little bit further. What do the eleven stars mean in Joseph's dream recorded in Gen. 37? You remember that the twelve sons of Jacob were called Patriarchs. That is, they were the beginning of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were the twelve patriarchs around which the nation of Israel was built.

So, the twelve stars in Rev. 12:1 that are seen upon the woman would stand for the twelve apostles, those men who by their ministries,

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together with the Lord Jesus, constituted the nursing fathers of the Gospel church. We are, of course, just gathering this information to help us in our meditation on the main burden of this book which is a consideration of who and what anti-Christ is.

Two other things need to be mentioned in relation to 'Stars' in prophetic symbolism. The first is taken from Rev. 8:10-11. We are told of a star falling down from heaven. What will a falling star represent? Remember that the church is seen as seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Those within the church who have attained to the estate of the five-fold ministry can be said to be stars in the heavens of God. The church in the time of preparation is God's heaven, working in the midst of this world, though not of it.

Generally speaking, in some sense, each believer is positionally a star in that heaven, ordained to shine forth the light of God to a dark world. However, those in the church who are ministry gifts are the ones, strictly speaking, referred to as stars in prophetic scriptures.

Remember that in Rev. 1, Christ was shown holding the seven stars in his right hand. He faithfully upholds all His own who submit to His Lordship. The fallen star then will represent someone who has been brought by grace to the estate of ministry in the church, and who by reason of unfaithfulness has, by choice, deviated from the path of life and from being under God's rule. He has through rejecting, in practical terms, the rule of the Word and its sanctifying spirit fallen from the state of grace.

In Rev. 8:11, we are told that the fallen star is called wormwood. Wormwood by its nature connotes bitterness. Hence, it is here given that the waters were made bitter by the wormwood. A ministry that is supposed to bring life to those under its care leads them into the disfavour of outer darkness and bitterness. And just as toxic bitter water causes death, so will the influence of the fallen ministry bring

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death to those who are exercised under it.

Furthermore, let us consider the imagery of a wandering star as used in Jude 1:13. Well, we know that if there are wandering stars, there must also be fixed stars. But what would a wandering star mean? In Revelation 12, we are shown a red dragon in the heavens, the very sphere of the daily living and operations of the church. Next, we are told that this dragon cast down a third part of the stars of heaven. This is a significant number when we consider the fact that there are millions of Spirit-filled believers on earth.

So a wandering star would mean one who has lost his spiritual distinctiveness. Even though he is still able to emit light, now and then, nevertheless, he is out of course, having lost his spiritual and moral bearing. In Jude 1:13, we are told such ones are reserved for judgment. The context of this verse indicates that moral failures sourced the wandering of those stars from their God pre-determined course.

But in a contrast, Dan. 12:3 declares that *“those that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever”*. They shall remain fixed in their courses, fulfilling the divine purposes for their lives. Amen and Amen.

When through the word of God and the Spirit of God, a servant of God can bring the ministration of life to the Lord’s people, he is fulfilling his ministry. But when the ministry no longer stands in the interest of God, then such a one is wandering away.

We have looked at the symbol of the sun, the moon and the stars in a positive sense. We should note, however, that these symbols can also be used negatively. For example, in Ps. 121:6, it is said *“the sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night”*. *These experiences cover physical as well as demonic ailments*. Thus, where the context allows, the *‘sun’* and *‘moon’* may also be seen to represent the powers of

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darkness.

In particular, the moon, being something that rules in the night (and we know that associated with the night is darkness and its unfruitful works) is sometimes used to picture the powers of darkness. The stars, in this connection, will represent men and women that exercise themselves in wickedness, the rulers of the darkness of this world. By the time we examine the symbol of *heavens*, this will become very clear. Just the same way we have stars in the heavens of God; there are also evil stars in the heavenly places that rule this present world that lie in wickedness.

We want to move straight to the picture of the *sea*. Now in scriptures, for example, in Revelation 17, we find the mention of a mass of water. There we are shown a woman, a harlot, sitting upon many waters. In verse 15, the Spirit of God gives the interpretation, saying that the waters upon which the woman sits represent multitudes of people, tongues and tribes. So, if the context admits, a mass of water could stand for a multitude of people.

This figure is familiar to many of us. For example, a great crowd in a public function, standing or sitting side by side may be described as a sea of heads. So the word '*sea*' will represent multitudes. Specifically, it pictures the nations as they are presently constituted in their various national boundaries.

Another element that we need to consider in relation to that figure for a fuller understanding of its usage in Scriptures is in Rev. 21:1. Here, John saw '*a new heaven and a new earth*' and '*there was no more sea*'. The sea in this passage is used to describe the present social order and the restlessness of this evil world. This restlessness and rebellion in man usually find expressions in civil unrests, commotions, and wars as men and women rise up against governments that no longer cater for their welfare.

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Is. 57:20 says the unregenerate, the unsaved, the wicked, is like a raging sea when it cannot rest. Again in Luke 21:25, we are told that at the time of the end, there shall be upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.

Daniel 7 teaches that it is from such unrests, commotions, and wars (strengthened by the working of spirit forces upon sinful humanity) that political kingdoms emerge. Verse 2 says *“I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea...”*

Thus, the world (outside of the church) in their unregenerate, restless and rebellious condition can be symbolized by the word *‘sea’*. Here, the emphasis is on the ability of the sea to rage, that unsettled, unruly nature that is easily stirred up at any slight provocation.

What we are being shown in Rev. 21:1 is that in the age to come, when Christ’s kingdom shall have been established upon the earth, that condition of rebellion and rage will not be allowed a place amongst men. There shall be no more sea! May God grant it, in Jesus Name.

Now we go to the final image/sign that we are considering in this chapter; that is the figure of the beast. In Dan. 7:2 which we read earlier we are told that the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. That is, there was an activity from the spiritual realm influencing things on a world-wide scale. The Bible says out of this ‘sea’ arose four great beasts.

In verse 17, we are told that these four beasts represent four kings. But in verse 23, the four beasts are said to represent four kingdoms. Thus, figuratively, a beast does represent a kingdom. In addition, a beast could sometimes stand for prominent persons within that kingdom. This is important and should be noted carefully.

To say a beast is coming out of the sea is not to suggest that a wild, strange creature, of the animal kingdom, is coming up out of the sea.

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Rather, that is a prophetic way of saying that there is something akin to an evil human government, of a vast authoritarian domain, in the order of ancient empires, that shall emerge out of the present cosmos (world).

The beast-kingdom is always in opposition to Christ's kingdom. The place from which it is shown to emerge (whether it is the sea or the earth) indicates what type of kingdom it is.

Of course, we will be looking at this in more details in subsequent chapters when we shall be considering Rev. 13, a passage at the heart of this meditation.

There is yet another element that has to be examined in relation to the beast. For those who use foul words, when in common language, someone is referred to as a "*goat*"; the reference is to a known behaviour of the goat, which the person has just exhibited. It may refer to his being stubborn or stupid.

So, in the use of the figure of beast in describing a civil/social/political entity, there are certain well developed character traits possessed by that human system the Lord is speaking about.

There is this little pamphlet that many of us are quite familiar with. It is called "*The Heart of Man*". There, in a diagrammatic illustration of the heart of an unregenerate person, at least eight beasts are shown, each beast representing a particular character trait. For example, you will find in it the picture of a dog. The reference is to lose morals, cheap virtues, persons who cannot keep their bodies in sanctification.

Thus, when the picture of a single beast is used to symbolize an individual, it means there is a *dominant* character trait in the person which is commonly associated with that creature.

For example, Alexander the great, head over the ancient empire of Greece, was represented in Daniel 7 under the symbol of a leopard (verse 6). This was because of the swiftness of his battle victories against formidable armies. His military machinery was so ruthless.

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With an army famed for swift and ferocious operations, he led the Grecian Empire into great heights crushing all that stood in his path. This swiftness, among other marks, is what was represented in the leopard. While the leopard is known to be ferocious, the lion is full of strength/devouring powers.

So when these figures are used in scriptures, they convey the thoughts of God concerning a given human phenomenon in so graphic a manner as to leave a clear message to the man.

Taking a look at Matt. 7:15 for example, it is evident that the Lord Jesus Christ was talking about certain persons that may be occupying prominent positions in our civil society, some of which will be found in the church.

He says *“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly, they are ravening wolves”*. Then he went further to say, *“By their fruits, ye shall know them”*. That is, by the character they display, you shall know them. For *“out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks”*. If inwardly they are ravening wolves, then, what things fill the inside comes out through the mouth.

The Church of the Old Testament had its own periods of spiritual declension, when persons occupying positions of authority were in their character other than God expected of them. In Ezek. 22:25-29, we are told that the princes of Israel, the priests, the judges and the prophets of Israel were ravening beasts. They did not spare the flock. These persons were supposed to feed the people. But rather than do this, they exploited them. For this, God calls them ravening wolves.

Many of such symbols are used in the book of Revelation. We will suggest you undertake a similar study, going through the scriptures, taking note of how these and other symbols are used. The way a sign-language is used in a given context, tells us how we are to understand

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it. That is, by reading a passage, you will know how God intends for us to understand the symbols used in it.

When in Mic. 6 the prophet says “*Hear ye O mountains, the Lord’s controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth*”, was he speaking to the rivers, mountains, trees, land and the like which are found on the earth?

When Moses said, “*hear O heavens, give ear O earth*”, was he addressing the constellation of stars and the planetary bodies?

Brethren, in understanding we ought to be men. When God’s word is made clear, there will be no excuse for any to turn deaf ear to God’s call unto repentance.

It is in allowing His word to rule over us that we are able to enter into the promised perfection and glorification He has reserved for those who love Him. May the Lord bless you as you and cause His face to shine upon you in Jesus Name.

2

Language of Prophecy (Part Two)

In this second part of our study of the Language of prophecy, we will be looking at the symbolic use of '*heaven*' and '*earth*' in the Holy Scriptures. Let us begin with the first of these two symbols. The word '*heaven*' and its variant, 'heavens' are used in at least nine distinct senses in the Scriptures.

In Matt. 6:9, we find Jesus teaching His disciples how to pray. He said, when you pray, say, "*Our Father who is in heaven*". Again Ps. 115:16 says "*the heaven, even the heavens belong unto God, but the earth has he given unto the children of men*".

From these two verses, we may directly infer that the word '*heaven*' as used here represents the sphere of the dwelling of the immortal God, and the abode of the angelic Spirits who are in His service. That heaven, the dwelling of the LORD God Almighty and the sphere of the existence of the spirit angels, is not a location in the material world.

We know God made the material world out of eternal resources within Him. Being self-existent, He could not possibly be living in the material world and deriving an existence from it. God does not need oxygen or any form of sustenance from the material world to live. Rather, the material world is sustained by the word of His power. Therefore, the first usage of the word '*heaven*' identifies it

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with the abode of the Most High God, that realm of glory and power that sustains the material universe.

In John 3:13, we see Jesus speaking to Nicodemus, saying “*no man has ever ascended unto heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven*”. Go through that verse a few more times. You will understand Jesus was saying that, though he was physically present upon the earth in the days of his flesh, he was nevertheless in heaven.

The reference in that passage (John 3:13) is to the fact that he had heavenly glory, authority, power and majesty about Him, not just access into the Father’s presence. Again, we notice that if that is true of him, it would be true also of persons called unto salvation and fitted to receive the inheritance of the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another occurrence of the word ‘*heaven(s)*’ is in Psalm 103:19. We are told that the Lord God has prepared his throne in the heavens (take note of the distinction between *heaven* and *heavens*), and that His kingdom rules over all. Again, in Dan. 4, a chapter penned by Nebuchadnezzar after he had experienced God's judgement, while giving his testimony, he says in the 17th verse that the things that happened to him were to cause all of creation to know that the Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men.

Then in the 26th verse of the chapter, Daniel is quoted as declaring by the help of the Spirit that the judgment visited upon that heathen king was to ‘*the intent that the living (that is creation) might know that the heavens do rule*’.

Looking at what Nebuchadnezzar said in the 17th verse, in the light of what Daniel said in the 26th verse, you will discover that the Most High God who rules in the affairs of men does so in His (or by

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means of His) heavens.

What this means contextually is clear. The punishment that came upon Nebuchadnezzar was through the instrumental agency of certain persons who prayed unto God decreeing the judgement. We are told in verse 17 that the matter was by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the words of the *holy ones*.

God's administration of His universe therefore, is done through what might be called the heavens. The heavens in this connection stand for the realms of spirit angels and of the church. God does His bidding through the spirit angels and through the church.

In the Old Testament age, the spirit angels occupied a realm of authority and power higher than that of the church of the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, the church occupies a position of authority and power in God's kingdom that is higher than that assigned to spirit angels. (Heb. 1:5-14; 1 Cor. 6:1-2).

So when the Bible says the heavens do rule, the reference is to the fact that God's rule with respect to the creation is administered through agencies who in any given case could either be spirit angels or His people, the church. These are the heavens, and they are said to be the watchers: the holy ones wholly given to promoting the interest of God in creation.

We have so far examined two meaning of the word heaven. First, we said heaven represent the place of God's dwelling. Heaven also has dwelling for angels who are messengers of the Almighty. Scriptures indicate however that this sphere is heavily stratified so that even among angels there are distinctions in terms of status; estate of glory assigned these beings. Just so, the sphere of the Majesty on high if unveiled is beyond access to all creation (whether spirits or humans) to see him. Glory to the immortal One!

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When God appears in the form the angels can see, He is said to be *the angel of the Lord*. The same is true when he comes in our visions and prophetic dreams. What we see is only a manifestation of the Lord's presence.

Then we also saw that the '*heavens*' stand for God's administration, the church and the spirit angels who minister in the interest of God.

Next, the word '*heaven*' could also be used to typify the firmament above us, the atmospheric heaven. For example, Ps. 103:13 says "*as the heavens are higher than the earth so is God's mercy great to them that fear him*". The reference here is to the aerial heaven. This will mean the sky in its high reach compared to the earth upon which we are standing.

Again, in 2 Cor. 5, we find yet another usage of the word '*heaven*'. In verse 1, we read

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

When this verse of scripture is read in context, we find that the "*heavens*" referred to here is the realm of the regenerated spirit of man. The reference there is not to the atmospheric heavens or to a geographical location above the planetary bodies, but to the sphere of the regenerated spirit where the Spirit of the glorified Christ, the indwelling Spirit abides us. This is so is clear. It says... *if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved....* The reference here is to the physical body. We are told that *if our physical, earthly (fleshly) body is destroyed in death, we have another body, not made with hands eternal in the heavens.* This is clearly an invisible body,

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and that invisible body is located in the indwelling Christ.

If we read the verses that follow it, we come to understand that the descent of that invisible (divine) body (for it is contained within the physical body) WILL occur at an opportune time in connection with the event of the first resurrection promised to the overcomers. These ones now live daily in vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, habitually abiding in His word, joyfully submitting to His rule.

So Paul says, "*in this physical, earthly tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*". He was not seeking for this experience through the gateway of death, that is, to be unclothed in physical death, but that he might be clothed upon additionally.

That is, he desired that what was mortal and corruptible might be swallowed up of the life that proceeds from the heavens of his redeemed, regenerated spirit man.

The blue print of all things contained in the inheritance of the believer are entered into as the Holy Spirit makes Christ known and incorporate Christ in the obedient.

So there is mentioned in our passage two contrasting bodies: the first, our earthy human body; and the other our spirit body which is heavenly, It is resident in our regenerated spirit, which is here, called the heavens.

Therefore, the word heavens could also be used for the believer's spirit. We move yet to another usage.

In Mic. 6:2, we find the prophet reporting a controversy between God and His people. And, in proclaiming the Lord's word, he said, "*hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, ye strong foundations of the earth*. And lest we begin to think the prophet is

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out of his mind to be talking to mountains and rocks, he explains himself in the verses following showing to us that the mountains and the earth he was addressing were the Lord's people.

Again, in Deut. 32, Moses was preaching and said, "*give ear O heavens and hear O earth*". We know that Moses was not speaking to the moon and stars or planetary bodies, but to the Lord's people. Two classes of persons are addressed here: those whom by reason of divine dealings have been brought to the estate of spiritual leadership; and those of the Lord's people who receive ministries from them. Moses was saying that these ones, God's servants and His people, should hear and consider the word sent to them.

Thus, the word "*heavens*" and "*earth*" are sometimes used to represent God's people. The '*heavens*' would refer to the leadership over Israel, those who stand in the place of authority, who take charge of the day-to-day governance of the polity of Israel. These include the priests, the prophets, the king and princes. The earth is then *used in a positive sense* to represent the generality of the Lord's people (outside the above classes).

As we shall discover later, the word earth can also be used to represent those of the Lord's people that are earthly-minded (that is using the word in a negative sense). So the word heavens can refer to spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership can also be represented as mountain. For example, in Mic. 6:2 that we read, the mountain in question is the spiritual leadership over Israel. Hence, in this context, both the mountains and the heavens speak of the same set of persons.

We move to another use to which the word '*heaven*' can be put. We are told in Eph. 2:6 that the church is sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This implies that the present sphere of the church's

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ministry and the present sphere of the believer's daily living are in the heavens. *This is the picture we find almost throughout the book of Revelation.* Quite often, in the book of Revelation, when certain things are shown as being in heaven, the present sphere of the fellowship and ministry of the church is meant.

The plural form of the word "*heavenly places*" suggests that there are several places that exist in the heavenlies. We could illustrate this using the Old Testament tabernacle, the tabernacle that Moses built in the wilderness. Recall that it consisted of three compartments: the *outer-court*, the *holy place*, and the *holiest of all*.

In the book of Heb. 7-10 and 13, the worship in the New Testament age is in several portions contrasted with that of the Old Testament age. We are told that the tabernacle services were patterns of the heavenly things, the good things to come. The Church has these '*good things to come*' expressed in her.

In particular, we have in this gospel age the spiritual realities of the heavenly things referred to by Paul which are prefigured in Moses' tabernacle. We have the '*good things that were to come*' right here with us. Halleluyah.

Thus, corresponding to the *outer-court* in Moses' tabernacle is what we might call in this church age the *first heaven*; the first realm in which the believer can walk with the Lord. This revolves around knowing Him in Salvation and receiving of the enlightenment of God's kingdom.

Similarly, corresponding to the *holy place* is the *second heaven*, and, corresponding to the *holiest of all* is the *third heaven*. So, when Paul said in Eph. 1:3 "*Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*", the heavenly places he was speaking of

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are these three heavens that corresponds to the three courts in the tabernacle of Moses. These three heavens are the realms of the believers' walk and fellowship with the living God provisionally.

We are told that blessings exist in these three heavens, and we are progressively brought into all these blessings as we grow in obedience and are in fruitful communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, through our coming under His several influences, we partake of the blessings stored in these three spheres.

There is the belief some have that the first heaven is the starry sky; that is, the atmospheric heavens, the setting of the stars, moon, sun and the like. The second heaven, in the same vein, is said to be where the powers of darkness occupy. While the third heaven, under this view point, is taken to be the paradise of God.

But these three heavens, in a proper consideration of scriptures, point to spheres of fellowship and communion with the Lord God Almighty that the believer is invited to in Christ Jesus.

In the first heaven, we have communion with him, submitting to his Lordship. By this, we are allowed to see the basic principles of God's word that govern salvation from sin and the call to consecration and divine service.

When the believer has a basic understanding of these principles, and is able to walk in (experience) them, such can be said to be seated with Christ indeed in the first heaven.

We are introduced into the second court (the second heaven) in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the equipment of the gifts of the Spirit and the development of the fruits of the Spirit. Because the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a promise of God to all who believe, the second court (heaven) is viewed as the normal sphere of operation of the Spirit-filled believer, even though in certain of his

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services, he comes out to the outer-court to minister to men.

Thus, the normal sphere of the Spirit- filled believer's walk is the second court, the holy place, the second heaven. If the believer is indeed baptised in the Holy Spirit and has learnt to habitually walk by the same Spirit, then such a one is in actual estate seated with Christ in the second heaven.

But, in practical terms, it is possible for a believer to know the Lord in just the first heaven when such a one does not submit to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and all that it implies for victorious Christian living and service.

The second heavenly place, the normal sphere of the believer's daily living and fellowship also prepares for further spiritual advances. There are entrances by GOD'S Word and Spirit into the third heaven typified by the holy of holies of Moses' tabernacle.

Access into the privileges that belong to this realm is an integral part of the great blessings secured by the atoning death of Christ and offered to man by the gospel. By the word, the spiritual realities available in this realm can be proclaimed as promised reward to the faithful. Living effectually in the light of this on daily basis is an evidence of possessing the hope that anchors the soul. This hope enters into that which is beyond the veil; into the holy of holies. Also, by the workings of the gifts and divers distributions of the Holy Spirit a believer may be granted entrance into the anti-typical holy of holies.

In some instance of this entry, the believer's humanity is temporally by-passed by the Holy Spirit. Such is lifted from the earthly realms into having encounters with the Lord in the third heaven.

This is the exact experience indicated for John the apostle in

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Rev. 4:1-2; and for Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12: 2-5. In the case of John, a divine voice said unto him, ‘*Come up hither*’.

We are told in the second verse that immediately John heard that voice, he was said to be “*in the spirit*”. Notice that the visions John was having up to this point properly belonged to the gifts of the Spirit in manifestation. This much we may infer from Rev.1: 10. But here, in Rev. 4:2, he was launched into this glorious realm of the Spirit.

The original Greek text of this verse says, ‘*he became spirit*’. In other words, it was an-out-of-body experience he had.

Most often, we are limited to fellowship in the second heaven. But, once in a while, when the Lord so desires, we are Holy Spirit-transported to receive of the things that pertain to the third heaven.

Paul calls the third heaven the paradise of God. There, things associated with a believer’s fullness of union with Christ Jesus and to his glorification are brought forth in sharp images that give overwhelming impression. It makes certain living remembrance of the things revealed, besides other desirable effects.

It is pertinent to distinguish these heavenly places wherein the believer operates, from the ‘*high places*’ used in connection with the domain of darkness. These ‘*high places*’ are demonic heavens. In Eph. 6:12, Paul says,

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

The high places referred to here are obviously realms of control

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by spirit forces that are evil. The term '*heaven*' or '*heavenly*' may thus be used for these high places. Basically, in line with this usage, heaven is a realm of spiritual control over that which it influences on earth.

Our text in Ephesians 6 just referred to indicates the high places of the demonic domain are occupied by evil spirits in three distinct ranks. From Gen. 1:28 it is clear that whatever the ranks, these spirits are active in all three worlds of Sea, Air and Land.

That is, one could talk about the first, second and third heavens in relation to the order and standing of demonic spirits in the dark, cursed, domain. Thus, rightly understood, a 'high place' is not merely a geographical location but rather a sphere credited with a certain degree of Satanism that it is capable of manifesting.

For example, when we can talk of demonic operations in the world of the waters, the evil spirits at work in water-world have the same order seen in the classification given in Eph. 6: 12. All realms existing in the evil heavens, no matter where they operate from, are powerless against a true believer enlightened by the Spirit of grace.

In the satanic realm, there is a lust for blood, especially human blood, as much is derived from it by evil personages. Satanism is a dependent realm shorn of creative powers, relying on life forms in material medium. That is completely unlike the spiritual heavens that the church is associated with.

The realms of the heaven of God, which the church is called into, are sustained by the glory of God working through the agency of the word of His power.

Rev 21:23 says, "*...and the city (the church) had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof*".

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This verse of scriptures expresses the all transcending power of God which He employs in accomplishing His will unaided by natural forces. This glorious reality flows from His being immortal.

God has life in Himself (John 5:26). Only God has life in HIMSELF (1 Tim. 6:15-16). He does not depend on anything for existence.

So the church operates purely by God's word and by God's Spirit. This should be carefully noted as it will prove useful at some point. In particular, let it be understood that all our supplies and growth experiences in grace, knowledge and service are sourced in GOD.

We are borne along by Him and continue to draw upon His inexhaustible riches of grace and glory. Yet in all of this, He is never diminished, never depleted. When He has filled the perfected church with all of His fullness, what remains in Him is the fullness He has always had. Glory to GOD in the highest!

Next, we take up the '*earth*' as a symbol the Bible sometimes uses to depict things having meaning outside its generally understood meaning.

Ps. 115:16, which we referred to earlier on, uses the '*earth*' in its commonly understood sense. In this verse, '*earth*' stands for the habitable part of our world; the land mass.

Again, the word "*earth*", as evident in some scriptures, may be used to speak of man's body. This should not be a surprise to anyone. If the spirit of man can be symbolized by the word '*heaven*', then in the same vein, '*earth*' could stand for man's body.

In Gen. 2:7, we are told God made man out of the dust of the earth. So the human body, earthy as it is, could be represented by the word "*earth*".

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In certain prophetic texts, the word '*earth*' bespeaks the social order of this present world. For example, it is this social order, which finds expression in the kingdoms of this world, that is referred to in scriptures when it says "*the earth shall pass away*" (Matt. 5:18).

The earth of this passage is neither the planetary earth nor the human race necessarily, but rather it speaks of the social, economic, political and religious order the kingdoms of this world operate.

Closely related to the above usage, the word "*earth*" is sometimes in the Bible applied to the peoples that inhabit the world. For example, when it is said that the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters covers the sea, it is talking of the tremendous blessings that the ministry of the perfected church shall bring upon the nations of the world.

We know that the overcoming church will shepherd the nations to the pure worship of God. So, the word "*earth*" could stand for the human race if the context in which the word is used admits it.

Finally, the word "*earth*" could be assigned to the class of believers living more or less like the unsaved. Putting it more succinctly, when believers who are called to live in the heavenly spheres live and walk like natural men in their affections, desires, wills and emotions, they are said to be dwelling upon the earth.

There are two minds ruling in the church: the mind of the flesh which brings about dying and death; and, the mind of the Spirit which brings life and peace (Rom. 8:1-7).

Paul in Phil. 3:18, lamented that in the church of his day, there were those who conducted their affairs as though enemies of the cross of Christ, "*whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things*".

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And in Col. 3:5, we are told to mortify our members that are upon the earth. Again in Rev. 3:10, we are shown that divine judgments released against the unregenerate will invariably also fall on *'all them that dwell upon the earth'*. So we find the word *'earth'* used of a class of people who though saved, do not allow Christ to rule over their lives.

Now let us take up some other symbols used in connection with the earth. First, consider the symbols of *'grass'* and *'tree'*. Grass, as we find in Rev 8:7, Is. 40:6-8, and Zech. 10:1, is used to symbolise persons who are born again but have not grown much, spiritually speaking. In the same connection, trees are used to represent mature believers.

In Is. 55:12, we find a variant of the above usage. We are told that *"all the trees of the field shall clap their hands"*. When John the Baptist was speaking to the people, he said, *"the axe of God is laid at the root of every tree"* (Matt. 3:10). The reference is to persons who had come to covenant relationship with God, and who as such are answerable to the demands of their holy estate.

Furthermore, in Is. 61:3, we are shown that when the Lord has restored and beautified His people they shall be called *"trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."* In verse 6 of the same chapter, it is said of these same people *"ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you ministers of our God."*

So while grass can be used to typify persons who are spiritually immature, trees, where the context allows, symbolise ministers of God or other mature believers.

Still, in this earth sphere, the *wilderness is a known physical feature*. The feature used figuratively answers to a desolate

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condition, spiritually speaking. This should be clear. In the environment of spiritual desolation, significant spiritual growth is not feasible. We do not have trees and luxuriant vegetation in a typical wilderness.

For example, we see in Rev. 17, when the Lord by the Spirit would make known to John certain things about the harlot woman, he was carried into "*the wilderness*". The reference is to the fact that the things that are to be shown obtains only in an environment of spiritual wretchedness. In other words, what is revealed points to what results from a history of gross unfaithfulness of professing believers.

There are however instances in Scriptures where the word "*wilderness*" are employed supportive of a positive cause. For example, it is sometimes used in connection with one separating himself unto intensive consecration; a place away from all distraction, with the sole aim of seeking the face of the Lord for spiritual increase.

The Lord Jesus Christ was in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. John the Baptist was said to be in the wilderness until the time of his showing forth to the house of Israel. The Israelites were led into the wilderness when they came out of Egypt, where over a period of 40 years they were being processed to fit them for the land of promise.

Next is the figure of the *mountain*, we are told in the temptation of Jesus Christ that the devil carried him to a great and high mountain. Well, it is not that Jesus Christ climbed some physical mountain. There is no mountain range in the world from whose peak you may see all the kingdoms of the world.

The enemy (Satan) flashed into his mind some secrets of the

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operations of his kingdom suggesting to him something like this: *"if you want to have world power, world influence over the kingdoms of this world, I can give that to you. This is how to go about it. The kingdoms of this world are mine and I can give it to whosoever pleases me, just become my servant, bow down and worship me"*.

The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was carried to an exceedingly high mountain shows that what was being disclosed by Satan was something shared exclusively with persons who he desires to bring into godhood under him.

Selected persons in the demonic heaven, who are drawn into becoming fully developed satanic adepts, are empowered with high degree of manipulative control over the masses of the unsaved persons in a given region. Many political statesmen and false religious cult leaders are in this satanic bracket. A pole position among these was what Satan was offering Jesus Christ.

In Rev. 21, John was carried away in the spirit to an exceedingly high mountain to be shown the holy city. There, the Almighty God brought things of great import to John's attention respecting the Kingdom of Heaven.

'Mountain' is employed in another symbolism in prophetic scriptures to represent kingdoms or governments, whether political or ecclesiastical. For example, the kingdom of God, the government of God, is represented as a mountain, (Mount Zion). We are told that *"great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness"* (Ps. 48:1).

Again, in Is. 2:2 we are told *"and it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and nations shall flow into it"*. ‘

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Mountains' and '*hills*' in the Isaiah passage referred to speak of kingdoms or governments and their rulers. Let us take another example. In Rev. 6:15, 16, we are told that in the face of God's judgements, the kings of the earth, the great men and the rich men, the chief captains and mighty men, the free and the bondman hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; saying to the mountains and rocks, "*fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*". These individuals were in their desperation trying to secure whatever help they can get from machineries of government to lessen their woes or find some means of escape.

The hill represents a lesser authority than what is indicated in the figure of a mountain. Within the same realm, these terms can be used to represent the principal authority in a Kingdom (the symbolic mountain) and their immediate subordinates (the symbolic hills).

What has been observed above for civil states or monarchies also applies in the spiritual spheres. We can now appreciate the usage of these terms in prophetic scriptures when it is obvious that those being referred to are God's people. Primary and secondary spiritual leadership in the Church can be pictured in this way.

In concluding our meditation on the language of prophecy, we are going to take the symbol of the *day*. In Rev. 1:10 John says he was in the spirit on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day has to do with judgment, generally speaking.

The Lord in a message to the Church threatened punishment for specific acts of treachery and unfaithfulness will always, before the due time, highlight already received moral and spiritual principles by which they are being measured.

In this regard, what light is shed, by which the Church is

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forewarned, is prophetically referred to as “**Day**”. The message of threatened judgments (Day) is in view of the day of the LORD. Paul says, “*The day shall declare it...*” 1Cor. 3: 13. The Greek word used for day is “*Hemera*” and is also translated “*Light*” as in light of disclosure; and “*Judgment*” as when the rule by which a matter is judged is referred to.

He does also manifest to local assemblies from time to time things that are out of harmony with His will by the diverse workings of the revelatory and inspirational Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

For nations and the unsaved class the light of the Ten Commandments coupled with the witnesses of providence, of nature and of His servants supply in adequate measures what the Creator-God requires of them.

Many cycles of what is stated above are divinely granted as acts of mercy both to the Church and the world. Only then does actual judgement proceed from the Most High GOD to crush the pride and rebellion of man and overthrow evil in all the earth.

This observation of the manner of God’s dealings with humanity helps in demonstrating the fact that the Lord’s Day necessarily spans many years. In fact, each aspect of the Lord’s Day takes several days or weeks or years as His wisdom chooses.

Now, recall that the light of understanding respecting issues the Lord takes up in judgment is called “**day**”. 1 Cor. 3: 13; Rev. 1: 10 refer.

In the dark, we may not be able to see how things are inside the house. But in the day, as the sun rises, the things that were not so visible in the dark are brought to light. So the word ‘**day**’ as mentioned in Revelation 1:10 refers to the Lord shinning his light on the state of things in his church and the world preparing them for

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impending judgments. Those who hearken to His warnings are spared.

As hinted above, the word '*day*' may be used to represent a time period. Most often, in prophetic passages, the word day is not used to depict a period of twenty-four hours.

For example, when we read the story of creation, we are told that God made the heavens and the earth in six days. The reference could not possibly be a twenty four hours period since the sun and the moon were created on the fourth day. We also know that it is earth's rotation round the sun that gives us the experiences of 24 hours of a night and day.

When we also consider this in the light of Genesis 2:4 which say the heavens and the earth were created in just one day, you will accept that such a day designates a time period.

Further consideration drawn from other passages of the scriptures, makes us to know that each of the six days of creation depicts a time period; evidently well over a thousand years.

Again, in 2 Pet. 3:8, we find Peter saying that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years. This is used in relation to the history of redemption (that work of the Lord God Almighty in bringing humanity to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus).

The time period marked out for the outworking of God's redemptive programme in his people and in the earth are SEVEN symbolic days, In relation to this time period, one day with the Lord is said to be as a thousand years.

Again, in Ezek. 4, the Lord thinking about bringing severe judgments upon Israel, asked Ezekiel to do something for some number of days, and he said in verse 6, I have appointed thee a day for a year. So we find that a day can stand for a year.

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Again in Ps. 95:8, we are told of the day of temptation in the wilderness. A little later in verse 10, David speaking prophetically in the stead of God said, "*forty years was I grieved with that generation*". So, the day of temptation in the wilderness was actually a period of forty years.

In the New Testament, we see such examples of the symbolic use of the word '*day*'. Jesus speaking of the whole three and a half years of his earthly ministry for example, told the nation of Israel (the Jews) that they did not know the day of their visitation (Luke 19:44).

Also in John 5, we see Jesus in a prophetic language calling the whole span of the church age an hour. In verse 25, he says "*the hour cometh and now is when the dead (physically alive but spiritually dead) shall hear the voice of the Son of God (in the gospel) and they that hear (with profit) shall live.*"

So the whole of the two thousand years period of the church age during which the gospel is preached to men, physically alive but dead in trespasses and sins, raising them up from this dead state unto aliveness to God (Eph. 2:1-6), is referred to prophetically as an hour.

Similarly in Eph. 6:13, the whole span of the believer's life on earth is called an evil day when viewed from the standpoint of the trial-some circumstances he has to go through. The Bible says "*we through much tribulation shall enter into the kingdom*" (Acts 14:22). So, Paul was describing the whole span of the believers' stay on earth as an evil day.

The above observations are quite important. In the book of Revelations, we see many references to the word "*day*". For example, in Revelation 11, certain persons said to be prophets were

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to minister for one thousand, two hundred and sixty days. In the scriptures, we are assisted to know what that stands for. Again, in Rev. 18, the judgement of Babylon is said to be in a day. When later on we see what Babylon represents in today's world, it will amaze you that John says her judgement shall come in one day (verse 8). But we are assisted by scriptures to know that the judgement shall span some years.

We believe the time taken to examine the subject covered in this introductory section has been worth the effort. One sure benefit is that the earnest reader will begin to give proper attention to every word he meets in Scriptures. The Scriptures are verbally inspired, and one mind is behind it all. 2 Tim. 3:16 says "*all scriptures are given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*". Wherever one turns to in the scriptures, we find that it is only one Mind ministering; never contradicting Himself.

It can be established that we are already in the time of the Lord's DAY. This ministry going forth is one out of a thousand and more witnesses to the fact that we are in the eve of a great visitation of the wrath of God. None, seeing the events transpiring all over the world, needs any persuasion to believe this assertion. These are not ordinary days. Let us all hearken to the voice of diverse warnings coming our way. Let us who are named as God's children walk worthy of our calling and submit to His wisdom and counsel in all things for the LORD '*standeth before the door.*' (Jas. 4:6, 7; 5:9).

May God bless you, and cause His face to shine upon you, in Jesus name, May the Lord enable us to put to death whatever are the deeds of the flesh in our lives. For when the Lord comes to judge sin, He will do so wherever it is found, whether in the church, or out of it.

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The reverential fear of GOD is what will enable us sustain a spirit that is quick to discern the things not in agreement with the Lord's mind. Blessed be His glorious name forever and ever.

3

SIGN-EVENTS OF THE END TIME

The first four books of the New Testament commonly referred to as '*the gospels*' occupy a unique place in Scriptures. They provide such entrances into the story of redemption and the Person of the Redeemer that are not covered anywhere else in the New Testament scriptures.

From their account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, we are able to obtain insights into how all the Old Testament prophecies concerning His first advent were fulfilled. This is despite the fact that some of these prophecies seemed to contradict others.

We now know in practical terms that every aspect of a word of prophecy is covered by at least two or three writing prophets. This may be inferred from what is stated in Hebrew 1:1.

What is more, any contribution made by an inspired writer (of scriptures) on a given subject, no matter how scanty, must be taken into account for a full understanding of it. This is a very important observation and should be noted carefully.

The direct words of Jesus Christ during various times of ministry in the days of His flesh provide useful keys that help us to see several meeting points between Old Testament and New

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Testament prophecies.

The path we are taking in the study of antichrists and the systems they operate is thoroughly illuminated by some Of our Lord's teaching in the gospels. During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ shed light on some previously obscure Old Testament prophecies.

Now, there are four great discourses given by Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh. They are of vital importance when considering the course He charted for the church. They have to do with issues that are called up when the Church comes under divine inspection at any given time.

These four discourses are the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5, 6, 7); the parables of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13); the Signs of the end of the age (Matt. 24), and the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14, 15, and 16).

Looking closely at all four ministrations, we see that the first three have to do with various features of the Kingdom of Heaven as it gradually unfolds on earth. (The gospel-age Church, which is being built by the Lord Jesus Christ according to the eternal purpose of GOD, is in several scriptures referred to as the Kingdom of heaven).

The subject matter covered in the Matthew 24 discourse, also found in Mark 13, Luke 21, Luke 17, will occupy much of our attention in this chapter.

The fourth discourse centres on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this age. It is revealed as God's core provision for the building up of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit teaches us the gospel; imparts to the habitually obedient the Life of Christ and leads such in the outworking of God's programme of redemption.

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Put differently, full union with the Heavenly Bridegroom, our Redeemer and King, is to be brought about through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He was specifically given for this purpose. It requires that the Church relies wholly on Him for all things respecting her life and service.

The setting aside of this arrangement, either wholly or in part, is responsible for majority of the church systems of men developing into something outside the divine intention.

The way of recovery is through repentance followed by a complete return to the government of the Holy Spirit in all things.

We now come to the central burden in this chapter. Put succinctly, our goal is to find out what predicted events are signs that the Church age is winding up.

The Lord's insightful teaching on events associated with the end of this age lists things that are either physical in nature or else spiritual. As may be agreed, we will focus on the events of spiritual character since these were particularly given to be discerned only by believers in Christ Jesus.

Now a prophetic survey of those events described as features of the time of the end culminate in the Lord's glorious return. Let's recall that much of the Lord's teaching under consideration was occasioned by some questions His disciples asked Him during the very last week on earth.

Matt. 24:1-3 gives the exact context of this teaching. Particular notice is to be taken of the three-part question in verse three, considered in the light of the Lord's statement in verse 2. We reproduce all three verses below

“And Jesus went out. And departed from the temple:

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and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

What follows from the fourth verse to the end of the chapter may, with all propriety, be taken as answers to these questions. With gracious concern for His own, the Lord continues in the entire 25th chapter to address (using three parables) the challenges bound up with being alive at the time the events under study will be transpiring on earth.

In both chapters, He makes us see what *attitudes and character disposition* His people should develop and keep at all times, more so at the time of the end. They constitute what can be readily identified as putting to profitable use the privilege of knowing ahead about the coming days of judgment.

To keep proper track of the events of the end, we will use Matt. 24 as our main text while referring to other passages of scriptures that have direct bearing on our subject. A close study of the following chapters in the synoptic gospels, namely, Mark 13; Luke 17; and Luke 21 help to sharpen our understanding of Matt. 24.

Narrowing our interest to events that are of spiritual character, we may list four things which occurring together, point unerringly, to an imminent close of the church age. We present, for our examination, the four sign-events graciously given by the Lord Jesus

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in the interest of the Church, His body on earth. Numbered 1 to 4, they shall be taken up in discussion one after the other.

1). There arises at the time of the end, a significant number of persons, the world over, claiming to be specially anointed of Christ *but are false*. These men and women will display great signs and wonders; miraculous powers that are intended to give compelling evidence to the world of their calling and divine approval. *But they are false as the Lord declares in Matt. 24:4-5.*

In this connection, let us note that Jesus has beforehand given us a hundred per cent reliable way of knowing a patently false ministry. In His sermon on the mount, He declares that a false ministry will invariably be marked by grievous moral and character defects.

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Matt. 7: 15-16

A second point to note in the 15th verse has to do with the fact that false ministries always hide their true identity. Such ministries seduce unsuspecting persons by taking on what the Lord describes as “*sheep clothing*” whereas inwardly they are crooks. This symbolic sheep clothing is all that is seen for a relatively long time.

We can be sure, on the authority of the written word, that by divine workings, the real inward condition of every false ministry will be exposed. As the scriptures indicate somewhere else, some in this bracket may have had their beginnings in God. Their defection

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from the path of life will always be seen to have something to do with rejecting the authority of Christ or of His Word, in preference for their own self seeking ends.

The evil seed that sprang up in them when they chose to despise the sanctifying presence of Christ will grow into visible character that cannot be hidden away.

What can be 'gathered' up in the hour of harvesting that which has been secretly sown, plainly tells of a man's real character.

"Do men gather grapes of thorns"? No. Thorns are harvested from the lives of men and women who have *turned themselves into the degenerate plant of a strange vine*. Jer. 2:21. Concerning this class of persons, the Apostle Paul says, their thorns attract a curse, *whose end is to be burned*. Heb. 6:8.

There has, perhaps, been no time in history in which have risen many persons in the Church world utterly false in life who adorn the ranks of the ministry. At least, this can be shown to be the case in the past thirty years. What begins as a careless allowance of a moral vice soon develops into fixed habit. At some point, if help is not sought, an evil spirit takes over. Then begins a widening and strengthening of the satanic grip.

Let us bear in mind that any believer who under God adopts the lifestyle of the Kingdom enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5, 6, 7), will possess an inward unction that develops strong resistance toward anything of a false character, This will be so even when the mind is unfruitful about specifics. Thus, a consecrated Christian has what it takes to guard against being a victim of satanic ambush.

2). A second event the Lord identifies in our passage (Matt. 24:

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11, 12) is when the greater many of professing believers become so derailed from the path of Truth that in essence they are standing in treachery against the covenant.

And many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

The “many” prophets and their “many” deceived spring up in the midst of the church world defiling almost all that come in vital contact with them. The Greek word translated Many in this passage suggests that those referred to are in greater number than others who keep their testimony and remain unspotted from the world.

In the 2nd epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, he makes reference to this phenomenon, describing it as a falling away. 2 Thes. 2:3 a

“Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first... “

One may readily infer from all these that many of the visible church systems will be hawking a gospel that is infested with the teaching of false prophets, false Christs, false messengers.

Many unsuspecting sincere minded believers may find themselves embracing the claims of a substitute gospel, especially when it is heralded by lying signs and wonders.

However, we see a divine reaction in the 14th verse against this evil trend. This leads us to the 3rd end-time event in our passage.

³ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.

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It is evident from the foregoing and this scripture that a work of the restoration of the true gospel is required and will be carried out by the Lord Jesus Christ at the very time of the end. We are to understand that the glorious restitution of all things spoken by Apostle Paul (Acts 3:21), reserved for the end time, will be preceded by a move of the Holy Spirit in this regard.

Now, let's take a closer look at this verse (Matt. 24:14). With the question asked in Matt. 24:3 in mind, notice that Matt. 24:14, taken pre-textually, gives us a valid answer.

We ask, when shall the end come? It will come only after proper witness is borne among all people to the claims and demands of the kingdom of heaven. We ask again, what end is in view for which a witness is needed along with its occurrence? We answer, in harmony with Christ's observation in Matt. 24:2, that it is the overthrow of everything contrary to the claims and demands of the kingdom of heaven.

Finally, we ask, what is meant by this gospel of the kingdom. Our answer: It must be the same gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ preached. It ran contrary to the popular beliefs and doctrines of the religious leaders of his day. Christ message involved a call to repentance. He referred to Israel as the lost sheep of Jehovah. As a nation, she had a reputation of being in a vital covenant relationship with God but they grievously transgressed the covenant and prided themselves in what amounted in vain worship and empty religious practices devoid of life. These religious leaders under the guise of having a divine backing for whatever they were doing, set themselves up as lords and kings over God's heritage.

The common people slaved to support their leaders' luxuries and

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carnal excesses.

As It Was Then, So It Is Now

Christ's message then, declared that the king is come, at the time appointed to set up his kingdom which is to bear sovereign rule over all humanity. He taught that only those who allowed Him to rule over their lives inwardly will share in the blessings of his eternal kingdom.

As we observed earlier, the Sermon on the Mount describes what lifestyle was required of those who seek to partake of the glorious kingdom of Christ, but Christ with His kingdom was completely rejected by the Jews. "we will not have this man rule over us, his credentials are not convincing, we would rather stand with Moses, accepted by all to have divine commission. We will rather build according to Moses.

Jesus Christ, the stone which the builders rejected, was by God made the chief corner stone. The Apostle Peter adds "*onto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed is made a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed*" (1 Pet. 2:7,8). This was the situation in the first advent, as it was then, so it is now.

The restored gospel, fully served with vital principles of redemptive truths must in this hour come forth from persons whom the Lord has conquered, in whose life he has a concrete say. They and those who embrace their word will bear witness respecting the two-fold mission of the soon coming king. To those who earnestly look for him, he comes to give incorruptibility and immortality.

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However, to the incorrigible, the Omega king executes the great and terrible day of the Lord. (Mal. 4:5).

4). The fourth event in our passage is summed up in the 31st verse.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Another event which will be transpiring on earth at the time of the end indicates that a further work will be carried out by God among those who receive and respond adequately to the gospel of the kingdom. Whereas the proclamation of this gospel is as the work of sowing, that called for in Matt. 24:31 answers to the labour of the reaping angels. (Matt. 13:41-43; see also, Ps. 50:5).

Notice that Matt. 24:31 declares that the labour of the trumpet sounding angels is carried out in '*heaven*'. The '*heaven*' under reference is the church world. The activities of the reaping angels are carried out by the reaping angels. It is easy to see that the angels here refers to the sons and daughters of God who are in very good measure faithful and have the call of God upon their lives. They receive a new commission to go forth with the great sound of the trumpet call to the prospective bridal class, to all who yearn for a full union with CHRIST.

Two Signs Produced By the Four Discussed Events

The first of these two signs is the principal sign of the son of Man, the coming Messiah king. (Matt. 24:30).

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³⁰And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven: And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹And he shall send his angels with a great sound of the trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

So, here is given us the sign (not signs but sign, showing that it is the principal sign) of the Lord's coming. This sign is said to appear in heaven. The heaven here is not the sky. In verse 29 for instance, we are told that "*the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken*". Of course, this is not speaking of the physical sun, moon, stars, etc. Even though things do appear now and then in relation to these heavenly bodies, the heaven referred to herein verse 29 has to do with the church world and the religious heaven.

Also, the heavens referred to in verse 30 where the principal sign of His coming is to appear is not the sky, but the normal sphere of the church. It is the church that is the heaven in reference here. Eph. 2:6 says, *we are sitted with Christ in heavenly places* even though we are physically present on earth. It is from that spiritual height that the church conducts her affairs.

The sign of the Lord's coming, the principal sign, is to appear in heaven among the Lord's people. It is to be seen only by those who have known Jesus Christ in salvation, especially those walking in faithfulness towards the Lord. It is a sign to be seen by heaven dwellers. Phil. 3:20 says, *for our conversation is in heaven, from*

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whence also we look for the saviour the Lord Jesus Christ... Rev. 12:12 says, therefore, rejoice ye heavens; and ye that dwell in them...

So, the heaven is a people, or put differently, heaven is the sphere of spiritual activities and fellowship of the Lord's people. This sign, the principal sign of the Lord's coming, is to appear in heaven. It is a sign to be read among the Lord's people. The world of men will not be able to discern it, for this aspect of the sign is not expected to be understood by them. The sign is addressed to the church of Jesus Christ with a view to preparing her to receive the coming of the Lord.

In verse 31, there is something to note with the appearing of this sign. Remember that we have already shown that associated with the coming of the Lord is blowing of trumpets. With this at the back of our minds, we can now read verse 31 of Matt. 24. It says

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of the trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other

The word "*angels*" here refers to human messengers, the angels of the churches (Rev. 1:20), human persons suitably anointed by the Holy Spirit and given grace by the Spirit of prophecy to go forth with a ministry to the Lord's people concerning His second.

The trumpet speaks of the ministry of the word. Not just any ministry of the word, but that which has to do with the ministry of Christ in the church at the time of the end. It is the sound of the trumpet that goes forth when men speak concerning the seasons that they are in. So, not all teachings, not all the anointed teachings can

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be said to be the sound of the trumpet, but that, which relates to the current season.

Here, we are told that it is "*a great sound of a trumpet*", implying two things. One: it comes with great clarity, great power and great anointing. Secondly, it is the greatest message to be given to the church, since it directs her attention to the final aspects of the work of redemption.

Then next, we are told that the focus of the ministry of these angels of God as they go forth with the great sound of the trumpet will be to gather the elect. That which is gathered is the elect, not just a gathering of persons. Here again, the activity is restricted to the church, people foreknown of God as belonging to Him in a special way, men and women that have been chosen to have a special place in the body of Christ from the foundations of the world. They are elects; they are such before the ministry reaches them.

Again, it is implied that the gathering of the elect, will be a world-wide phenomenon. It says from one end of the heavens to the other. Across the church world, in all the nations of the earth, this activity of gathering the elect will be taking place.

At the time just prior to the coming of the Lord, there is to be a gathering together of the saints unto Him (2 Thes. 2:3). In Ps. 50:1-5, we are told that at the time when the Lord shall call to the heavens from above and the earth that He may judge His people, there is to be a gathering together of the saints unto him, them that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.

The effect of this gathering out of the church world of the eagle saints is the birthing of a spiritual movement. This will be very different from the many spiritual movements that have sprung up

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through the church history because it will not have human heads (it will not be something of a denomination). It will be a phenomenon emerging all over the world. All over the world, on account of the sound of the trumpet, believers will become increasingly concerned about the season that has set in, seeking to be fully joined to the Lord.

In Matt. 24:23-26 and Luke 17:37 it is shown that this gathering of the saints at the end of the church age shall not be unto a man or to some men who claim to have been specially anointed of God. But the gathering shall be unto the Lord Himself as shown in Ps. 50:5. The light of the truth of the kingdom that the Lord comes to reveal to His people shall be the basis of the said gathering. At that time, the Lord, not men, not signs and miracles in themselves, becomes the central focus of His people. Full union with Him in His glory becomes their sole desire.

The direct result of "*the sound of a great trumpet*" is the emergence of a spiritual movement all over the world. A great gathering of the Lord's people, of those whose hearts and minds are responding to the Spiritual awakening.

That introduces us to Matt. 25:1. Notice that this particular discourse begins in Matt. 24; so, it is one continuous teaching we have in Matt. 24 and 25; the chapter division being merely for our convenience. What we find in Matthew 25 are things that take place at the end of the age.

The introduction of Matt. 25:1 confirms this. It says "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven become like unto...*" The word "*then*" means "*AT THAT TIME*". And we may ask, "*at what time*"? At the time when the things shown in Matt. 24:29-51 will be taking place. At the time when the principal sign of His coming shall appear in the

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heaven of the church.

...THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

So, there is a spiritual movement that is birthed in the church on account of the great sound of a trumpet announcing the coming of the Lord. And this agrees with what we find in Number 10. The trumpet is for the calling of God's people out of their various religious camps, unto the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The persons involved in this spiritual journey are the elects. In Matthew 25, they are said to be virgins. This is because they are believers who proved their love for the Lord and their allegiance to him alone by responding to His call (Rev. 14:4). In the midst of the decay in the church world, its falling standards and idolatry, these ones have separated their hearts to love and serve Him rather than serve men. Their desires are towards the Lord alone, they long to be united with Him.

This principal sign is relayed in Rev. 12:1, 2. Here we are given some other identifying characteristics of the class of believers involved in this course of Life. These are adjudged as living overcoming lives in their disposition. They are thus being exercised under the exceeding great and precious promises. (For example read Rev 2:26-28; Rev 14:1; 3:12).

This sun-clothed woman is a prophetic sign watch whose course is guaranteed to bring forth a life over which death and devils have no power. She births a man child who is promised the rule over all

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nations (Rev.12:5). More discussions on this very interesting personage in a later book.

But there is a lesser sign also. It is a sign on '*earth*'; sufficiently easy to discern. The sign is produced by the first and second events discussed earlier on. The earth-beast of Rev 13:11-18 is the expression of the red-dragon on earth.

When the dragon is confronted with steadily declining fortunes in the heavens, it raises up a church based organisation which is erroneously taken by the greater many of professing believers to be the church of Jesus Christ.

The earth beast functioning fully as detailed in Rev 13:11-18, is a phenomenon that has never existed up until this end of time. More discussions on this will be taken later in this book.

Antichrists, Antichrist Systems: Their Early History and Predicted Rise

In this chapter, we shall be looking at Antichrist Systems. We will trace their early history and their predicted rise.

We trust that as we examine these things, the word of God will not only enlighten us but equally cause our love for righteousness and hatred for iniquity to abound.

We all should be inspired by the Spirit of truth to take a bold stand against that corrupting serpentine seed; refusing to bow the knees to anything that is contrary to GOD and His righteousness. God himself shall breathe upon His revealed word; giving this humble effort the powers of a sharp sickle. The fruit of this release of truth shall abound to God's glory through Christ Jesus our Lord.

So we are looking at the Antichrist systems. We want to trace their rise as revealed in the word of God. The leading text is I John 2:15-27. However, we will be dealing here with verses 18-20, trusting to pick up the other portion for meditation much later.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had

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been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

We begin our examination of this great subject by drawing attention to the first thing of note in this short passage: the phrase "...it is the last time".

It was about 2000 years ago that John under divine inspiration wrote these words. He says that his days were the beginning of a time period in redemptive history called "*the last time*" or "*the last days*". Let us therefore recognize that there is a definite time period in human history that the scriptures call "*the last time*".

The next thing we are shown is that there was common knowledge among the believers then that at the last time 'antichrist' shall come.

In other words, the coming of '*antichrist*' was to be a property of the last time or the last days of this present age. This evil phenomenon will evolve and take on prominence wherever it is allowed to breed. This is the very next thought we are introduced to in this same verse.

When it is the last time, there shall be MANY antichrists. In fact, the apostle clearly states that there were already many antichrists in manifestation in his days, thus confirming that the last days have set in.

Notice the way verse 18 reads: '*even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know it is the last time.*'

At the last time, antichrist and antichrists shall come! Our concern in this chapter will be to look at what constitute the

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antichrist system, note its emergence and track its presence and mode of operation in the earth today.

It will be profitable at this very beginning to re-establish a point we have made in the foregoing paragraphs. We want you to note that the apostle John did not say “*at the last time the antichrist shall come*”, but “*at the last time antichrist (not the antichrist) shall come*”. This is very important because it shows us that antichrist is first and foremost a system of things, even though the word would also concretely refer to persons at the head of their affairs.

This observation connects us to that phrase we find in verse 18: “*even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know it is the last time*”. There is the ‘*antichrist*’ and there are antichrists; two realities that we should take note of early enough in this meditation.

So here we are explicitly told that in the last time, there would be a class of persons springing up on the earth that shall have in and round about them, measurably developed anti-Christ characteristics.

These persons will be extremely few compared to another class we find in this passage. But they, the first of these two groups, will stand out prominently on the world stage. In addition, a few among them may be more given to Satan and so have more prominence than others. It is this class of persons, full-grown sons of the devil who emerge to attempt to execute the programme of Satan that is referred to in the first part of verse 18.

“*...and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come...*”

Secondly, there will be a number of antichrist persons (“*many antichrists*”: verse 18b) on earth. Each antichrist will be leader of a large following, having a vast number of persons looking up to him

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for leadership and control. Thus, each antichrist will be the head of a system. There will many of such anti-Christ systems over the whole earth.

Let us read verse 18 again to drive home this thought. (If we see the foregoing in context, we are able and ready to take on the next thought)

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

Concerning this great subject, we all need to be thoroughly informed. We cannot afford to be ignorant of things that are happening all around us; particularly events transpiring in the church world.

God expects that when we have been enlightened to see what is taking place, we will be able to take quality decision concerning our walk with Him and the hopes of a share in the Kingdom rule of CHRIST.

The next thought we will be taking is in verse 19. We read 1 John 2:19 again.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

What we find in this verse is shocking. First of all, it tells us how the antichrist system comes to be. The persons who become manifest as antichrists have their beginnings in godly environments.

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They are persons who at some time may have been soundly saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.

So when we talk about the antichrist systems, we are confronted with this rather disturbing fact that antichrists have their beginnings in God. They are not persons who had no root in a Church setting. They are most probably persons who had encountered Christ in salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit but later fell out of the way of truth and righteousness.

“They went out from us...” the apostle says. That means the antichrists have their beginnings in the church. That is what makes it all the more serious.

‘Antichrist’ may, in simple terms, refer to one who was anointed with the Spirit of God, but who resolved within himself to use the anointing for a purpose other than that for which God gave it.

A disloyal attitude towards Christ’s cause eventually leads one on the path of loss. A deviation sets in that brings an individual to a sphere where Satan can lay hold upon him to work in his infernal interest.

So we are seeing in this passage that antichrists were believers who once exerted much influence in the church world, manifesting the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. But these persons, in the process of time, began to veer off the way of truth and righteousness.

Ultimately, such are brought to a sphere where they come under satanic manipulation or outright control.

We shall be touching on this in details later in this and subsequent chapters. But note that when God outpoured His Spirit upon the church on the day of Pentecost, it was for a purpose. But when a minister develops a false life, perverts God’s purpose and is

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driven by wrong motive, he cannot stay under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He goes OUT.

Yes, such goes out of the divine covering and becomes vulnerable to Satan and his hordes of demonic spirits. At the beginning, he might not be aware of what is happening to him. The victim's strength and influence are put to serve satanic cause.

Let's read verse 19 of I John 2 again. It says:

...they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. So antichrists have four identifiable characteristics

(i) They have their beginning in God. Antichrists invariably have holy beginnings; they have their beginning in the church. Soundly saved, knowing the sound of the gospel of grace. These persons once evidently moved in the anointing but, chose to work in opposition to the divine purpose. They were Holy Spirit anointed, but by character and works now stand in opposition to Christ; they are antichrists.

Antichrists are not men who are in the occult who have never known Jesus Christ. Other scriptures on this subject strengthen our understanding of the 1 John 2 passage. Let's examine just a few passages. In Rev. 17:1-5 read and considered together with Rev. 13:11-18, antichrist is called a harlot. Who is a harlot?

One who is married, but who leaves the affection of the husband and turns to another. By the word of the covenant we are married to

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Christ (Is. 54: 5; Eph. 5:24, 31-32.).

James could write to believers and say “*ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity to God or do you seek to provoke God, don't you know that the Spirit that dwelleth in you lusteth to envy?*”

So when we talk about a harlot system, in spiritual parlance the obvious reference is to a church set up that has from a divine perspective become grossly unfaithful. Definitely this will include in its ranks men once faithful but have now turned their loyalty to another.

(ii) They have a false life. Antichrists maintain false lives. They are, more or less, moral wrecks. They cannot keep their bodies under sanctification; their eyes are full of adultery such that young girls or young men in their congregations are not safe in their company.

Of course, they do not begin in that state. But along the line, because of their treachery against Christ, they lose grip of the spirit of holiness. They are even deceived into thinking that a man's moral bearing does not really count for the ‘*saved*’.

Many, who have strayed from the paths of life, think in the same manner. One ‘small’ error here and another there, and before you know it, whatever control they once had of their moral lives fails. Bondage to moral perversion results and by them spreads.

They may have had the experience of going in and out of some moral evil. But the vital life flow from Christ having been lost, there comes a time when even if they want to cease from a moral vice, they are helpless. What a terrible fate that is!

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Help is still available to all such but strange enough victims often prefer to hide away their leprous condition. What a life!

Moral depravity when not confronted by the power of God deadens the conscience that was once alive. Without doubt, this is one of the marks of an antichrist: what they really are is covered up by pretentious claims.

Brethren! The Holy Spirit makes us holy; we cannot be holy by ourselves. When a man refuses to see the importance of submitting to the Christ's sanctifying power his morals are endangered, Instead of the fruits of the Spirit, the works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19-21) slowly but surely gain ascendancy and degenerate him.

For some, this ministry of the anointed word can start them on the way to victory over sin once again. But such should deliberately seek additional counsel and help early enough

When an individual that has been once quickened to see the kingdom and has a sure calling as a minister of God begins to walk in uncleanness, the person is travelling on a dangerous path. He easily becomes a Satan's recruit. Men, who today are working against God's interest, do not realize that their fall began years ago.

We all know that there is a stage in a believer's life during which he is in conflict with sin. He hates sin but experiences a struggle within him so that he sometimes runs afoul of the word of righteousness. But that is not what we are talking about here.

We are talking about men who know how to walk in victory over sin, suddenly allowing all kinds of things to creep into their lives. Peter says like dogs these ones return to their vomit, so that their state is worst than before conversion.

Paul warns that persons who have tasted the heavenly gift, the pure word of God and known something of the powers of the age to

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come, if they shall fall away, “*there is no more sacrifice for sins*” (Heb. 6: 4ff).

So from the moral standpoint, antichrists are degenerates. They have not taken advantage of the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon their lives to walk in moral victory. While living in uncleanness and do not have real compassion they love the manifestation of power for illicit gains.

(111) Antichrists are driven by wrong motives. Whenever they set out supposedly on the cause of the gospel, the real motive is to use the window of opportunity this affords to make merchandize of God’s people.

They are merely floating a ‘*church*’ business outfit after the passion for God’s glory was thrown to the wind. Put differently, they are in the ministry for gain (fame, money and pride). Their motives are simply far from being pure.

When the anointing is upon a man, he is able to influence people for God; able to wield divine power for the blessing of humanity as the word of God is preached. People easily take notice of the anointing and are willing to submit to the leadership it confers on the bearer. But that brings the individual carrying the anointing under great responsibility. Loyalty to CHRIST all the way!

Like John said, a minister’s principal responsibility is to keep pointing his hearers to Jesus. “*He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom (Christ) must increase and I must decrease*”.

Persons who carry the anointing upon their lives must know that the Church belongs to Jesus: it is not their personal property. If

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anyone is a man of God, his gifts will make room for him even in difficult times and in hard terrains.

God will lead persons to acknowledge His grace upon His servants through acts of kindness and support. But many mistake this gracious arrangement for a divine mandate to exploit the people of God.

The Prophet Isaiah saw and described today's widespread practice of ministries making merchandize of God's people in the 56th chapter (verse 12). He called them greedy dogs. In the same passage the prophet identifies selfish motives as the ruin of ministry. He certainly was picturing the church systems of our day.

Those that turn the house of God into a den of thieves make themselves choice candidates for Satan's end time Generals. The host of antichrists is filled with men who having lost their senses to greed, now take up arms against Him whom they once knew and adored as Saviour. What a tragedy!

Support for a system that has usurped the rights of Christ in His Church passes for enmity against God. Children, youths and adult alike can court the way of antichrists. That is how the antichrist systems thrive.

When any neglects to give serious attention to his moral life, such cannot develop powers of spiritual discerning. Without proper discernment a man can easily be swept along, becoming an ardent follower of an antichrist. There is no evil as damning as giving support to systems that have taken a stand against God (Jer. 51:1; Is. 28:1 Rev. 18:4). This is the hour of a great separation between the symbolic tares and wheat classes. Stand clear of the treachery that is in rampart display!

Right standing springing up from a heart that has been

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thoroughly awakened by the word of life leading unto a right living under God is the only thing that can guarantee a fixed place in the Kingdom of grace.

There is such a thing as being placed a pillar in His perfected temple. Of such ones it is written; they “*shall go no more out*”. May this be your portion and mine as we follow the Lamb of God all the way.

How different is the above estate from this other: “*they went out from us*”. That is, they go out of the covering of the Lord.

‘*Son of perdition*’, and ‘*man of sin*’ are terms used to describe those who ‘*go out*’ as Judas Iscariot did (John 13:30; 17:12). This man seemed to follow the Lord but his undoing had to do with having wrong motive. He lost his place by becoming Satan’s ally.

(iv) The fourth mark: Perverting the divine purpose. There is a purpose of God for giving the anointing. It is not for man to raise to *himself congregations over which he sits in Lordly control*. President and founder tendencies invariably lean toward oneself a god that must be worshipped by the followers.

God's purpose for the anointing is to raise up from the world of mankind, a people for His name; a Bride for the Son of God (Acts 15:14).

When a man begins to measure success only by the number of churches he has planted, defiance and arrogance might be at the door of his heart. Now notice this: true anointing will reveal itself in fruitfulness and what we are talking about is not against the joy of fruitfulness

Antichrists are only interested in increased membership of their ‘*church*’ enterprise; not in the welfare of the souls of the people. In

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fact, the souls of the people are perceived by them as financial instruments, mere articles of trade (Rev. 18 17). This is *antichrists*: were once tempted and having fallen are now driven by a treacherous mimicking of the divine purpose and method.

Christ's all inclusive pre-eminence is clearly taught in Scriptures. All characteristic lines of the Christian faith and practice take their bearings from His Person and works. Christ is both the Builder and Building. What is to be seen in the finished picture is Christ through and through.

Whatever is not Him or His cannot find acceptance with the almighty GOD. The needed graces in any sphere of divine service come as supplies from Him and are maintained only through the obedience of faith and unbroken fellowship.

Without Him nothing is done. It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. These assertions have practical implications. Christ leads the way as the WAY Himself.

But when man puts himself in the place of Christ by either setting aside the revealed word of God or the order of things put in place by Him what obtains is dead works. When this state of affairs is continued in what is indicated should be seen as neither frailty of the human mind nor mere un-consecration.

A hidden agenda lies behind all attempts to '*build the Church*' while setting aside Christ and His word. Counterfeit kingdom building springs from a wrong purpose. It reveals an inward resolve to set oneself as king and lord over God's Heritage. The currency of pride, greed and illicit pleasure is often what is coveted.

When the ministry of the word of God is perverted it is designed merely to serve man's end, not the divine interest. The Gospel is not man-centred, it is Christ-centred. It is all about building people and

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being built up into the Life of Christ. The passion of Paul as expressed in Gal. 4:19 and Col. 1:24-2:2 capture the essence of a true ministry.

Brethren, God has needs! He has a purpose in redemption. The purpose for which God brought Christ into the world is first and foremost for Himself; the kingdom is His.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray "*thine is the kingdom, thine is the honour, thine is the power, thine is the glory from now and forever*". When put in a proper perspective, it is as God's needs are met that man finds His needs satisfied. But when a thing is done that opposes the interest of God, even though it serves the interest of men, it is something dangerous.

Jesus said to Peter "*Get thee behind me Satan thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*"

Let it be properly understood, that it is in the environment of habitually side-tracking God that we find the gradual emergence of antichrists and antichrist systems. If a man perverts the anointing that is given to serve God's purpose to another's he only sets himself in opposition to God. A man under God will minister to human needs, but more than that, he will minister to the needs of the divine as well.

By these four telling characteristics, we can always identify antichrist tendencies. Any believer in whose life and ministry these characteristics are measurably developed is antichrist prone.

In the same vein, church system where such things have become institutionalized, that supports and creates an environment for the developments of these traits are antichrist prone. May the Lord's mercies find all who once laboured for Him but are now straying through lack of discretion. In Jesus Name.

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Notice that the scriptures give us an understanding that while all of these things are happening in the lives of persons who once had the anointing of God upon their lives (who began humbly but lost focus on Christ their Head and Master as they began to experience concrete evidence of success in ministry) there would be a corresponding activity taking place in the congregations that these ones minister in. It is as this condition is present that the antichrist system emerges. Let's see this in 2 Thes. 2.

Recall the points made earlier on in this chapter on how antichrist takes his rise. We saw that their beginnings were in Christ, genuinely anointed people but who have perverted the purpose of the anointing to self-serving ends, with wrong motives and a false life. 2 Thes. 2:1-4.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

The apostle says here that the day of the Lord shall not come except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. In other words, the revelation of antichrist is

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always preceded by a “*falling away*”. If there is no “*falling away*”, antichrist cannot be birthed.

What does the apostle here mean by a falling away? Notice he was writing to believers, and he says there would be a falling away that will ultimately pave the way for the unveiling of the man of sin.

The “*falling away*” here speaks of a general departure from the terms of the covenant; a departure from truth, from righteousness, from the apostolic doctrines and principles that are to govern Christian walk and service. The “*falling away*” is a very pronounced decline in spirituality among a great many (Matt. 24:12).

Brethren, it is only when spirituality is at a low ebb that an environment is created for satanic incursion, this ultimately produces an antichrist system. The antichrist spirit cannot take over when a congregation is alive, spiritually speaking.

In a proper setting, when the ministries either by default or design do something that is contrary to God, they are challenged by the congregation.

But if and when the servants of God are failing morally and ministry wise and the congregations are also unfaithful to the divine charge, death sets in. The emphasis today in many places is on numbers and the attendant increase in monetary taking.

The discerning will readily agree that another spirit ultimately takes over in such circumstances. All manner of un-consecrated persons begin to invade the assembly (Rev.18:2). Some of these odd members even become leaders and heads of assemblies.

How terrible it is for a congregation where there are all manner of persons (symbolic frogs and evil birds) taking prominent responsibilities. In such an environment, you cannot be talking about moral purity.

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Right in that congregation-type, the minister is a captive to sin and there are some human mediums whose eyes beam forth demonic influences. Evil glances are cast on uncovered human vessels and they are soon overpowered with the spirit of lust. In that kind of atmosphere, the evil system is wholly embraced with time.

But when the people are alive to their responsibilities under God and everyone knows what he is doing, evil cannot prevail.

So when the congregation cannot be a check on the ministries and the ministers who are supposed to bring life from God to the people are serving themselves, the mystery of iniquity prevails. In such a setting, a platform is created for the tutoring of several satanic messengers. As faithful ministries reproduce their likes under GOD, so when there is a great loss of spirituality, holiness of life and conduct, the reverse is to be expected

Now let's read verse 4 again and see something that is said concerning the manifestation of the antichrist spirit. 2 Thes. 2:4

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as god sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

In the Old Testament, the greatest charge laid against the children of Israel is that they worshipped idols. And here again we are shown that idolatry is prominent and marks out the antichrist system. Under the Old Testament, backslidden Israel worshipped idols of gold and silver. In the same vein but in a contrast, gospel age idolatry is the worship of men by their equally deceived brethren right in the temple of God.

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Now, when the scriptures refer to some idol man sitting in the temple of God, some suppose that someday a temple will be built in Jerusalem which the antichrist will desecrate, declaring himself to be God. No. Even if the Jewish temple system is rebuilt, it will be of no consequence, for God no longer dwell in temples made with hands. He finished with that order of things about two thousand years back (Acts 7: 48, 49 Heb. 8:1, 2). Man is now God's temple.

So the temple under reference here is the believer's heart and by extension the church of the living God, the congregation of God's people. "*know ye not that ye are the temple of the living God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*" (I Cor. 6:18-20)?

In the antichrist system, the headship and Lordship of Christ is dethroned and men sit as gods over the congregation of God's people. Men are not only held in reverence and awe, they are literally worshipped. By their conducts these idol Shepherds literally demand the worship and obedience of the people. They thus oppose God and exalt themselves above any form of restraint.

It is a two- stage affair. When developing their 'godhood' they labour (symbolic standing) dishing out the polluted food (symbolic wine, doctrine of the Nicolaitans) that overpowers the sensibilities of the people. All resistances are crushed by sheer intimidation couched in spiritual undertones.

When all are beaten to submission, the idol shepherd now crowns himself king over the conquered domain. Now seen as god, he invariably acts as one. This is the symbolic "*sitting and showing himself that he is God*".

In many places around the globe are to be found potential antichrist systems at varying points of development.

Be careful who rules over your heart brother; be careful who

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rules over your heart sister. Paul already taught the brethren about this. “*Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things*”. May the Lord help us to tell and be constantly reminded of these things for certainly these are not ordinary days.

We have seen that two compound events combine to produce the antichrist system. First is the gradual falling away of genuinely anointed persons from the covering of Christ. In their fall they resort to building up a false life and seeking to use the anointing to serve themselves. The second thing is a general loss of spirituality among the congregations where these persons minister.

The Antichrist System Today

In the remaining part of this chapter we will be taking a closer look at what the apostle John meant when he said there were already many antichrists in his day and how this compares with today.

Our intention is to draw your attention to the fact that as in the days of the apostles, there are many antichrists and antichrist systems today. Of course the main thrust in all of these teachings is to sound God’s warning message to His people in the midst of the present decay.

Let’s turn again to 2 John: 18-20.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that

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they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

John writing nearly 2000 years ago was declaring things which were true then. However, as we shall demonstrate, his prophetic message carries a similar signification for our day. In particular, the reference to the last time means that John was speaking prophetically.

While in the consideration of the apostles, they were living in the last days; their days only began the last time, since the phrase is used to refer generally to the entire period of the church age (see also Joel 2:28ff read alongside Acts 2:17ff).

This observation is important, because those things the apostles witnessed in the early days of the church would feature throughout the church age, becoming fully developed at the close of this age. We have surely entered into the time period belonging to the close of this age. (This position is clearly established in our earlier writing, “*The blessed Hope*” to which this reader is referred).

We need not wonder that those marks of spiritual defection that began to appear in the days of the apostles have become more pronounced in our day. We are able to speak about them ‘more particularly’. The things condemned then are with us today and on their way to full development.

The tares cropping up in church systems then were as little shrubs in terms of the extent of development. They have now become mighty trees. Erroneous doctrines and the evil practices which they develop in their adherents have become common place issues in the church world.

They certainly are the same things which John spoke about then.

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However today there is the advantage of our seeing the features of the present state of spiritual decay in full relief. It is a lot easier to have a clear appreciation of the Apostles' treatment of how it all began.

John says, '*it is the last time*'. And if it was the last time about 2000 years ago, how would we describe the present time? We are surely in the very end of the "*last time*." May the Lord bring all of us to that awareness and to what it entails.

We have already seen that an antichrist system is a full blown phenomenon; a well defined spiritual organism. Organisations that fit this designation are *headed by either defiant wandering or outright fallen stars*. They have a strong following that are held under their sway, almost irredeemably bound to their cultic influence.

An antichrist evidently has some history. He is certainly not just someone who did not *start* as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The term '*antichrist*' includes the core idea of an anointed minister of the gospel who by defection now *works* against the purpose of Christ.

Putting it more succinctly, an antichrist in making is one who had known God in salvation, filled with the Holy Spirit, and has once moved in the power of the Holy Spirit. But now through a self serving defection such a one has corrupted his gifting and relinquished loyalty to Christ.

Because we know that quite a number of persons find it difficult to see that the antichrist system is proceeding from the church world, the great house (2Tim. 2:20), we shall spend some more time on this.

We have already taken the witness of the apostle John. He says in 1John 2:19 "*they* (the many antichrists earlier referred to) *went*

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out from us". So they had early days in the church. They were part of us, so to speak, "*but they went out from us.*"

Now, let's take Paul as a second witness. We will be considering several passages in the Holy Scriptures. The first call is 2Cor. 11. Let us take verses 1 and 2 in the first instance.

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Here Paul, seeing certain spiritually unhealthy things creeping into the church in Corinth, was provoked in the spirit to address it. He began to write to the brethren "*I have espoused you to one husband*", not many husbands, not rival husbands in opposition to Christ, but one husband.

John says "*...He that has the bride is the bridegroom. He must increase and I must decrease*". So Paul says, I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. Let's read the next verse and get an understanding of the apostle's concern. He says:

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

What exactly was the burden on Paul's mind? Why the fear? Perhaps we should rather ask, "*In what way did the serpent beguile Eve*"? We answer, by words! In what way can the minds of God's

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people be possibly corrupted from the singular devotion to the Saviour, Jesus Christ? Well, it is much the same way as it happened in the Garden of Eden. It is also by means of words!

In a congregational setting, the communication of such beguiling words would only possibly come through the ministry of persons received as servants of God and who are part of the leadership. This was the case in Paul's day and what we have before us in this passage of scriptures is a divine reaction to this ugly development. Paul in this chapter confronts the problem headlong intent upon destroying the bewitching spell patently false ministries had set up over the Corinthian Church. So let's continue our discourse from 2Cor. 11:4.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him

False ministries have an attitude which makes them cast aspersion on true servants of God and in the same vein lay claim to being unusually 'anointed'. Here, these 'ministers' made way for themselves by discrediting Paul. These satanically manipulated ministries feared that what Paul and other ministers like him stood for will endanger not only their acceptance with the people but unmask their pernicious ways.

We find the same scenario in 3 John 9-11 unfolded with respect the treatment their likes meted out to Apostle John, Diotrephes charged the local church he functioned in as an elder to receive neither Apostle John nor anybody from him. If John or anyone he sent were to visit that local church for ministry, they were to be

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rejected.

We are told Diotrephes was driven by an inordinate desire to have pre-eminence among the brethren. He already had lordly control over the Church in that locality. He easily was an idol shepherd. He forced cultic submission to himself and must have had something of a gang following who did his bidding. These traits in Diotrephes are associated with the antichrist spirit.

So Paul needed to let the church in Corinth know that she was being seduced by wolves in sheep clothing. The charges levelled against her were strongly worded and serves us today as warning. Paul by the Spirit called the false ministries deceivers and angels of Satan. Let's read verse 13

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

In the above verse, one might think Paul was referring to persons who were out-rightly unsaved. However, when we read further down 2Cor.11 we are left with no other conclusion than that these evil ministries once walked with Christ. Their defection from Christ constituted a danger to the Church because the greater many of the brethren were not able to discern this.

But someone may ask, how come an individual who had come to the estate of ministry turn against the interest of Christ?

Unfaithfulness to one's covenant responsibility is always at the root of a man's fall.

For an un-consecrated individual involved in spiritual leadership, taking advantage of the Lord's flock for filthy lucre sake is not a far-fetched thing. At some point in the life of individuals who are

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habitually given to serving personal interests an evil spirit takes over. Paul writing concerning these evil ministries says that *'their belly is their god'* (Phil. 3: 19). Paul calls them *"false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ."* Verse 14-15.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

That Satan loves to use scriptures to sponsor his deceitful schemes, is a well known strategy aimed at hoodwinking unsuspecting hearers. Many are painfully gullible and appear not to be able to discern properly.

Let's continue in our reading from 2Cor. 11, taking verses 16 through 18.

I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

What exactly was Paul saying here? Those said to be glorying after the flesh were *'ministers'* who feign charisma, make boastful claims and for effect love glamour. They were influential not only in their locality but also in the sub-region. Paul, in this letter challenges these charlatans, saying in effect; *"You lay claims to having some*

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stunning credentials respecting both natural and spiritual standing. Whatever these claims are in real terms, do not line up to mine."

Paul had words of rebuke for the Corinthian church who took pleasure in these false teachers thereby showing indiscretion and disloyalty to Christ. He says:

For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. (2Cor. 11:19-20).

The Corinthians preferred these glamorous '*ministries*' who under some pretence plundered them. The humble carriage of true ministries as was seen in Jesus Christ contrasts with the overblown ego and unsanctified morals of ministries that have gone degenerate. Nothing is appealing enough to these perverts except that which carries illicit gains and assigns them a reputation of greatness!

We know from the scriptures that if Paul was someone who took wrong advantage of his very rare spiritual giftings he certainly would have out done them.

Recall a time Paul went into the city of Macedonia preaching. In the riverside outdoor meetings he was holding a lady with the spirit of divination began to prophesy. She declared in '*prophecy*', "*these are the servants of God that have come to show us clearly the way of salvation.*"

False ministries today will go to town with this kind of '*unsought*' publicity and probably call a press conference to rub it in on all about the unusual anointing they carry!

This '*prophecy*' was given the first and second day, but by the

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third day Paul discerned that the utterance flowed from an unclean source. A factual declaration you will say, but it emanated from a wrong spirit! He commanded the demonic spirit of divination to come out of the young lady. The evil spirit came out and things began to unfold.

The young lady was in league with a number of persons in an evil cult. The cult group was using the spirit of divination in the woman to make money. The devotees of this cult stirred up persecution against Paul and had him and Silas cast into prison (Acts 16:18-23).

Unclean spirits tried to gain control of the proceedings in the early church but the true apostles laboured to separate the vile from the precious. It was a difficult job but they did it. It was not without stiff opposition even from unexpected quarters (undiscerning church leaders).

So Paul told the Corinthian Christians: *“for ye suffer (you accept it), if a man brings you into bondage, if a man devour you...”*.

The reference was to the unsparing attitude of the false ministries towards the flock. They laid heavy burdens on the people in the matter of money collection.

This is the reason why from verse 8 to verse 12; Paul was saying *“when I come unto you do I take money from you? When I lacked did I say you should supply my needs? I hold back to set a proper example.”*

Paul continues, saying in effect, *“I see that you have become a constant victim of overbearing ministries who take to deceit, plundering you in the name of God.”*

“I agree some of them are known to us. Though they started out with us but their present demeanour is unbecoming. They have

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unclean motives for stepping into the work of ministry.”

“In my not receiving offering from you, I am actually making a statement to the effect that you should have a proper perspective of the work of the ministry. Is it because I love you less? God knows, it isn't that I don't love you but I will rather spend my resources to provide for you and spend my life to preach to you to demonstrate the attitude worthy of the gospel. ”

Later in verse 14 and 15 of the next chapter (2 Cor. 12:14, 15), he says *"for I seek not yours but you (in other words “I seek not your offerings but your submission to the rule of Christ”) for the children ought not to lay up for the parents but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend my money and be spent pouring out my life serving you; even if the more abundantly I love you the less you love me."*

That is the spirit of true ministry. In a contrast, the phrases *"bring you to bondage"; "devour you"* allude to the effects of false ministries on the brethren.

Let's take the reading of verse 20 of 2 Corinthians.11 again.

For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

These are characteristics of a class of ministries that was already in existence in the days of the apostles. The verse indicates that these false ministries dealt ruthlessly with all who tried to resist their evil way. This nature of violence contrasts with the comportment of true ministries like Paul.

A true ministry does not play to the gallery. He is usually very

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deliberate in his speeches, pointing men to the cross and to the living Saviour.

Ironically, some congregations complained against Paul. As we saw earlier, it takes a falling away among God's people themselves for false ministries to have their way among them. That is what sets the stage for antichrists to flourish.

Paul, apparently, did not excite the flesh nor capture the people's fancy and many did not like it. In verse 6 of our passage, he says "*but though I be rude in speech (the way I minister the word does not seem to reflect artistry in your assessment) yet not in knowledge but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things*".

In other words, Paul was saying, "*you have stayed long enough under my ministry for you to know that I am from God*".

Let's take the next few verses one after the other (from verse 21 of 2 Cor. 11)

I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly) I am bold also.

Paul is saying here that he did not come behind in any grace. Whatever these hirelings boasted of as to natural or spiritual endowments, Paul declared he was more than a match for them all.

Obviously, the Corinthian Christians were not putting the difference between Paul and these other persons. They were ready to reject him in preference for the false ministries, apparently because of boastful claims and fleshly displays that excite carnal minded believers.

It was hard for them to discern spiritually the world of difference

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between Paul and the self-acclaimed apostles. This is because, somehow, the Corinthian brethren were not living right themselves. Moral failures weaken spiritual perception.

So Paul begins questioning the faltering Corinthian about the false ministries.

*Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I.
Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.*

Thus these were not just people coming from some heathen lands; they were Israelites and at a time part of the Jewish church in Jerusalem. He says "*are they the seed of Abraham? So am I*". Now let's read verse 23.

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

So Paul does not say these people are not ministers of Christ but that they have been overtaken by a false life, a greedy disposition that has virtually dispossessed them of desirable graces. Thereafter Paul begins to testify of all the experiences he was going through on account of ministering to God's people. But these others ones, they don't like making sacrifice, and did not watch over their souls.

So very clearly we have it on good authority that antichrists are ministers who had their beginnings in the faith. But how does Paul describe these persons who he admits to be the ministers of God? He calls them "*false apostles*", "*messengers or ministers of Satan*?" Why? Because the overall effect of their ministry serves the interests of Satan rather than God. May the Lord heal our minds and hearts.

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Let us go to a second passage, Phil. 3. We will read verses 1-2, and then from 17-19. Phil. 3:1-2

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

'**Dogs**' is used to symbolise moral uncleanness in persons with a measure of spiritual age (able to war) and is applied to certain persons whose ministries have defiling influences. These symbolic dogs are also called evil workers.

But we need to understand the class of persons so addressed by Paul. We are given insight into his use of this symbolism when we read verses 17-19. Phil. 3:17-19.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:...

Now Paul was not weeping for unbelievers but for fellow ministers who had taken a downward course. As he was writing, there were tears in his eyes because of the evil course these persons have chosen for themselves. He calls them the *enemies of the cross of Christ.*" Concerning these ones, he says in verse 19.

Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

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These men serve God only for what they can get out of it. They are ready to compromise truth for illicit pleasures and filthy lucre. They glory in their shame; they mind earthly things.

The third passage we are going to take is Acts 20: 17-37. It records Paul's address to the elders of the church at Ephesus just before his departure. The entire passage is very revealing of the points we are making. It is reproduced below.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he saith unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no

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more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

There are a lot to learn in this passage concerning the characteristics of true ministries in contrast to antichrists and that is the reason why we have taken pains to reproduce it for reading and close study. But we will just draw your attention to vs. 29-30.

It says “*For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away*

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disciples after them”.

Thus antichrists are to be found in church settings. They are persons, ministers, who had their beginnings with God. Here again we are shown some of their characteristics. They serve with a wrong motive: to make merchandize of God’s people; and they do this brutally. They are grievous wolves who do not spare God’s flock.

Concerning Israel, the prophet said in Zeph. 3:3 *“her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow”.*

Secondly, they seek to draw away disciples after them. They seek lordly control over God’s people. They seek to have the pre-eminence; they carve out empires for themselves.

So antichrist persons are not unbelievers, they are not persons in the occult or false religions, they operate within the church world, they had their beginnings in the faith.

Now we are in the closing period of the *“last time,”* and what we see in the church world today indicate that things the apostles witnessed against in their days are now with us in fuller measures.

For example, in the denominational churches, a Pastor who is president and founder is a *‘President’* indeed. He is often venerated and it is amazing to what extent this is carried out. When such comes into the congregation in the midst of a Church service, everybody stands up and begin to clap their hands, singing his praise. The instrument of music goes forth and you can hear shouts of vain eulogies; men worshipping man.

Brethren! There is so much of idolatry going on in churches today. Men have assumed the place of God in their fellow men’s hearts. They are idolized, revered and worshipped.

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Zech. 10:2; 11:17 talks about idol shepherds. They want exaltation, they want prominence; they want the devotions due Jesus Christ to be given to them. They literally crave the worship of their brethren. They do not necessarily say so, but they act it out. They conduct themselves in such a way that their brethren take them as gods.

The Lord Jesus said concerning the religious leaders of the time, *“they make broad their phylacteries; and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets; and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.*

But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased: and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:5-12).

There perhaps has never been a time when there was so much craze for titles and names of blasphemies as we have it today in the church world. That is because men seek ways to exalt themselves and make others see them as gods. In spiritual parlance, this is spiritual masquerading. From the above passage, we learn that religion has always provided its priests with the platform to impose themselves upon the common people as objects of veneration. They simply twist provision in the tenets of the faith to establish their right to human worship as though divinely commanded.

Pentecostalism is a term sometimes used to indicate the stripped remains of what was once identified as spiritual movements birthed

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in the wake of unusual outpourings of the Holy Spirit notably in the first half of the last century.

When these spiritual movements one after the other began to lose steam because of sin and unfaithfulness in their rank and file, denominations sprang up to take their place with a common brand name "*Pentecostals*".

Each one of them with a relative good start brought much gospel blessings to lost humanity. And this they did not without disturbing admixtures. In the passage of time, one by one the Pentecostal denominations are waning in their witness bearing while at the same time accommodating beliefs and practices that are alien to the New Testament scriptures.

The rate at which apostasy is gaining ground even in the court of the Pentecostals is disastrous. They are out-doing the orthodox churches in things for which these are considered dead. Many things that were unimaginable thirty, forty years ago, when the church was more alive, are now happening.

Many good people are making bad mistakes allowing themselves to be borne along in the treachery against the cause of Christ. But we as God's children must come alive to our responsibilities. Our hearts must be purged of the spirit of iniquity. This will prove to be our defence against the spirit of this age. Otherwise there can be no other expectation but a coming fearful judgment.

John, that great servant of God, said to the covenant community of God's people in John 3:28-30:

"Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the

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bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase but I must decrease".

But this spirit that was in him (and in the apostles of the Lamb) is not treasured by many today.

Without knowing the full import of what they are doing and unmindful of the ruin they are bringing upon themselves and those who submit to them, many have made themselves rivals of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every one of them is carving out a kingdom for himself, where he sits as Lord over many congregations (branches) spread across cities, states, and nations. There is so much of empire building where the king is not God but man.

Today in every street in most of the cities of our country, the number of denominational churches can run into dozens. Each denomination has its ensign, all competing for supremacy. You will think that is a sign of revival. But no, men are only intent on extending the frontiers of their own empire.

The Lord Jesus Christ says they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. But when the convert is made they make him twofold more a child of hell (Matt. 23:15). May the Lord greatly have mercy on us.

So that is the first thing of note in the church world at the close of the church age: grievous idolatry in the temple of God, a notable sign that there is already a falling away (2 Thes. 2: 3). Many ministers of God are setting aside the Lordship and headship of Christ over the church and are sitting upon the *'throne of*

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God' to receive worship from their brethren.

It was not so in the days of the apostles. Even though many antichrists sought to introduce that order, the apostles and many other faithful ones among the Lord's people resisted them. The prophetic spirit indicates that human worship of cultic shepherds shall fully emerge at the time of the end. Today, it has become institutionalized; it has become the norm.

Secondly, the church world today is increasingly taken over by materialism and greed. '*Church business*' is about the most profitable venture in the world. The name of the game is money, and it does not matter from what source the money comes or how it is collected. The gold of the temple is more important than the temple; and the gift upon the altar is more treasured than the altar itself (Matt. 23: 16-22). Anything goes as long as the money keeps rolling in. There are no restraints.

Out of covetousness, an increasing number of servants now go into *extortion and excesses* (Matt. 23:25). And even persons that seem to be gentlemen in collars having the shape of lambs transform into wolves and dragons (Matt. 7: 15; Rev. 13:11) when '*raising*' offering.

The Lord Jesus upbraided the Jewish leaders in the days of his flesh "*woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayer*" (Matt. 23:14).

Oh, there is a lot of devouring of hapless souls today! In the average denominational Church, you can predict what will be preached on Sunday. It is from some group of scriptures and they keep going round and round the same subject. It is all about how you can build ten houses if you give a well-pleasing offering. The

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sermons are always centred on man's needs. And if you are not careful, you will think they are lovers of people. But no, they are fishing in the troubled waters of human problems and only appear to be proffering real solutions.

Like ravenous wolves “*they devour widows*” houses, and for pretence make long prayer! There is grand deception cum extortion everywhere. And this has become a shame even to unbelievers. Many a ‘*servant*’ of God today glory in their shame (Phil. 3: 19).

What of moral uncleanness? It hardly deserves any mention. Many things are happening in secret places and the nakedness of many that stand before God’s people as servants of Jesus Christ have become public embarrassments.

Men that appear beautiful outward are full of all uncleanness within (Matt. 23: 27) and many abominable and unimaginable things are being done in the dark by even public figures in the church world (Ezek. 8).

The mystery of iniquity is already at work; and among leaders and followers alike, strange things are happening. A strange wind of uncleanness is blowing over Christendom and sweeping multitudes along. May the Lord deliver us!

These things abound: idolatry; materialism, greed, extortion and immorality. Grievous moral failures manifesting in all forms of sexual sins and uncleanness have taken over the church world today. *There is a falling away already.*

The situation is made worse because with murderous passion do many false ministries resist the truth. They oppose and persecute true ministries that seek to bring the word of correction and liberate God’s people from their tyranny. They fight against every attempt to upset their empires. They build the tombs of the prophets and

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garnished the sepulchres of the righteous (Matt. 23:29-35).

This tendency for false ministries to bitterly destroy true ministries even to the point of death (a major characteristic of the antichrist system: Rev. 18:27; 17: 9) has been since the days of the early church and was so grievously manifested by Roman Catholicism. But the same spirit pervades the church world today. To stand for truth; standing against the evil of the time is to make yourself a prey. The prophet Isaiah said in Is. 59:13-15.

In transgression and lying against the LORD and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the mouth words of falsehood. And judgement is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street (of religion), and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth: and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.

As this word comes to you, it places upon you a great responsibility. Notice that the Lord Jesus Christ says in Mathew 24 that these things that have now enveloped the church world are marks of abominations that eventually lead to desolation (Matt. 24:15). And there is a judgment determined upon the desolate (Dan. 9:27).

There is a sure judgment that will come upon the church world and all associated with this order of things. “*But ye have an unction from the Holy one, and ye know all things*” (I John 2:20).

The power to discern a true message (ministry) from a false ministry is inside of you. This places a responsibility upon you as a believer. God has not left you without protection. *You have an*

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unction from the Holy one, and ye know all things. If we are truly born again, our spirits will bear witness to the Lord's mind on a situation, so that we are without excuse.

But why does John call it “*unction from the Holy One*”. It is because holiness of life and conduct is a basic measuring line. One who is a carrier of God’s message to His people; a carrier of the message from the Holy One must know how to live in victory over the flesh. 2 Tim. 2:19 says:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”.

So even before you examine a message, take a look at the man. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 says their coming is “*with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*” while I John 2:29 says us “*If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him*”. That is the acid test: a man’s moral character and ministerial conduct. “*Ye shall know them by their fruits. They come to you in sheep’s clothing* (seemingly harmless, even attractive, everything fine outwardly), *but within they are ravening wolves.* (Matt. 7:14-16).

If a servant of God is not living in righteousness or is carrying on in a way that runs contrary to the principle of righteousness and truth, you have a right to reject his message and to flee from him even if he seems to be on fire for GOD.

But that is not all. When you are alive to God and to your responsibility as a believer, submitting to the rule of the Holy Spirit,

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you will be able to detect by the anointing a false ministry or an antichrist system and to stay clear. I John 2:26-27 says

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Ye need no man to teach you. If you are sincere and ask God whether or not a particular work has His approval, He will show it clearly to you, because there is the ability by the Spirit of God that indwells you. There is a covenant between you and Him.

It says “*You have unction of the Holy One*”. The only authority for you to accept the things witnessed to in this book is if they agree with your spirit. If they do not, you are to set them aside. No one better qualified than the Lord Jesus Christ to be an inter-mediator between a believer and God in any matter. You are not a grandchild to God; you are His child and have direct access to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ.

But that treasure God has put in you to be able to know what is in agreement with Him puts you under a responsibility. It is that you have the responsibility to ensure that your heart is always right with Him.

This is because if your heart is not right with God, the light in you will darken. You will not be able to understand these things; they will make no meaning to you. You will even fight against the truth, because the Bible says the wicked shall do wickedly and shall

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not understand (Dan. 12:10).

Look at Balaam. What made him to fall? He was a minister with so much anointing upon his life. The scope of his prophecy spanned thousands of years. *“I shall see Him but not now: I shall behold Him but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel...”* What a beautiful prophecy!

But what was his undoing? The Bible says he loved the gain of unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:15). He fell because of greed. His greed made him *“mad”* to the point he could not see what even a donkey saw (2 Pet. 2:16). You cannot identify a false prophet and an antichrist system when you love the broad way (Matt. 7:13-15). But if you long to do His will alone, you shall understand his doctrine (John 7: 17).

So the starting place is your heart; turn it over to him in totality. If you find yourself having moral problems, or wrong motives (greed and covetousness); if there is anything in your life that you don't approve of, cry out to God and continue to do that until you gain the victory.

There is power in the presence of God to deliver. It is dangerous to walk in un-consecration; having conflicting affections. Double mindedness makes one both unstable and devoid of light.

We are in the time of the very end. Whatever a man will amount to in the kingdom that shall soon be revealed is being determined on a daily basis. Now is the hour of judgment, the judge is inside of you. Christ in you is the hope of glory; He by his word is judging His people.

Let us turn to him. To whatever extent the anointing of God is upon your life and you know it, you must guard that great deposit of God in you so that it does not fall into a sphere where there can be

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satanic manipulations. The Lord bless and keep you as you make a decision to live for Him alone, in Jesus Name.

5

The Satanic Axis

In this chapter we want to examine the satanic axis. By this we mean the three expressions of the satanic kingdom that are revealed at the time of the end.

We will be showing that the antichrist system is one division of three axes of evil. We will begin by describing this evil axis, briefly discuss the first two and later focus on the third, the antichrist system, and our main concern in this book.

Now there are three axes around which the satanic kingdom revolves. These are mentioned and discussed in Revelation 12 and 13 with other passages both in the book of Revelation and in the Old Testament scriptures shedding further light on them. These are (1) the dragon, (2) the beast out of the sea and, (3) the beast out of the earth. Together they constitute an evil trinity.

We begin our meditation by briefly discussing the first two.

The Dragon

The dragon is introduced in Rev. 12: 3. It says

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

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In verse 9, we are told that this dragon is “*that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.*” So the dragon is a familiar personage. He is that old serpent, the devil. When we see him at the beginning in the Garden of Eden, he was just a serpent but over time, he is manifested as a dragon. He is no longer just in man’s garden; he is now firmly positioned in the heaven. (Later we shall talk about this heaven in which the sign of the dragon is revealed).

Ordinarily, a dragon is a hydra-headed, lengthy and mega-sized serpent. So we understand that over the years, Satan has known a measure of increase. He has grown in terms of its influence and control over mankind. He is in fact the head of a federation of unclean spirit personages.

He now has not just one, but seven heads. The evidence of these heads being recognizable entities with considerable might but yet subject to satanic authority is shown in their wearing crowns.

In a sense, Satan controls the present world. He is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19b). He is also said to be a great red dragon.

The dragon is not just the devil as an individual, but a satanic world. It is a many-member body, made up essentially of spirit beings in a fallen estate over which Satan presides. There are also some human persons in our world who are part of that set-up.

So the dragon comes across as a federation consisting of Satan and the league of fallen angels. Collectively, these constitute the main axis of evil. It is the base of the satanic kingdom. All that takes place of satanic interest are determined and co-ordinated from that realm. That is one bloc.

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The Beast out of the sea

This is revealed in Revelation 13:1-2. Let's read it the way it appears in the King James Version of the Bible. We shall have cause to draw your attention to verse 1 in another connection when we will need to read from another translation. So let's take Rev. 13:1-2.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

We have already shown in the Language of Prophecy that a beast may represent (1) a king or the human head of a kingdom (the term 'beast' is never used for Christ's kingdom,) or (2) the kingdom itself, or (3) the sphere of authority of that kingdom. Thus, we can say that this beast out of the sea is a political kingdom/alliance (among the comity of nations) that emerges on the earth at the time of the end.

To say that it emerges out of the sea means this beast system comes out of the world of mankind; composed, in the main, of people in unregenerate condition.

That is, the persons who would be the main actors in that order of things will be non-Christians. They draw their powers from Satan and do not pretend to have any religious expression. Even when key persons in the system are religious, the political contraption

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maintains its separate identity. They make no mistake to say they are of the church. In this second axis, we have Satanists, persons in the occult, and the world's false religions.

Satan has always had strong interest in the political systems of this world and in the leaders of such systems. The beast out of the sea will be the most powerful political/military formation ever. Rev. 13:1 suggests it will have all the features of all major world empires in human history.

An examination of the historical fulfilment of Dan. 7 gives us to understand that the coming world political empire would in its nuclei aspect be more or less a revived Roman empire.

There was a Roman empire, which was the last of the four beasts shown in Dan. 7. That political kingdom lost its political control over the earth. But here in Rev. 13, we are shown that it re-emerges in a much more developed form at the close of this present age.

The nucleus of this world empire is already present in the earth. Prophecy assigns a much greater and global prominence, *militarily*, to the European Union in the near future. But that over-bearing, military cum political, dominance which the beast out of the sea shall possess as revealed in Rev. 13:1-8 will be held back by the divine hand until a particular event sets in and has measurably run its course. We shall give this matter the consideration it deserves in the next chapter.

Our focus in this meditation however is not on the sea-beast. We are interested in unmasking the third axis of evil: the beast coming out of the earth. It is in this evil axis that we find the antichrist system. It is this system that poses a problem to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The beast out of the sea with all of its powers cannot deceive

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even a young Christian. Its power lies in the force of arms. But the antichrist system which is the beast that comes out of the earth is a veritable adversary of the true believer and the cause of the Kingdom of Christ. So let us now examine this third axis of evil.

The Beast Out Of the Earth

The last eight verses of Rev. 13 give us so much insight regarding this beast. For a start, let's read Rev. 13:11.

*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth;
and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a
dragon.*

So there is a distinction between the dragon, the Beast rising out of the sea and the beast coming out of the earth. This must be noted carefully. The Beast from the earth, who is later shown to be a false prophet, is neither the devil nor his angels. Strictly speaking, it does not even represent persons in the occult or false religion. Rather it denotes something that has connection with the church as we shall soon establish.

Now unlike the first beast, this beast is shown to emerge out of the earth. Now, recall that the *sea* from which the first beast emerges is used in this passage to represent the world of the unregenerate, humanity devoid of the knowledge of Christ.

The *earth*, in contrast, stands for the realm of professed believers in Christ Jesus. Structurally, these persons are typically organized into local congregations of God's people in more or less fellowship with Christ.

We saw earlier in the Language of Prophecy that two symbols

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are commonly used to represent the believers in the book of Revelation. The first, the symbol of “*heavens*”, is employed to describe those among the Lord’s people who are heavenly-minded. As such, these live in sanctification, and continually seek a divine placement with the over-comers. They live daily in light of the coming of the Lord. They have found strength to separate themselves from the allurements of this world.

The second, “*earth*”, is used to symbolize those of the Lord’s people who though saved have by their lifestyle chosen an earthly course. They are believers and do serve Him so to say, but they have their members upon the earth. They have not yielded themselves to the call of consecration. They know nothing of the blessedness of life in the Spirit

In other words, there are two minds revealed in the church: the mind of the flesh which brings about death and death things, and the mind of the Spirit which brings life and peace (Rom. 8:1-7).

Paul in Phil. 3:18, lamented that in the church of his day, there were those who conducted their affairs as enemies of the cross of Christ, *"whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things"*. And in Col. 3:5, we are told to *"mortify therefore our members that are upon the earth"*.

So the word “*earth*” could mean believers who are allowing the works of the flesh to gain prominence in their lives, men and women called to a heavenly course, who rather chose to follow an earthly course. And here we are shown that from among the earth class, from the midst of an apostate, fallen church, a beast is to emerge.

This observation agrees with what we read earlier in 2 Thes. 2. For an antichrist system to emerge in the midst of the church world

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there must be a falling away first. It is when believers have lost their spiritual focus and are living like those who are not yet saved in their affections, desires, wills and emotions that a system of things can emerge from among them that can be described as a beast out of the earth.

The beast out of the earth is thus a religious kingdom that emerges from within the church world. It is said to have the shape of a lamb, that is, it identifies with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). It operates like the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also appears harmless, for a lamb is gentle and harmless. It is however a false lamb. There is the true lamb, but there is a false lamb.

Now when as believers we are true in our affection, loyalty and submission to the rule of Christ, we are pictured as sheep, the sheep of His hand (Ps. 95:7). And remember a lamb is the small of a sheep. So we are lambs.

In Rev. 14:1, we are shown that they are lambs indeed who learn to submit fully to Christ's rule in their moral and spiritual conduct. But when a body of believers conduct their affairs in a way that is contrary to the rule of Christ, they may outwardly appear like lambs, but they do not fit the description.

So the very fact that this beast is said to have the shape of a lamb shows that this is a Christian organisation. It is a church-based kingdom. It is made up of persons who have only paid lip service to the vows of their covenant relationship with God.

Like a true lamb, it looks harmless, even inviting. When you see it with its beautiful names (and there are so many names, the bible says it has names of blasphemy), you may not after many careful glances detect any evil. It carries a signal "*don't run away*

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from me, I am harmless and a lamb". But it is actually a beast.

Moreover, it is said to have two horns like the true Lamb of God. Horns in scriptures represent powers; remember Rev. 17 says: *the ten horns are ten kings*. The true Lamb of God has two horns with which He manifests His power and carries out His activities on earth. These are the power of God's word and the power of God's Spirit as we mentioned earlier in the consideration of the Language of Prophecy. These are the two powers by which the true church operates.

But this false lamb also has two horns. It makes the beholder to believe that the power of the word and the power of the Spirit are evident in its operations.

The Bible is preached; it outwardly appears to operate by the Spirit of God. When an onlooker sits in the congregation, he may not easily understand that something else is happening. And at the beginning nothing else seems to really happen. But this '*lamb*' though having two horns and is seemingly innocent is a false prophet and eventually turns out to be an antichrist.

The Lord will not have His people to err concerning the things that belong to our peace and safety, and because this third axis of evil has so much to do with the church of Jesus Christ, two other symbols are used to represent the beast from the earth. These symbols (the symbol of a false prophet and the symbol of a harlot woman) are used in order to strengthen our understanding of this earth beast as having a church expression. So let's consider them.

The Earth Beast as a False Prophet

We will read Rev. 16:13-14 in the first instance.

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And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast (this is the beast out of the sea. He is the only one referred to as the beast when the description does not include where it comes from), and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Here these three axes of evil are again shown but in this case the beast from the earth is called a false prophet. Now come to Rev. 19:17-20. We read:

*And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast (**that is the beast from the sea**), and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. There both were cast alive into a*

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lake of fire burning with brimstones.

Notice he says the beast was taken and with him the false prophet. So the beast from the earth is the false prophet. And the false prophet is known by the miracles that it conjures. 2 Thes. 2:8-10 says:

And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteous in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Take note of verse 9: “*Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan*”. There is an activity of Satan towards the false prophet that empowers him to do certain things and ultimately transform him into an antichrist. Later in chapter 6, we shall examine three distinct phases in the development of the false prophet. But recall that our burden in this part of this chapter is to show that the beast from the earth, which we have already identified as a false prophet, has a church based expression.

So come with me to Matthew 24, we will be looking at verse 5, 23 and 24.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

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Notice He says *many shall come in my name*. So when we talk about the false prophet, we are not to look for one individual. But to say that all the individuals that are so described have a common identity; they are false.

They also claim a special relationship with Christ. They do not out-rightly say “*I am Jesus Christ*”, (for nobody will take any such person serious) but they simply say “*I am specially anointed*”. Christ means “*the anointed one*”. So to say “*I am Christ*” is to draw attention to oneself as one that is specially anointed and worthy of the attention of God’s people.

So let us read verse 23 and 24:

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect

Please let’s take note of the plurality in the expression: “*For there shall arise false Christs*” (Verse 23). So from the divine perspective, in the matter of antichrist, many personalities are involved. All, no matter their apparent differences and mode of operation, have the common characteristics of being false.

But who is a false prophet? One may ask. A false prophet is identified in scriptures by several characteristics few of which shall be discussed. First of all, by the simple test of Matt. 7:15-20, we can say a false prophet is one who serves in the midst of God’s people (in other words, he professes to be a minister of the gospel) but who is unclean in his moral bearing. Unholy living is sufficient

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evidence that an individual is out of fellowship with Christ.

Let's go back to Mathew 7. We will take the reading from verse 13 and through to 23 to see the exact context in which some claims are made. This will help us get a clearer understanding of what the Lord is showing us here. Matt. 7:13-27

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity

“They come to you...” means that they come as servants of God.

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They present themselves to men as ministers of the gospel of Christ so to speak. Then it says they come in sheep clothing, so they are not unbelievers, they are not persons of strange religions; they are not outright cultic persons. They were believers; some soundly saved, baptised in the Spirit and had known how to operate by the word and by the Spirit of God.

“They come to you in sheep clothing”, just like one of you. But there is something about their inward life, their moral lives, their motives and desires that have been firmly held back from the Lord’s conquering power.

“Within they are ravenous wolves.” That this is so is very clear from the verses that follow. Now, in Matt. 5, 6, 7:1-12, the Lord teaches on the life style that is required of those who are to be accounted worthy of His kingdom. And immediately after, He gives a warning concerning false prophets revealing their characteristic marks (verses 15-20). He begins to say in verse 21 *“not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven”*.

So false prophets are professing believers; once accepted as servants of God. They call him Lord with their mouth, they prophesy in His name, they cast out devils in His name, they do many wonderful works in His name; but they are not doing the will of the Father. They serve their own interests, building their own kingdoms.

They are also not morally true. They do not do all of the sayings of the Lord (verse 27-27); they do not live true to the demands of the kingdom. They choose from the scriptures only that which suits their fancies. The Lord Jesus Christ says they are *“workers of iniquity”*.

So from the fruit of character, you can detect a false prophet. A

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false prophet is false in life. Then gradually, not in one day but gradually, a false prophet begins to have perversion in his teachings. His teachings begin to become coloured and perverted. He begins to speak perverse things. Ultimately a false prophet becomes an antichrist, one whose very essence opposes Christ.

The typical example in scriptures and who we may consider a type of false prophet is Balaam. Some of the most beautiful prophecies in scriptures were given by him. Read through Numbers 22 through 24, and it will amaze you seeing the great anointing that was upon his life.

He was so great a prophet that everybody knew him across several nations. In particular, it was believed with reason, that whoever he blesses is blessed and whoever he curses is cursed. He lived in Mesopotamia in the Ur of the Chaldees (the same place from where Abraham was called out). Many came from far and near to seek his ministry. He was no ordinary man of God. But he became a false prophet and metamorphosed into an antichrist.

Now you are likely to be familiar with the story. But to refresh your memory, recall that Israel, God's people, were journeying into the land of their inheritance. God manifested His presence among them in giving them decisive victory over all the nations that stood in their way. At this time they had just destroyed two great nations and their kings: Sihon King of the Ammorites and Og the king of Bashan. *“And the fear of them came upon all”* the remaining nations in the region. Verse 3 of Num. 22 says *“And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel”*.

This development led Balak, the King of Moab to contemplate a way to destroy God's people. In Num. 22:2 we are shown that he

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consulted with the elders of Midian, a neighbouring nation, on how to approach this agenda. They knew whatever takes place in the earth is often influenced by unseen powers, and if a curse could be placed upon Israel, they will be defeated in the battle.

So they decided to consult the great prophet Balaam to curse God's people. Verses 5-7 of Num. 22 says:

“He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him saying, behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam and they spake unto him the words of Balak”

So that was the setting. And it is in this context that we find the prophecies given in Numbers 22 through 24. But let us go to Num. 24:25 and read to verse 3 of chapter 25 and we will see something concerning this prophet of God. Num. 24:25-25:3

And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also his way. And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the

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daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

Now, it looked as though the matter was finished, Balaam returned to his place. But the offer of money, wealth, and goods were still in his mind. The New Testament scriptures show to us that he went back to tell the elders of Moab and Midian what to do to overcome Israel.

Balaam said in effect, *“To curse this people, no way, you can’t curse those whom God has blessed. But there is something you can do that will bring a self-curse upon them. Send your beautiful young women into their camps and let them lure them into sexual immorality, when they have lost their senses, these women will then draw them to worship in your altar. If you are able to do this, even God will be angry with them and you will defeat them”*.

So by the authority of the Lord’s word in Rev. 2:12-17, we know that what we read in Num. 25:1-2 was by the counsel of Balaam to Balak, for which he was handsomely rewarded. Let’s read Rev. 2:12-14.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among

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you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

So who taught Balak to do these things to the children of Israel? It was Balaam the “*great prophet*”. He taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Of course, the fornication here goes beyond the physical acts they committed. That only opened the gateway to a much more terrible union: the worship of the Moabitish god Baal-peor. Num. 25:3 says: *And Israel joined himself unto (became one with) Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.* The Bible says in I Corinthians 6:16 *he which is joined to an harlot is one body.*

So they joined themselves to Baal-Peor, which is by interpretation “*the master of the penis*”, who ravishes men’s moral restraint leading them to lewdness. And when they had committed all kinds of immorality, their spiritual senses became dull and before you knew it they began to kneel before ordinary silver gods or gods made of wood. Thus what we have in Rev. 2:13-14 as the doctrine of Balaam interprets Num. 25.

Let us take another reference to Balaam in the New Testament and see why he taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel. Let us turn to the book of Jude. Jude 1:8-13.

Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh,

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despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, AND RAN GREEDILY AFTER THE ERROR OF BALAAM FOR REWARD, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Under the Old Testament, Balaam was one individual, but in the New Testament application, Balaam is a body of people who share a common identity. The false prophet is a many-member body. Now notice the words used to describe these people. They are said to be *brute beasts*; that should remind us of Revelation 13. They are also said to be *clouds without water*; they are also called *wandering stars*.

The last figure of speech is very instructive and we shall meet it again in Revelation 12 when we shall be discussing the satanic field. But to say they are stars means that they had attained to a high status in the faith before they began to fall away. You can't call a man a

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star but that he is able to emit light. Men who have the capacity to hear God's word, understand it and minister it in a way that gives light and understanding to God's people are stars, and "*stars differ from stars in glory*" (Remember Rev. 1:20 and our comment on it in '*the Language of Prophecy*').

That these ones are wandering stars means they have wandered out of the sphere of divine control and influence. They are no longer in the keeping hands of Christ (Rev. 1:16; 2:1). They have been drawn away by their own lusts and fallen (Jas. 1:14-15); That is what happened to Balaam. He was drawn away from righteousness by greed; he loved the rewards of unrighteousness.

Balaam is a type of a man having a holy beginning but because of greed and a false life, with time opens himself to all kinds of influences. And notice, when a man begins to fall, many people about him will not know. He will still appear to be carrying on; only people very close to him will begin to notice something is going wrong. But ultimately, some other powers take him over. Things become very clear to the spiritually discerning that the individual is in a desperately evil state

The Earth Beast as a Harlot

The third picture used to describe the earth-Beast is that of a woman, a harlot woman. Let' read about her in Rev. 17: 1-3.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials and talked with me saying unto me, come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters. With whom the

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kings of the earth have committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns

Now let us first agree that in scriptures a woman is sometimes used to symbolise the church. (Both man and woman is sometimes used to symbolise the church, but woman as a symbol for the church is the more commonly understood figure). In Is. 54: 5 for example, the prophet says concerning the church “*thy maker is thy husband*”. Thus the church is married to the Lord, her maker.

This is also clearly brought forth in Eph. 5:23-33. Verse 31-32 says

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a very great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

So the church is set forth as a woman in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. She is a bride and the Lord is her bridegroom; her husband. And this being the case, the Lord expects from the church that singular affection and devotion that a woman gives only to her husband.

The church is to love the Lord with all of her might, strength and body; she is to be faithful to Him and committed to His purpose. She is to be committed to the charge given her by her

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husband, and hold Him in reverence, keeping with all diligence His words and instructions.

But if and whenever her loyalty and affection begin to be given to another other than the Lord, it attracts divine displeasure. That ‘*another*’ may be the spirit of this age.

There is no way she can seek the fleeting pleasures of this world without becoming unfaithful to the charge of the Lord. Rightly seen, she will be reckoned guilty of trampling her Master’s words if she is hooked to the world.

Using the term employed in Numbers chapter 5 for an adulterous woman, she is like a “*wife going astray from her husband.*” Let us take some verses of scriptures to establish this thought.

First, let’s take Hos. 2. Now, Hosea is a book written to show God's love for a people who are regarded as his wife but who were unfaithful unto Him. In Chapter 1, the prophet was asked to marry a woman given to harlotry in order to illustrate by his own life the experience that Jehovah was having with his people.

But come to verse 5 of chapter 2 and see how this unfolds. There we find Israel saying, under the figure of a woman:

I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

Note that the word “*lover*” is plural... “*I will go after my lovers*”. We are shown that what informed that decision had to do with her unbridled lust which could only be met by these several husbands.

Now let’s go also to Jas. 4:4-5. It says:

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Ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

Who was James addressing here? We answer that these were believers, males and females alike. And he calls them adulterers and adulteresses, because they had shifted from singular love and affection for Christ and the kingdom, to the love of the world.

And notice that we are shown here that the Lord exercises great jealousy in this matter of spiritual harlotry. Num. 5:12-21 is a prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the church. It shows to us that the Lord will not overlook any condition of infidelity in the church. Again and again, moved by the spirit of jealousy, He will bring the church under testing and divine inspection. May the Lord help us to see this in Jesus Name.

The last scriptures we want to examine in this connection is in 2 Corinthians. We already looked at it in chapter 4 when we considered the early history and predicted rise of the antichrist system.

Remember the point we are making is that a body of people called by the name of the Lord, genuinely saved and filled with the Spirit, operating by the word and Spirit of God and going by the name of a church can be pictured as a harlot if she is grossly unfaithful to her vows and has become more or less fixed in her ways.

Let this thought be carefully weighed in the reader's mind. The figure of a harlot is never used to represent unbelievers or the world

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systems, because these do not belong to Christ in the first instance. They have no marriage relationship with Him. It is a prophetic symbol of a church that has left her husband's home and is joined to others. So we read 2Cor. 11:2-3. Paul writing says to the Lord's people.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Thus when the believer's mind is corrupted from singular affection and loyalty to Christ through false teachings and doctrines, and false emphasis that turn attention to another, she is being drawn into harlotry.

Now, no congregation in covenant relationship with Christ suddenly becomes a harlot. Quite often, the Lord intervenes in acts of mercy to recover His people from their backslidings. This is the picture we find in the Book of Hosea. In chapter 2:2-4 the Lord says

Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for

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they are the children of whoredoms.

He even employs hard agencies when the need arises all in a bid to recover His people (read verses 7-23 of Hosea 2). It is only when divine warnings and “wooing” have been consistently rejected that the picture of a harlot is assigned her.

This is exactly the case here in Rev. 17: 1-3. At this point she is not just a wife going aside sometimes to have fun with her lovers while she returns to the husband’s house; rather she has become a branded harlot. The time ordained for her recovery is over. The court has decided and judgement delivered. She has been thrown out of the house of her husband. Her fate is sealed. She is in a terminal condition.

Now there are two other things we want to point out about this woman, both of which reinforce what we have already observed. First the woman is shown to be a city, a “great city”. Rev. 17:18 says

*And the woman which thou sawest is that great city,
which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

We will not look at what all these mean now, or what the “greatness” of this city consist of, but we just want you to note that the woman is called a city. A city, in prophetic symbolism, is an administration; it is something that has concrete expression, it is a well-organised system. Thus, we can say that this woman, *administratively*, is a church system; a system of things in the church world that has universal expression and acceptance.

Verse 1 assures us that the woman is sitting upon many waters,

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and verse 15 says these waters are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. Thus she has *presence* all over the earth.

She is also called the *mother of harlots* meaning that she has many daughters, which like her, are also harlots. That links us with verse 5. It says “*And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*” So the city is called Babylon.

Notice that at the time that John received this revelation, the ancient Kingdom of Babylon was no more, so the reference is not to modern day Iraq. But there is something about the ancient kingdom of Babylon and in the name itself that reveal certain things about this woman.

What then does Babylon mean? The term is drawn from the word *Babel*. “*Babel*” means the *gate to God* or the entrance into the things of God. That which leads to God is Babel (Gen. 11:9). But “*Babylon*” means *confusion*.

Thus considering this with the meaning of the root word Babel, we come to understand that the word “*Babylon*” simply means that which presents itself as God's vessel for showing the nations the way to the true worship of God is actually in opposition to that worship.

In other words, that which the people see as the gate to God actually leads away from Him.

So it is clear that this woman represents that which stands upon the earth as the gate to God but which brings the people into bondage, confusion, and false worship.

She is another representation of the false prophet. Together with her harlot daughters, each one riding upon her own beast

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figuratively speaking, she constitutes the antichrist system: a church system in full-blown apostasy now conscripted into the satanic axis of evil, joined not to the Lord, but to the red dragon.

That is why the first word in the name upon her forehead is *mystery*. It is not what you see that is really there. There is something else behind the scene.

Now, this harlot woman and her harlot daughters did not just become what they now are instantaneously, they were not like that before.

They had holy beginnings; they began as holy congregations of Gods' people, true and faithful representation of God upon the earth, a true gate to God.

But with time, they began to change, first by transforming into denominational systems, a system of things that exalts man and provide a platform for other vices to begin to set in. Ultimately they transform into Babylon. Is. 1:21-23 says:

How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves: everyone loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards.

How the faithful city became a harlot and made the whole world drunk with the wine of her fornication is a mystery indeed. May the Lord help us and be gracious to us.

The true Christian message kills the flesh. It does not minister to man's ego. The death to self-message, makes men little and they are not afraid to be little but God makes them great.

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Messages that exalt man are the stock in trade of carnal ministries and out-rightly false prophets. These also comport themselves in arrogance, making a fair show in the flesh. You can see them coming to preach and somebody else, ASSIGNED, carries their bible. If they come in a car, somebody else opens the door. You see people living like tin- gods in the midst of their fellow brethren.

You see, there is a priest craft that has been set up in the church world, a thing contrary to Christ and His word. (The New Testament teaches the priesthood of all believers). In this CRAFT, is a clergy who act as '*priest*'. Then, there is the '*laity*' class who are followers. This distinction made is both official and formal. It is getting terrible to the extent that the abnormal has become so common place that people take it to be the normal.

May the Lord bless you, and give you a love for the truth, may the Lord draw you and make himself known to you, and may the desire for a place in the kingdom fill your heart, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

6

The Satanic Field

All scripture is given by the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the glorified Christ that has been sent to indwell us and bring the obedient to the fullness of Christ.

John 16:13-15 sets forth the ministry of the Holy Spirit toward the Church in enabling her to be an effective witness under Him for Christ. The principal aspect of this work of the Holy Spirit is to make the Person, power, plan and purpose of the Living Word known to us in the medium of the written word.

Now in the scriptures, the Lord declares the end from the beginning howbeit in a sealed form. He opens the seals to give as much detail as is required by those who should bear witness to Him in any time period. Knowledge of these elements in the plan and purposes of God does not come by mere scholarship but rather, by the mercies of the Most High.

Whatever indicates great favour from the presence of God to a people will bear this mark, that it pleases God to make known to them the things that belong to their day. So let's whole-heartedly praise the Lord God for opening our understanding to the scriptures respecting current issues and those soon to come.

He causes us to know with certainty things in His plans and

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purposes penned down in the written word but hitherto sealed. May we prove to be men and women who make proper use of the things God is graciously giving to us, in the name of Jesus Christ.

In continuation of our meditation, we will be looking at the actuating force behind the rise of the two beasts of Revelation 13. Our purpose in this chapter is to give a fuller attention to the scriptures covering the emergence of these beasts. As we do this together, it will enable us to have a clear insight into the nature of the forces at work in the appearing on the world stage of these beast-systems.

Their gradual emergence and coming into full development coupled with the mission they seek to execute on earth are not to be thought of as chance events. These evil beasts owe their character and entire history to intensive satanic manipulation and control. Demonstrating what has just been said through faithful recourse to the Scriptures is the main burden of this chapter.

In a later chapter we shall scoop out how these two beasts will endeavour to work together, and in union with the dragon engage in serious but nevertheless futile efforts to destroy humanity and upstage the installation of the Kingdom of Heaven over all the earth. May the Lord grant us great grace as we examine these things, in Jesus Name.

We have already seen that an antichrist is one who prior to his going astray had attained to a measure of grace and reputation in his sub-continent or even in the church world at large.

One of the great privileges a child of God, and even more so, a minister of the Gospel of Christ enjoys is divine covering. When a man begins to deviate significantly from the path of Christ he is no longer under that divine envelope.

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Such a one may feign ignorance of this but he is at risk of being drawn into the sphere of satanic control. The risk is shown to be higher for persons who though having a strong charisma are captives of some sort to lose morals.

Let's go over the point just made for the importance of it. Christ brings a covering over His children. But an individual loses the covering when there is a habitual failure in morals (not because the person does not know how to live above sin, but that he refuses to yield to the power of sanctifying grace).

It is important to know that possession of spiritual gifting never compensates for moral evil. When an individual gets carried away by his abilities, there develops in him a false sense of security which is exploited by his carnal mind to allow unclean motives to spring up unchecked.

In the circumstance, the gracious covering Christ over him is lost and the individual is exposed to satanic manipulation. Usually too, human goals are substituted for the divine purpose.

A wrong purpose for taking up the work of the ministry may be defined this way: seeking to use kingdom privileges for self-advancement, building '*empires*' which though appearing to serve God's interest, are self-serving and, in effect, in opposition to the kingdom of heaven.

When un-crucified flesh is coupled with a wrong purpose, they make up an environment which results in a gradual but steady abandonment of the paths of life.

In this chapter, we will be looking at Revelation 12 and 13 in some detail. Our interest as we mentioned earlier, is to uncover the hidden power behind the emergence of the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth. In doing this, we will also put emphasis on how

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to stay beyond the reach of satanic conscription. So let us read Rev. 12:1-11.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our

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brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The first verse says “*And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars*”. We start off by asking the question “*who is this woman?*”

Now let’s take note of what she does not represent in order that we may better appreciate what this woman answers to in this prophetic scripture. Notice she is said to be a wonder, a sign in heaven.

First, it is generally believed that this woman is Mary. This thought is based on a consideration of verse 5 “*...and she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne*”. Identifying this child to be Jesus, it is commonly believed that the woman who gave birth to him must then be Mary, the mother of Jesus. But this cannot be true as we shall now show.

We know that Mary was a virgin and had not had any children prior to the birth of the Lord Jesus. In the seventeenth verse of this chapter, we are told that this woman had given birth to many children before the birthing of this man-child. Thus, this woman cannot be Mary.

Now some suppose that this woman must be speaking of the physical Israel. And that since Jesus Christ came out of the tribe of Judah, he could be said to be born of Israel. Therefore, the woman is considered to be a composite woman representing the church of

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the Old Testament. Again, this can be shown to be faulty on two counts.

First the book of Revelation was written about AD95 when John received the vision. In verse 19 of chapter 1 he was commanded to write “*the things which he had seen, the things WHICH ARE and the things THAT SHALL BE hereafter*”. Those things that were to be hereafter (that is far into the future, beyond AD 95) began to be revealed as from chapter 4 and runs through chapter 22. Now let us read Rev. 4:1.

After this I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

So from chapter 4 to the end of the book of Revelation, all the things that were shown were things future to AD95. Earlier on in chapters 2 and 3, the Lord had shown John the things which are. That is, the condition, at that time of each of the seven typically chosen churches. But as from chapter 4, the Lord began to reveal what shall be thereafter. So Revelation 12 cannot possibly be talking about the church of the Old Testament.

We have already seen in the last chapter and also in chapters 1 and 2 of this book (on the Language of Prophecy) that the church of Jesus Christ is often represented as a woman because she is the prospective bride of Christ. So we can say that this woman is the church of God under the New Testament, the Church of Jesus Christ.

That this is so is revealed by the crown upon her head, a crown

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of twelve stars. These twelve stars as we saw earlier are the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Their writings (the whole of the New Testament writings) provide the doctrines and principles of truth by which the church operates. This is her crown. Ephesians says we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

When a woman puts a covering on the head, it is a symbol that she is under authority (1 Cor. 11:3, 9-10). So this woman is under the authority of the apostles of the Lord through submitting to the New Testament Scriptures.

But we must note that this woman is not all of the visible church. She represents only the church that abides in God's purposes. All through the church age, there have always been some of the Lord's people, who get out of the sphere of authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, choosing their separate ways. They remain part of the great house of God (2 Tim. 2:20). At the time of the end, a clear separation is made between the faithful and the unfaithful classes of believers in Christ Jesus.

Out of the same general house of God, two distinct characters emerge: the faithful house and the unfaithful one. Of course, these realities are from the divine standpoint, known to Him alone. What we can do individually and in our assemblies is to keep to all the things readily identified with faithfulness, a holy walk being a primary responsibility.

Now, these two houses are also pictured as two women. The unfaithful house in its fully developed form is shown as a harlot (Rev. 17:1) while those who habitually submit to the rule of Christ are pictured as a noble woman, a wife under the authority of her husband. It is this latter class that is revealed in Rev. 12:1.

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So from the same holy beginning, in the process of time, two women, in utterly dissimilar contrast, emerge from the great house of God. At the time of the close of the age each of these women would have fully developed their respective characteristics.

Rev. 12: 1, 2 thus unveils the sign-woman in the manner she appears at the time of the end having all the features assigned her by prophecy. Hallelujah!

Notice, this sign-woman is said to appear in heaven. Recall that in the consideration of the Language of Prophecy, we said that the church is positioned in the heavens of God. That is the normal sphere of her dwelling and activities as Eph. 2:6 among other passages indicates.

In this heaven we meet with the great Saviour daily in communion and receive from him moral and spiritual impartations that prepare us for full union with Him. Amen. So the heaven here is the normal sphere of the church's daily living.

Now this woman is said to be with child. The very picture shown suggests that the pregnancy had reached an advanced stage. Indeed she had come to the time when she is to bring forth. Verse 2 says *...and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered*. That which is ultimately brought forth is shown to be a man-child, who was *"caught up to God and his throne"*.

While the man-child stands for Christ (since the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy: Rev. 19:10; John 5:39), the reference is not to the Lord Jesus Christ (the Head) but to Christ the body. This body comes forth in the fullness of Christ's image.

God is bringing many sons to glory, and whatever can be said of Christ the Head as to His glory and inheritance, is true also of those who overcome and share with Him in his throne (Rev.3 21). This

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leads us into a consideration of Rev. 12: 5 seen by some to be the authority to regard the sign-woman of Rev. 12:1 to be Jesus Christ.

Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21 show that power over the nations and the right to sit with the Lord in His throne to administer His kingdom are to be given to believers who overcome, who keep His work unto the end. Just as the Lord Himself received this conferment of His Father. Yes, the overcomer is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Divine honour and power as well as throne privileges are to be fully conferred on him that overcomes. This is the estate of those who constitute the man-child, who are come to the full stature of Christ

The coming forth of a body of people in the fullness of salvation, also seen as the unveiling of the fullness of kingdom power and strength, is what is pictured here as the birthing of a man-child. Verses 5 and 10 of Revelation 12 thus actually interpret each other.

Take notice that this woman had given birth to some children prior to the birth of the man-child. Verse 17 talks about “*the remnant (remaining) of her seed*”. The church had always produced men and women of great spiritual stature. These have manifested in significant measure the grace and power of God in life and ministry. But up till this time, she had never produced any child standing in the fullness of Christ. Even the apostles did not walk in the fullness of divine life which expresses incorruptibility.

But the time for the fullness of the power and glory of the kingdom to be revealed is imminent, even the time for the unveiling of the Sons of God (Rom. 8:19).

Yes! It is the unveiling of a life over which death and death things have no power. God has prepared this glorious experience for the closing days of the church age. May He count you and me

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worthy to be a partaker thereof, in Jesus Name.

With this introduction, we may now go into the main stream of our mediation.

Verse 3 of Revelation 12 reveals something which is of great relevance to our subject. We will do well to take a proper note of it at this point of our study.

In the same heavens the church is called to operate in, we find a fiendish interest group, referred to as a great red dragon. This dragon carries a prophetic signification (a sign, something to watch as events of history unfolds).

We have already identified this dragon as the satanic federation. Satan had always stood to oppose the Lord's people and the advance of God's kingdom in the earth. There is a battle that has been raging since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. It is a battle between truth and error, between righteousness and wickedness, between the kingdom of Christ and the satanic enclave.

This battle which centres on control over mankind and over the earth is being fought in the unseen realms of heaven, but with telling effects on the cosmos, that is, this whole sphere of human existence and social order.

A central element of this war in the heavens is that the forces of righteousness are intent on rescuing humanity while the satanic forces are determined to wipe it out. if they cannot annex it.

Satan hates humanity with a perfect hatred. Whilst the hatred is towards all, that ancient serpent called the devil, targets with all the venom it can muster, the church in God's purpose, the pillar and support of truth, the embryonic kingdom of heaven.

The satanic federation contests every advance of the kingdom of Christ upon the earth. It wars against the saints and seeks to weaken

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them and through trademark deception, shift them from God's purpose.

Hundreds of centuries ago, this two-fold objective of satanic forces was shown to the prophet Daniel as the "*scattering of the powers of the holy people*" (Dan. 12:7).

The adversary most often employs the weapon of persecution especially when in a given situation he reckons that the force of civil government can be put to advantageous use in this regard.

Wherever persecution cannot be stirred up and effectively used against the Church he employs the more subtle weapon of causing a people to sidetrack through worldly lusts, sinful passions, materialism and loss of spiritual focus. Though loss of a strong sense of divine purpose shows itself in these other ways as well, the formation of sects is the surest evidence of an evil course.

Unfortunately the latter has been the method that has won our adversary more victories as manifest today in the throng of denominational churches with desperately conflicting ensigns, doing their own thing.

The straying of a congregation from the narrow path of life, from the way of truth, comes as casualty of war in the heavens. It is rooted in wickedness. The apostle Paul identifies the activities of witchcraft spirits as sourcing this (Gal. 3:1). Also recall his assertion in the epistle to the Church in Ephesus.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

This is why the whole of the church age is said to be an evil day (Eph. 6:13) and we are admonished to put on the whole armour of

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God (Eph. 6:11). The Lord Jesus Christ counselled us to watch and pray lest we fall into temptation (Matt. 26:41)

Peter says we should be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom to devour. We are advised to resist him by being *steadfast in the faith* knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren (I Pet. 5:8, 9).

The church since it was birthed on the day of Pentecost had been involved in intense spiritual warfare with the forces of darkness. At this end period, for the church keeping faithful to the divine call, the battle is assuming frightening proportions because the adversary, Satan, knows he has but a short time.

The final overthrow and annihilation of evil is imminent, brethren. That is why we are shown here that the dragon is red with fury. It is seen as positioning itself right in front of the woman (a picture of a very deliberate targeting of the Church). But thank God! The dragon in all of its fury is helpless against the woman so long as she remains under the authority and covering of her husband, the Lord Jesus. We give all honour and glory to our Redeemer King.

Our consideration of Rev. 12 brings us to the 7th verse.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.

As we have seen, this is not a battle that was fought in the heaven of God before man was created. No! It is a battle that began in some sense in Eden which resulted then in the fall of man. It

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graduated into terrible dimensions when redemption was procured for mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. A people have ever since arisen and continue to arise who prevail by the power flowing from the victory of Christ on the cross.

Those who now live and stand in the good claims of redemption are called upon to know how to wield the power of the Redeemer in overcoming the adversary. At this time of the end we are confident that nothing can come between us and the fullness of our inheritance guaranteed by the Redeemer through His precious blood. Praise the name of the Lord forever and ever.

“Prepare war; wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near”. We believe that the summons Prophet Joel was led to give out in his day has a message in it for those who see the imperative of taking the battle to the gate. This also is in keeping with the revealed order of things in Rev.12:7

“Michael and his angels fought against the dragon.” Notice, the initiative was taken by Michael. But who exactly is this Michael?

Michael means *“the one like unto God”*. It is a prophetic name that is used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ in his capacity as the Messenger of the covenant, the arch-angel, the Chief Messenger. Jude 9 read side-by-side with Zech 3: 1-2 from whence that passage was quoted confirms this.

Again, we are told in Dan. 12:1 that *“Michael the archangel”* has always stood for the outworking of God’s purpose through the ages. At this time also He is standing for the church of His purpose. Amen! He will ensure that God’s laid out plans are fully accomplished as He has declared them to His servants the prophets. (Rev. 10:6-10).

The angels of Michael from the foregoing must therefore be the

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true followers of Jesus Christ: His truth servants and messengers, both small and great. This includes all who are loyal to Him in all things, even to their own hurt if need be. Verse 11 of Revelation 12 says:

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death

This means that the subjects under reference are human persons. We cannot, with any propriety, say spirit angels “*loved not their lives unto the death.*” So those who gain the victory are persons living in the light and power of Christ atoning sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. They are believers in Christ Jesus. That is why when the victory is fully won there is a loud voice saying in heaven,

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night

Fullness of salvation in the redeemed, the glory and power of God’s Kingdom installed over the nations of the world, the authority and power of the perfected Church as the corporate Christ are great issues which are *bound up with the complete overthrow in the heavens of every bit of all that sin and Satan are.*

What ALL creation is waiting for is neither time nor some date. Rather, creation is waiting for *the only authentic evidence* that a new world is about breaking forth through the ministry of the sons of

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God. And *that evidence is contained in the victory song of Rev.12:10 which accompany the event described in Rev. 12.8 and obtained through the divinely inspired claims of Rev.12:11. GLORY BE TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!*

All else must wait until this comes to pass. Nothing matters on earth as much as the war in the heaven being *concluded by the Church* on the glorious note of the absolute overthrow of sin and satanic deception, *flushing them out of the heavens*. This may, for some limited time, escalate the turmoil the visible world is facing now, throwing it into the greatest ever scenes of wars and devastating troubles. But only for a very limited time! Having now secured heaven's final triumph, the manifestation of the sons of God takes the center stage. *These sons are made able to manage the crisis effectively and then usher in a new dispensation.*

The observations made in the last three paragraphs are by far much weightier than may be readily appreciated. Consequently, we would revisit and establish the points made in a more deliberate approach to sponsor better understanding of the matter. That will be later on as we get into other verses in the passages now under consideration in this chapter

In the mean time, let us also point out a few more realities. Now, the birth of the man-child (Rev.12:5) is the event that Apostle John is alluding to in the proclamation of Rev.12:10. The final victory of the over-coming Church, (I Cor. 15:50-58; Rom. 8:23) is actually *his entrance into incorruptibility and life*. It is for the same reason the ultimate victory is referred to as being "*caught up to GOD.*"

Recall that the beginning of man's salvation experience (when he gave his life over to Jesus Christ) is described in scripture as a new

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birth. In this connection, please see 2Cor. 5:17 in the light of John 3:3. It was as it indeed is, a new child is born.

It is the same when we come to the fullness of salvation experience. It is like being born into a new world, a new world of power, glory and unhindered access to the Lord. John 3:6 says it all in a nutshell. It is indeed a full entrance into the Spirit realm as a spirit being.

In John 16 the Lord also used the picture of the birthing of a man-child into the world by the church to indicate their coming into a new realm of experience with him. Now let's take some reading from John 16 just to validate this position. John 16: 20-23.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye ask the father in my name, he shall give it you.

So the birthing of the man-child here in Revelation 12 is the manifestation of full victory over the dragon system. And the woman “*travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered*” is therefore a prophetic illustration of a church both in warfare against her adversary and under the challenge of coming into the fullness of Christ.

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We proceed now to a consideration of Rev.12:9

We are told in verse 9 that “*the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him*”.

The collapse of the satanic kingdom that has exercised influence over mankind since the fall is a sure event. Scripture certainly teaches that it is in two stages: the collapse that occurs in the unseen realms (the spiritual); and then the completion of the process in the physical.

The satanic kingdom will suffer a decisive defeat at the hands of the Church at a time some of her own will come into the fullness of salvation experience discussed earlier.

This signal defeat will see the prince of the power of the *air* losing that designation forever. So will all his powers (the satanic lieutenants and other ranked dark forces, see Eph. 6:12) be “*cast out with him*”. Their place is to be found no longer in heaven (Rev.12:8).

The Voice gifts sounding forth the final redemption trumpet of GOD will then have accomplished in us the Father’s good pleasure. Glory now beckons! The glorious shout of acclamation and invitation of Him who is our Resurrection and Life will lift our fully developed new creation man to meet with Him in a new body *in the air*. The ruling arm of the Kingdom of God will then and there be installed. (Rev. 12:10, 1Thes. 4:17).

“*AND SO SHALL WE EVER BE WITH THE LORD.*”

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Praise the name of the living God forever all ye His saints!

Now, let's rewind a little bit for a good reason. The weakening of the satanic kingdom began with the advent of Jesus Christ into human history and, subsequently, the delegation of authority over that kingdom to his disciples (Luke 10:19). It shall be totally laid LOW when a body of people emerges in the fullness of the image of the Son of God.

With this understanding, let us proceed further in our meditation taking up verses 12-17 of Revelation 12. It says

*Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.
Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the
devil is come down unto you, having great wrath,
because he knoweth that he hath but a short
time....(verse 12)*

“Therefore rejoice ye heavens and ye that dwell in it. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea”. So the words “ye heavens” clearly refer to divine sons (caught to God) newly admitted into Heaven as first fruits. Thus, the heavens, the earth and the seas are different classes of people as we have shown in “the Language of Prophecy”.

The '**heaven**' where the context allows, is the church that is living in overcoming grace; the earth is the church that has chosen a downward course, minding the things of the earth, while the sea is the realm of the unregenerate souls of mankind.

Now verses 13-16 says

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And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he “persecuted” the woman which brought forth the man child. The word “persecuted” in the Greeks is *Dioko*. It is better translated “pursued”. The dragon pursued but could neither annex nor vex her.

What made this woman unreachable, unassailable to the dragon? The answer is to be found in verse 14. The two wings of a great eagle enabled the woman to fly to the wilderness, into a place prepared of God for her nourishment and building up.

Under this divine sheltering, she remains until she is brought to perfection. She is then in such an independent state of life that cannot be overcome by the dragon.

Who or what then is this ‘*great eagle*’, and what are its two wings? Now “*eagle*” in scriptural parlance (where the context so admits) refers to a prophetic ministry. For example, God said to

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Israel in Exodus 19:4 ...*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.* Then Hos. 12:13 says "*by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt and by a prophet was he preserved*".

So while "*wings*" speak of ministry; eagle speaks of the character of that ministry. We know that in the context of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, they were delivered and led forth through the wilderness, preserved and protected by the ministry of Moses and Aaron. Moses was as a god and Aaron was his prophet (Exo. 7:1).

But Moses himself was a great prophet (Deut. 18:15). So the ministry of Moses was one wing of that great eagle upon which Israel was led forth, while the ministry of Aaron was the other.

Coming back to Revelation 12:14; we can say that God will ordain a prophetic ministry that will assist this woman to come into her place. She has a place prepared of God for her in the wilderness where she is to be nourished away from the face of the serpent.

The wilderness is used here to represent a place of intensive consecration, a place of spiritual preparation and building up towards a specific purpose as we showed earlier in the consideration of the 'Language of prophecy'.

The prophetic ministry that bears this symbolic woman into the wilderness is the ministry of the man-child, the sons of God that have come to full salvation. These are one in purpose with the woman; they came forth from her, and will be the means of her deliverance and safety in the time of trouble (Is. 32: 1-2).

By the ministry of the full-grown sons of God, this woman shall be assisted to stay above the waters of evil issuing from the mouth of the dragon, and to come into the fullness of the Lord's plan for

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her, even in times of great troubles (Dan. 9:25).

This is important. No matter how young an individual is in the faith, even if he has just given his life to Christ today, there is a provision for such to come to the fullness, once the heart is right with God.

He gives abundant grace to His own, brethren. Grace comes with the Spirit of Truth (John 1:17). The reader might not have come to perfection and to an incorruptible Life at the time that these things shall be taking place. But He will preserve the faithful at heart from the deception that shall engulf the whole world.

He will keep those that tremble at His word from the mystery of iniquity. Once a man's heart is true, he will be kept from falling. Yes, He will present His little flock blameless and bring them into His everlasting kingdom. To Him be glory and honour forever. Amen.

Verse 15-16 of Rev. 12 says:

And the serpent cast out of its mouth water as a flood after the woman that might cause her to be carried away of the flood and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of its mouth

This flood is a strong delusion that shall engulf the entire world and pave the way for the final expression of the satanic agenda on earth *AND among the earthy* (2 Thes. 2: 11, 12).

The earth class shall open its mouth and swallow up the flood which the dragon casts out of its mouth. But SUCH shall be saved from it whose heart's loyalty is unto Jesus Christ the LORD. When

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you have learnt to submit to Him and His activities in the earth at this time of the end *you are indeed keeping yourself from satanic atmospheres.*

So immediately a body of people come to full salvation and the “*manifestation of the sons of God*” sets in (Rom. 8:19), the attention and ministry of these sons will be directed first towards the company of people with whom they are associated. They will watch over the woman until she is perfected. Hallelujah.

But let’s go to verse 17 and read to verse 1 of chapter 13. We shall also add verse 11 of chapter 13. And we shall begin to see the activities of the dragon *as it loses ground; and more so after it has fully lost its place in heaven.* This statement leads us into the main thrust of this chapter.

Remember, we are examining the mode of operation of the mystery of iniquity in these last days and are doing so under the title, *the Satanic Field.* Rev. 12:17-13:1.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And I beheld another beast coming out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

Now the devil seeks to prevent the birth of the man-child, or to devour the child as soon as it is born. But this is shown to be an

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impossible mission. The child that is to be born is assigned a glory well beyond the reach and capability of the devil.

Next, the dragon becomes furious with the woman that births the man-child and seeks to destroy her. But the woman is assisted to overcome all his wiles and fury.

Then it proceeds on a last bid to injure the interests of the Kingdom of God. Rev. 12:7 says: “*he went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*”.

But beyond this the dragon does something which is important to note very carefully. . Rev. 13:1 says “*he stands upon the sand of the sea*”. That is how we are to understand this verse as this is the way it is rendered in most translations. (You may want to convince yourself of this by reading this verse in any one or two translations other than the King James Version).

In other words, it is not Apostle John the visioneer, but the dragon that stands upon the symbolic sea to exert infernal influences upon the human race.

The original text in Greek says that he “*stood still*”. That is, there is a relatively prolonged time of exerting this influence before the full effect of his activity shows up on the world stage. Though it *seemed a period of silence* in relation to events transpiring in man’s world, the dragon was not in any way inactive.

He stood still to redirect all his wisdom and infernal powers towards a particular direction. He stood still to focus his attention upon *the sand of the sea*.

Having lost his place of control and influence in heaven, the dragon is made completely impotent *with respect to the heavens*. To find any expression in the earth’s sphere, he must get human persons

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and institutions that will open up to his influences. He will then empower these ones and seek to use them to carry out his purpose.

That is what we are being shown here. The dragon stood still to direct all its energies towards the raising up a satanic host. He sets up a ***satanic field*** (*an evilly and intensively charged manipulative influence*) over ***the sand of the sea***, which as we have shown earlier, is a class of persons who are unsaved and given to wickedness, or who may be merely professing religion. He takes these ones over and breathes his '*anointing*' into and upon them.

The result of the dragon's feet standing upon ***the sand of the sea*** is what we find in Rev. 13: 1 the emergence of two beasts, one from the sea, and the other from the earth.

It is the same picture we find in Daniel 7. Behind the emergence of world empires and of certain personages that have ruled the earth in political and religious spheres, is *the mysterious striving of the four winds of the heavens upon the great sea*.

Satan has at various times in history gained access into human affairs through individuals in political and religious institutions. Yes, there has been differing measures of satanic incursion at different times in human history. But it is in these closing days of the church age that we are to see such things in their fully developed estate.

The Lord says in Rev. 22: 11, 12 *he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly.* We say again, may the Lord save all those who truly love His precious name from the evil that is coming upon the world.

When the dragon has been fully cast down from heaven, because the event is associated with the complete loss of his power to

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influence things from the heavenly realm, the earth will, at first experience a time of relative peace.

But this will be short-lived. It will give way as soon as satanic manipulation exerted upon '*the sands of the sea*' begins to yield fruit. This will as previously observed, result in the emergence of the two beastly systems discussed in Rev. 13.

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them” (I Thes. 5:3a). May the Lord help us.

So let's examine what develops under the '*strivings*' of the *dragon upon the sand of the sea*. Rev. 13:1, 11

And (the dragon) stood upon the sand of the sea, and (I) saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy (verse 1).

And I beheld another beast coming out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. (verse 11)

The description of the first beast (the beast from the sea) is parallel to the description of the dragon in Rev. 12: 3. But *there is a difference between the dragon and this beast* that we must take particular note of.

In Rev. 12:3 we find that the dragon when it was shown as being in the heaven had "*seven heads* and ten horns, and *seven crowns upon his head*".

But here in verse 1 of Revelation 13 we are told that the beast from the sea has "*seven heads* and *ten horns and upon his horns ten*

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crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Thus, there is a fundamental difference *of the same kind* between the dragon and the beast. This is seen in the fact that the **seven heads** of the dragon when it existed as a power in heaven **had crowns**, not the horns.

But here, it is the *ten horns of* the sea-beast, and not the seven heads, that **have crowns**. This shows that *the power, authority and rule* of the dragon will be manifested through *a politically unified system* also acting as *a military confederation* of sovereign member states.

At the time this beast was seen emerging from the sea (and its emergence is a process), it has crowns *upon his horns*. In other words, although the body of the beast, already existing, is a political order, its authority and rule, *militarily, sets in only when there are crowns on her ten horns*.

It is important this distinction is properly understood. Additional help in this regard may be garnered from the following:

(1). Revelation chapter 17:1-3 shows us a time was when *neither the heads of the beast nor its horns had crowns*.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a

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scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Now we can immediately identify the beast that carries this harlot woman as the same beast we read of in chapter Rev. 13:1.

(2). Notice next, that the *seven heads received crowns ahead of the ten horns*. (Rev.17:8-11).

(3). The ten horns according to the next two verses have not until now (2008) receive crowns. However, the horns receive power as kings *one hour with the beast*.

This is clear enough. This beast is not yet a world political empire, *from the standpoint of their ultimate picture*, even though the arrangement that will lead to that already exists.

Now let's read verses 11-12. Rev. 17:11-12.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

So you can see that when the horns are shown without crowns, it means the political alliance is there, but not yet bonded into a *military confederacy*. But when the ten horns receive power as kings, the horns can now be said to have crowns. And that paves the way for the fulfilment of what we find in Rev. 13:2-10.

When the ten horns receive power as kings, *the prophetic one hour begins and the things that are written down in these prophetic*

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scriptures will begin to have their ultimate fulfilment. This symbolic one hour is quite significant and can be examined for what it indicates, but that goes beyond the scope of our present burden.

Now note carefully the character of this last world political empire that shall emerge on earth. Verse 2 of Rev. 13 says:

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

In Daniel 7, the first three of the four world political empires that have ruled the earth, *after the nation of Israel ceased to be a monarchy*, are described, in order, as lion, bear, and leopard. Here in our Revelation 13 passage, we are shown that the coming world political empire will combine in itself all the attributes of these past empires (including the fourth). Unto this beast, the dragon will give his *power* and his *seat* and great *authority*.

But all that is not our main concern in this book and as such we shall not dwell much on them. Our interest is to concentrate on things that more directly relate to the Lord's house at this time. We shall of good necessity give fuller attention to the second beast, the beast of Rev. 13: 11.

Let's go to Rev. 13:11. We have seen the emergence of the beast out of the sea and established the fact that it was the 'placing' of the satanic feet upon the sand of the sea that brought it about. And now we want to see another unfolding sign linked to the activities of the dragon on "*the sand of the sea*". Rev. 13:11.

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And I beheld another beast coming out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon

If you read this verse WITHOT paying attention to involved details, you are likely to think that the second beast emerges from the earth after the first beast has fully emerged from the sea. But this is not so.

The two beasts emerge *fully within the same time period*, the one from the sea, the other from the earth. However, the first beast leads the way and attracts world attention well ahead of the second.

And just like the coming into prominence of the beast from the sea was over a period of time (for there was a time its ten horns had not received crowns), the full development of the earth-beast and its attainment of the status described in verses 11-18 of Rev.13 is over a period of time.

So the activity of the dragon upon the sand of the sea brings forth two beastly kingdoms, two beastly realities, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth.

The first beast has much to do with civil governance and a hawkish push toward coming into a wholly domineering control over all else in the world.

Military supremacy gained through technological advantage, coupled with economic strangulation of all else obtained through fiscal policies tailored to achieve set goals are the main concerns of the first beast.

Its leaders only court religious interests to serve the same end. But their romance with religion, nay, apostate Christianity is expressed through prodding the second beast to do its bidding.

However the beast from the earth emerges from the church

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world, from among those of the Lord's people who left and eventually lost their first love. The pathetic thing about it all is that though their leading lights (ministries) have derailed they still boast of being God's mouthpieces thereby deceiving more and more persons.

They considered an earthly, rather than heavenly course as more suited to gaining the whole world. They virtually sit upon the throne of the hearts of their victims upstaging Christ as it were.

Thus, the earth-beast continues to give all to believe its horns (anointing) by which it does miracles were supplied it by the true LAMB. And oh! How in appearance and mode of operation it fakes a lamblike spirit. But alas the dragon who anointed it will soon run out of patience and *require it (not to hide anymore but) to show up its fangs!*

It must do this before shamelessly abandoning "*power crusades*" to embark on *military campaigns* against the saints as indicated in Rev. 16:13-14.

This earth-beast *is even now* speaking like a dragon. It will continue to do so although with *a voice modified by demonic vibrations to excite 'uncovered' hearers* to subservient behaviour toward it. (Rev.13:14-15). Prophet Isaiah and Apostle John see these victims as overcome with the wine of the perverted doctrines flowing out of the mouth of this earth-beast. In this connection, it is at once both the great harlot and *false Prophet* (Is. 28:1; Rev.17: 2).

However, the once "*amiable*" idol shepherds will begin to develop cracks in their voice *when instructed to move into open acknowledgement of the dragon*. What notable 'signs' are demonstrated by the earth-beast in the *sight of men must be eventually shown* to be by the power the dragon releases in the *sight*

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of the supervising *sea-beast* (Rev.13:1; 13:14).

The earth-beast will begin to croak *like frog* (Rev.16:13) when the sons of God turn on the full heat that consumes its false covering and destroys its power to deceive. (2Thes.2:8)

Let's go over these same points again in even plainer speech. The *satanic field* or influence makes a prey of defecting believers and ministers. These persons having left their holy estate (and covering) are, under demonic manipulation, heading further and further into the satanic purpose. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 says "*Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, for the mystery of iniquity doth already work*".

So there is a satanic field of *mystic influence*. In connection with its design, Satan is now '*anointing*' and enlisting persons into his inglorious service.

From the political realm, he is enlisting states men. Many heads of state are into all kinds of alliances; the least of these is certainly not the New Age Movement.

The Japhetites through racial ties are even more emboldened in their quest for an enslaving dominance over the nations of the earth. Their grand design will fully unfold with time, but God will crush it when all nations seem to have come under their *military might and socio-economic torture*.

Now, let us put together the thoughts we have established so far. The beginning of the antichrist system (which in Rev. 13:11 is shown as a beast emerging from the earth) is founded in the church systems of men that have completely veered off course.

The key persons once had a holy beginning and knew in a significant measure the workings of the Holy Spirit. But due to

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moral failure and evilly inspired motives, they were gradually drawn away from the realm of the influence of Christ.

When they come to this other side doing their own things an influence comes over them from the satanic realm. This is described in verse 1 of Revelation 13 as actuated by *the dragon standing on the sand of the sea*. The result is the emergence of that system of things that serves satanic interest and aggressively stands against the LORD and His anointed.

7

Stages of Development of Antichrist Systems

We have seen in previous chapters that there is going to be a shifting of Satan's focus after being overpowered by the overcoming church and thrown out of the heavens.

(In the heavens, the adversary's premier mission is to thwart God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus for the Church. However, we have it on the authority of God's revealed word that it is a totally futile mission. It is but only a little while more and Satan completely loses the designation of being the prince of the power of the air).

The Scriptures show that the ability of Satan's kingdom to exert manipulative influences from the invisible spheres over the human race will be fatally under mined as the full grown Church takes over the government of the air.

Satan's subdued kingdom will have recourse to pursuing the same goal of deceiving the human race through concentrating its efforts on annexing political alliances and religious movements.

In the same connection, as Satan turns away his interest from trying to undo the elect Church he reaches for a fuller control of such visible church systems that are run as business corporations. Satan is '*religious*', isn't he?

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Sensing their imminent defeat in the heavens, in order to achieve their political agenda, satanic forces are already striving to manipulate a re-configuration of the political philosophies of sovereign nations. Hither-to the various committees of nations uphold democratic norms and encourage non interference in one another's internal affairs. Even now, that agreed position is already changing.

Yes, he is already at it and Scriptures indicate Satan will achieve measurable success. Creation of self assertive *world dominating empires is his style of politics. We expect to see alignment and re-alignment of sovereign nations.*

In the same manner, there is a great deal of effort directed at the birthing of an ecumenical religious order. With these moves in the political and religious spheres the adversary hopes in vain to hold humanity under his sway.

The Bible reveals that Satan's final onslaught against God and humanity is to be carried out through these two systems of things emerging in the political and religious spheres.

Revelation chapter 13 discusses such an emergence on the world scene of two beast-systems shown to owe their rise and character to that ancient serpent called the Devil, the great red dragon. Now, let us do a little bit of further survey of this evil system that was merely introduced in the last chapter.

Now the dragon-system is invisible; it consists principally of Satan and the legion of fallen spirit beings. The *first* of the two beasts of Revelation 13 is said to be given 'power, seat and great authority" by the dragon. From what we read later on in the chapter, this beast will work in unison with the second beast, the earth-beast, to promote satanic mission on earth. This *first* beast is

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mainly political.

The religious expression of this evil axis, pictured in the *second beast*, the earth-beast of Rev. 13:11-18, is the antichrist system.

As was mentioned earlier, it is this system that strives to give legitimacy and acceptance to the entire satanic set-up. The earth-beast also called *false prophet* leads the “*inhabitants of the earth*” and “*all nations*” in opposition to Christ and His kingdom.

In this chapter, we will examine the three stages of development of the anti-Christ system (earth-beast) and the relation it bears towards the sea-beast and the dragon.

We are shown in Revelation 13 that *as and when* the dragon loses its place in the heavens he invests his power, his seat and authority in the first beast; the beast that rises out of the sea. All of that happens progressively, in a continuum and over a time period.

This sea-beast would in this same long drawn manner exercise a very deliberate control over the fortunes of the second beast (the earth-beast), in doing this, it will *gradually* release influence, power and authority to the earth-beast. See, in this connection, the third temptation of Jesus Christ. Matt. 4:1-11.

We have already established that the sea-beast would be a world political empire. Recall also that the term “*beast*” in prophetic symbolism besides indicating a kingdom, may also be used in a secondary sense to represent persons at the apex of such a kingdom.

Even though they operate a political empire, these beast-leaders would in varied degree have their faculties taken over and clothed with garments of satanic cruelty.

Notice further that at the time Revelation 13 is to be fully fulfilled the beast-heads (political overlords) are not merely having some links to the satanic kingdom, but there would have been a

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complete union as implied in Rev. 13:2b. It says, “...and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority”.

While the kingdom itself shall exercise world-wide control and dominion, the leaders shall under satanic influence culture and fully crystallize dehumanized passion for unsparing brutality.

They will not shrink back from embarking on large-scale destruction of whole civilizations in order to push their agenda. This recourse to mass murder shall far surpass the acclaimed madness of Hitler.

We also mentioned in chapter 5 that this sea-beast is more or less a reviving of the old Roman Empire. That this is so is clear from Daniel 7 and Revelation 17. We will not take up that now, this not being the focus of this meditation.

Take note, however, that the reference to a deadly wound that was healed relates to a reviving of something that had been before.

The Roman Empire, which has for hundreds of years lost its dominion, comes to prominence again, and will do so on a scale much higher than what was as at the first.

Rev. 17:8 speaks of the beast that was and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit i.e. out of oblivion into great prominence.

The political base for the emergence of this coming world political empire is certainly already present in the earth and ‘resides’ in the European Union (EU). The Union is above 50 years old now, and not long ago, precisely on the 15th of December 2007, the nations involved (about 27 of them) signed a new treaty that provides for the establishment of the office of a President.

The new treaty also sets aside the power of individual nations to veto any decision on some important policy issues. It also grants

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greater administrative controls to the Union over member states in foreign affairs.

These developments are quite note-worthy. They contrast with the dangling fortunes that have been the lot of the EU for some decades. Indications in the spirit realm point to a very radical change in the EU towards lessening its overweight ‘burden’ and at the same time developing into a strong military alliance intent on dwindling all other world *‘powers’*.

It should be remembered that a main objective of the Union as set out in its charter is economical. Humanly set limits for the EU are carefully monitored to ensure no member nation takes advantage of all others. But it remains to be seen how long that can hold in the light of the predictions of scriptures.

Now, we will like at this point to introduce something that is quite important to our subject. We have seen that the coming world empire has identity relations with the erstwhile Roman Empire. This being so, we are to expect the sea-beast to have structural ties with that ancient system.

In the ancient world, it was usual for sovereign states to assign to its kings the status of a deity. The kings were the heads of their religious institutions and custodians of their pagan beliefs and practices. It was an arrangement that ensured full conquest of its subjects. Combining state functions with the religious, the kings and their immediate lieutenants exercised authoritarian control over all in their kingdom.

Roman Catholic institution of old was a religious order that the ancient Roman Empire romanced with and annexed. The Roman Catholic institution survived the collapse of the Roman Empire.

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Even then, we are right to think of it as the religious remains of the Roman Empire.

The Roman Catholic institution has over time been reputed as having much influence over sovereign states inside and outside the domain of the Roman Empire. It was not however by the force of arms. It came to the pinnacle of its rule in the dark (its bright) ages, after which a death blow was inflicted on it that led to its decline and ruin.

Prophecy points in the direction of the remains of the old Roman Empire. It shall come alive again *with* a revived Roman Catholic institution aligning with her all the way.

This is seen prophetically as the healing of the fatal wound inflicted on one of its heads. The healing of the **wounded-head of the Sea-beast** (see Rev. 13:3, 4) as explained above *will* signal the breaking in of a new era in world politics.

Concerning this beast Rev. 13: 8 says *...And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him.* We are told also that it shall be *given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them* (verse 7).

The saints with whom the sea-beast makes war and overcome are not *“the inhabitants of heaven”*. They are not the man-child and the woman classes, for as we saw in chapter 12, the dragon is totally powerless against these. Rev. 17:14 says these ones are *called, and chosen, and faithful*. They are faithful followers of the Lamb (Rev. 14:4) who cannot be overcome by the beast.

Who then are these saints? Revelation 12 described them as the *“remnants of the woman’s seed”*. Verse 17 says:

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to

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make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.

Notice the Word says that the dragon was wroth with the woman, but powerless against her. Then he takes recourse to making war with the remnant of her seed. This class of believers would be brutalized by the beast system. We will give this matter additional attention in a later chapter of this book. It is sufficient for the moment to say that the Dragon uses the sea-beast in this connection to war against the above described class.

But the sea-beast on its own would not have been able to press on with certain aspects of the satanic agenda for the last days. Without the deception the earth-beast churns out in the name of 'Christ', the human race will not be led into the world-wide satanic worship that Scriptures predict. This is a most important observation and should be noted carefully.

It is the earth-beast that deceived the "*inhabitants of the earth*" and "*all nations*" and inspired them to wonder after the sea-beast and to worship both the dragon and the beast. How completely revealing is the fact that the earth-beast moves with the dragon and the sea-beast as allies into military campaign against the overcoming Church. From 'miracle' jamborees to mass murder!

As a lamb-shaped creature, it seems to have a peaceful carriage, does it not? Then by means of ministry of the '*word*' and '*prayers*' make-belief miracles flow forth seeking to portray identification with the saving ministry of Christ and His Church. But alas! It is all deception.

The crafty money collection schemes and the moral violence of making merchandize of unsuspecting eager seekers after divine

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mercy were already pointers to the fact that these peddlers of a corrupted gospel were not in the service of CHRIST.

So in a sense, the earth-beast is more dangerous, especially to the Lord's people, than the sea-beast. It is more effective in the employment of its cunning, deceptive powers than the beast from the sea.

Yes, it seems to have a humble, gentle disposition as is the manner of a natural lamb. But the bestial nature shows up when its evil mission is challenged. Then it speaks as a dragon.

This second beast is '*Christendom*'. It consists of nations '*churched*' by the message of the gospel but stripped of the witness of godliness through the unfaithfulness of their teachers, the denominational churches.

The term '*Christendom*' is generally used as being the opposite of heathen countries where 'thick darkness broods' and pagan worship prevails. But, rightly seen, this distinction no longer holds. There is as much idolatry in the 'churched' nations as elsewhere.

The grace and mercy of GOD channelled to these Christianized nations through the gospel have been turned into lasciviousness.

Without doubt, they are more deserving of the wrath of the Almighty God than the yet un-reached pagan lands.

The *counterfeit church system* that results from the event of a godly spiritual movement losing her first Love and habitually walking contrary to the ways of the LORD is **a denomination**. With time, **whole grain denominations** develop all the characteristic features that Scriptures assign to *spiritual Babylon*.

The *sustained loss of the first love* and the consequent *setting aside of Christ and the rule of His word* in a Church is what is

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termed *a falling away* (2 Thes. 2:4). She goes through all the motions of worship and ministry day in, day out but her candlestick status has long been withdrawn and divine ownership of that entity forfeited.

A denominational church movement carries on as an alternate kingdom. Another king, not Christ, calls the shot. It is much more opposed to the plans and purposes of God in Jesus Christ than it appears to be.

Let's now take a closer look at the earth-beast. In a certain respect, it is prefigured in Scriptures by Balaam of old. The earth-beast is said to be a prophet, capable of 'performing' miracles, but a false prophet.

Balaam is shown in scriptures to be a typical false prophet. Let us take notice that Balaam was not a false prophet because he was never at any time God's servant. He was not false because he did not have his beginning in God. He was false because he was overtaken by insatiable lust for illicit wealth. His greed coupled with being driven by a wrong motive in ministry could only have found expression in a hypocritical lifestyle.

Balaak, a heathen king working in the interest of the satanic host was able to lay hold on Balaam to upstage the children of Israel because he was morally weakened by lust and greed. With cunning treachery, he gave a counsel (which the New Testament later calls the doctrine of Balaam) which led Israel into idolatry. The Bible says the people were *joined* to Baal-Poer (Num. 25:3).

So this Old Testament event foreshadows something about the earth-beast in Revelation 13. The warnings of Scriptures are to the effect that the Lord's people may faithfully obey GOD in all things particularly matters pertaining to His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus.

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We must hold fast to a walk with God that secures divine assurance of peace and safety.

History without doubt acknowledges that the Evangelical and Pentecostal assemblies have brought much blessing to all humanity through the gospel. It is most saddening then that today these churches in the main are fast gravitating into the same mould of the orthodox harlot Church systems.

It does appear the Roman Catholic system is inspiring, by their degree of worldly success, the relatively younger Pentecostal leaders to develop their assemblies into more or less secularized religious states. These leaders carry on like little gods (or do we say popes) over their little kingdoms. They are also learning to be as ruthless as the first beast.

The first stage of the development of the earth-beast has been observed in the foregoing. We may identify it as taking rise from time a measurably backslidden, unrepentant, and self determining church system is hijacked by Satan the Devil.

When a church in spiritual terms is sick, struck with the anti-type of the three symbolic ailments listed in Num. 5:1-4 (as further personified in the wife that has violated her marital vows, Num. 5:11ff) she is really destitute. It is a sorry condition and such a denominational church becomes a veritable ground for the adversary to shop for those he will anoint for himself.

The first stage of the development of the antichrist system is deemed complete with the anointing (empowerment) of enlisted persons operating through the '*churches*' they own.

Everyone genuinely burdened for the house of God cannot but wonder at what has become of many of the Pentecostal movements that sprang up in the last few decades. They were undeniably mighty

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instruments in God's hand in words and deeds, bringing sweeping revival across the earth.

They who once stood fearlessly against the grievous errors of the dead orthodox churches are now themselves neck deep in the same mess. They are even becoming more determined, more daring, in undermining the spiritual and moral glory of Christ while still appearing before men to serve His interest. But how come this fall?

We have already seen that moral failures and un-consecrated living in spiritual leadership ruin an assembly. This inevitably paves the way for smuggling in the cursed practice of man worship.

Today, ministries make themselves gods, loving to be feared and held in awe by their own brethren. There perhaps has never been an era in which ministries are as madly in love with superfluous titles and maintaining a bogus hierarchy in the church as we have it today. Men in Pentecostal cassocks confer on themselves and their aide's immeasurable powers with which they execute their nefarious schemes. They claim divine support for setting up a Pseudo-Levitical Priesthood in a New Testament age. What a treachery!

For purpose of clarity, the deeds of the Nicholatans, the Laity-clergy distinction which dates back to the thirteenth century and which now pervades the church world is anti-God. The Lord hates it as He clearly declares in Rev. 2:6.

For the first three hundred years of the church history, even though there were *highly anointed ministries and able leadership* that God graciously made available to the church, *they never imposed themselves* as lords over His flock.

The divine provision is for the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Establishing any order that negates the authority of the Holy Scriptures and the rule of the Holy Spirit is to court divine

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displeasure on the one hand and attract satanic interest on the other.

It is certainly much more disturbing than amusing that many Pentecostal ministers now wear robes like Catholic Priests and bear titles of blasphemous claims.

It is as though in the Pentecostal court, the peak of a man's ministry comes when the Pope has granted him audience. "*I was with the Pope*" so it is said. Others, not so 'privileged', boast of the romance they have with highly placed ungodly statesmen.

Apostle Paul in his day speaks of some ministries, who hold men in admiration because of advantage. The reference is to greed of these men; the love for filthy lucre in these ministries leading them to company with persons of cheap virtues. These traits may easily be seen as early signs of a gradual loss of a good conscience.

Of-course the beast nature creeps up slowly, showing itself in small degrees. This is a very important assertion. The word pictures of these events seem to convey the thought that the beast from the earth comes forth at once. But this is not actually so. The two beasts come on the world scene in developmental phases until full grown.

Let's consider the sea-beast. At its beginning, it may just be the head that has appeared. This, if assumed, will naturally suggest the body gradually emerges in addition. After a good while, perhaps the limbs come up to complete the picture.

Again, this later stage must set in before it receives power as may also be inferred from a proper understanding of Rev. 17:12 read in the light of Rev. 17:3 and Rev. 13:1. That is, the beast is fully identifiable on the world stage ahead of receiving the power to carry out the major activities lined up for it in Rev. 13:1-10. This same observation holds true for the earth- beast.

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In terms of an assessment of the current status, the earth-beast is now only showcasing its power to do the miraculous “in the sight of men”. Enlisting and empowering for satanic use is the first stage. In the passage of time, the other characteristics become manifest and the real nature of the beast fully emerge.

Now, let's progress to the second stage of development of the earth- beast as revealed in Rev. 13: 11- 17.

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had the horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, where deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles, which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell in the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which, had a wound by the sword and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that hath the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

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Now we had shown in a previous chapter that there are leading causes to the emergence of the earth-beast. First of all, there must be the event of ministries that have defected from their holy and heavenly estate and so becoming wandering stars. This makes them an easy catch for their erstwhile adversary, Satan the dragon.

The dragon eventually casts them down to the earth (Rev.12:4) with its tail. The victims become earth-bound, wallowing in the mire of worldliness. Now, these fallen stars retain control over their congregations who habitually look to them for leadership, instruction, and guidance. With unclean spirits finding welcome in these environments they settle down to work their evil mission. The satanic field is gradually built up much sooner than later. When fully activated Satan takes over proceedings in these organizations, setting up opposition against God's purposes in Christ Jesus.

So an antichrist system is revealed against the background of a falling away of some ministries from the narrow path of life. By and through them, unholy influences are cast over their congregations. This is why the scriptures reveal that the earth-beast is shaped like a lamb; it is because it has a 'Church' identity; emerging from the Church world. It looks harmless and inviting but its true character will, ultimately, be made manifest.

Notice that in Revelation 14, we are introduced to the true Lamb and those of His followers that have taken on His nature. Verses 1, 4-5 say:

And I looked lo a lamb stood on mount Zion and with him a hundred and four thousand, having his father's name written in their foreheads.

These are they which were not defiled with women, for

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they are virgins. These are they which follow the lamb withersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

So there is the Lamb of God but there is also the false lamb. You cannot detect its evil by seeing how it conducts its affairs. Remember a lamb is the small of a sheep. When you see a sheep, there is something that is calm about it. No wonder that figure is used to represent the believer. We are sheep of God's pasture, a people of His hands (Psalm 95: 7).

So this beast, with its sordid characteristics hidden from public view, comes out as a lamb. It appears as though it operates by the word and Spirit of God (the two horns). Everything about it seems holy and harmless. That is the first thing to take note of. If you were to sit in such a congregation through a typical service, you might not easily discern that something else is happening.

At the beginning, nothing of an evil sort seems to be on course. The men who are in charge of the affairs seem to many to be sincere. However, the bible describes as harlotry the incorporation of the ways of the degenerate world in the spiritual walk of any group of persons professing covenant relationship with God (Jas. 4:4). What results in these circles in the passage of time only points to something that was always true at its beginning. Some suggest that a backslidden Church is still the Lord's own. It is factual but only to a limited sense is it true. If the warnings of scriptures and the corrective ministries that the Lord raises to address spiritual defections are embraced there will be a restoration. But a persistent,

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wilful rejection of the same does lead a people to another's claims of ownership.

Now, the craze for wealth and fame, the bane of the unregenerate world, has become the driving force in many a congregation of professed believers. The king-pins/denominational warlords are more committed to whatever is perceived as money yielding than seeking God's will.

These men raise empires or kingdoms for themselves even though the people are given to believe that the kingdom of God is being built. Well, they do not see anything wrong; they think it is acceptable to God, the way they are carrying on. They are willingly ignorant of the fact that in actual terms, what is obtaining is the setting up of rival kingdoms in opposition to God.

It reminds one of Jacob of old; he served for seven years thinking he was working toward receiving Rachael as a bride. But after seven years, his eyes were opened to the reality that all he laboured for was Leah. What a picture of the experience of many of us!

Jacob had to labour in love-service again to make Rachael his. All of us at one time or the other have served in the kingdoms of men. We have helped to build men's empires in the belief we were prospecting for placement as kings in the kingdom of heaven. But all of a sudden, the Lord opened our eyes and said, "*You think you are building for me, you are actually working to build man's kingdom*".

So this beast is shaped like a lamb; appearing harmless and inviting. This beast-organization operates the way a true church does. But its speech when '*provoked*' betrays it. The telling defect is more obvious in its speech under *testing circumstances* than its frame. The voice of a dragon is within that lamb-shaped thing!

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Testing circumstances come from the direction of the true Church. She is counselled to ensure separating the **vile** from the **precious** by going forth with the **sharp sickle of** harvesting **truth** is carried out *when* the '**tare**' features fully appear. The maturing of the revealing features of the tare class does not take place in the first stage of development of the earth-beast.

A gradual but determined turning away from the path of life by that which once served the interest of God occurs before it can be hijacked by the adversary. On account of rejecting divine counsels, a defiant leadership and their surrogates unwittingly travel on the broad-way of self destruction. As they journey along this fatal path many fall easy prey to satanic manipulation. Once another spirit takes over them, moral checks begin to lose appeal and a strange boldness comes on board that dares God and discounts the claims of the Holy Scriptures.

Somebody had a revelation which shocked him so much and was one of the things that made him go out of the denominational church in which he was a minister. In the dream, he saw a procession of idol worshippers. There were those churning out music from ancient looking drum sets leading the procession toward the river with all the things they were carrying.

They were dressed in the traditional regalia of those who worship the marine goddess. Each prominent person was carrying some sacrifice and they were proceeding towards a river. But as the narrator looked on in the dream he identified the persons to be members of his denominational church. Those in front were choir members, two of them Americans.

The Lord ministered to him that his dream is a reflection of what was actually taking place. Then the revelation was followed by

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another in which this same set of persons was involved in idolatry right in the head quarters of that denominational church. This eventually led that minister out of that church.

But what do these dreams signify? Does it mean those people (remember they are the Lord's people) were secretly going to worship idols? No. But the same considerations that motivate a man to bow down to graven images are present when man forsakes the worship of God and begins to worship men.

It is no greater folly in the idol worshiper that makes an idol from scraps of iron or sawn timber consecrating it for worship. Yes, he is no more foolish than a well '*cultured*' man, a high net-worth individual, general manager of a big company, who goes to the church supposedly to worship God, but actually succumbs to man worship.

Worship of human idols, driven by a cultic style of leadership, has completely defiled many denominational churches. It is an ugly reality in the world today.

Remember, this beast has the shape of a lamb; it has the proof that its operation is simply by the '*word*' and by the '*spirit*'. But when it unmask a dragon nature is exposed. The power by which it operates is of course from the red dragon.

An antichrist system always has its foundation in a body of persons professing religion. Some in this bracket once were enlightened by Christ but in practical terms have fallen away and gone out of the hollow of His hands. These are vulnerable to influences emanating from a satanic field of power.

In the first stage of the development of the antichrist system while retaining the operations of a church, it is given access to infernal supernatural signs and lying wonders by the means of the

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spirit that has taken it over. Let us read verses 12-13 of Revelation 13 again.

And he (that is the beast from the earth) exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, where deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

...*And he doeth great wonders.* The working of miracles, the gifts of healings and the gift of faith are part of the endowment of the church. The church is a supernatural organism. But there are spurious things on display in many places, and the trend would become more pronounced in the days ahead.

The GOAL is to give the recruits fame and winsomeness. They become crowd pullers. Deception has no better appeal than when it is accompanied by ‘*miraculous*’ works. By means of the powerful signs these satanic stooges come to great wealth and considerable followers. These are ‘*credentials*’ that earn a man world-wide recognition in the passage of time. Remember Balaam. He was known and courted by world rulers of his days.

This is a feature seen in the first stage: the spirits that come over these stars that have been cast to the earth begin to give them the wealth they are looking for. They are empowered with ‘*miraculous*’ powers. They begin to manifest lying signs and wonders. Let’s see this same thing in 2 Thes. 2:9. We read from verse 7.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he

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*who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.
And then shall the Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord
shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall
destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him,
whose coming is after the working of Satan with all
power and signs and lying wonders*

That is what will arrest the public. Seemingly impossible cases would be dissolved in no time and people would begin to troop to celebrate these false messengers. At the early stage of this development, nobody is able to detect what is wrong. When the message is preached, it is sprinkled with the name of Jesus, for the persons have already mastered the ‘art’, being once in the ministry.

That is the first stage. The earth-beast has a humble carriage, shaped like a lamb, speaking the ‘word’, moving by the “spirit”, performing miracles, drawing attention of all around. That is the first stage of development. Let’s read Rev. 13:12-13 again.

*And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before
him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein
to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was
healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh
fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of
men.*

That is where the first stage ends. All of these things would be happening *in the sight of men*. The power that is enabling the earth-beast is hidden from public view.

A minister of God in Nigeria once received a letter not too long

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ago. He was invited to the U.S.A. to learn how his church can experience tremendous growth. He was requested to come for training for three months, after which when in a church service he waves his hands or blows air, people would fall under “*the anointing*”.

(Of course, times were (and will ever be) when genuine servants of God moved in real manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s compassionate presence. However, demonic incursions into the rank and file of some of today’s church systems have churned out damnable counterfeits).

So this servant of God received a letter he did not solicit for. But when he saw that the mail indicated the sender was an occult group, he questioned how his name got to this people. He reasoned, “*There must be some of these pastors who for sheer want of success by any means are patronizing this occult group. Thinking that I may be having difficulties, they must have out of concern sent my name and address to them*”.

So this is the first stage of the development. We see the same thing in Revelation 17 where the antichrist system is pictured as a harlot. She looked so beautiful and seductive that even the apostle John was captivated. He wondered “*with great admiration*” (Rev. 17:6). But behind that appealing beauty was terrible seductive power. No wonder her first name is “*MYSTERY*”. The great whore is other than what she presents of herself.

The romance between the sea-beast and the earth-beast is brought out even more clearly in this passage and it sums up what we have found so far. We read from verse 1 through 3. Rev. 17:1-3.

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And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials and talked with me saying unto me, come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Notice the woman is riding upon the sea-beast. She is facilitated in her mission through the goodwill of the first beast. The progress of the beast is reflected in the fortunes of this harlot woman. But as we shall see in chapter 9, a time comes when all love is lost between the two of them. This will set the stage for the judgment of the harlot.

Now back to the first stage. The earth-beast continues with the substitute church order, for that is what defection and rebellion against Christ resort to. Nothing seems to change in the physical for quite a while.

Let's return our minds to what we are looking at in Rev. 13:12. ***He exerciseth all the powers of the first beast.*** He begins to draw attention to ***the first beast*** as he performs miracles in the ***sight of men***. As the first phase wears on, the second stage sets in. So let's see the second stage.

Early in the second stage, the principal leaders of antichrist systems will come under pressure from their benefactors to show in a public way some form of association with them.

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They would begin to say to them “*Well, now is the time for you not only to acknowledge but also to celebrate us. Operate from now on as we direct you.*” This is what introduces the second stage: **image-making**. Image making means “*do it the way I am doing it; adopt my procedures.*”

Let us illustrate what is meant by image-making by considering a person who enjoyed celebrity status in the kingdoms of men. Take the man Fela Ransom-Kuti for example. Consider another musician trying to make his voice sound like that of Fela. Furthermore, his music is just a replication of Fela’s. What that musician is doing, in effect, is simulating an image of Fela before the audience. Where and whenever this musician is in a concert, he evokes the memory of Fela. One hearing the music will think “*Oh that is Fela*”. But no, it is only an image he is making of Fela. He is a copy of Fela.

So these several antichrists (the leaders of the antichrist systems) would begin to operate exactly the way the spirit empowering them directs. In other words, congregations would be raised all of which will operate in conformity with the preferences of the first beast. This is the second stage of the development of the earth-beast.

Let’s look at what has just been said. The first stage ends with the phrase “*in the sight of men*”. In the second stage, the powers behind these persons will seek to catch in on their fame and popularity. So let’s read Rev. 13:14 and see the second stage.

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of these miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast: saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had a wound by the sword and did live.

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First, it was in the sight of men, but now it is “*in the sight of the beast*” (that is the sea-beast). The link between the false prophet and the source of its power will begin to be made manifest at this stage. These powers that have been behind the scene hitherto will begin to show up.

They would request that the several assemblies established everywhere by their wards operate the same way. When the principally anointed ones of this beast system go to a city to raise up an image to the sea-beast, those who are engaged as leaders of the new set-up, receive same power by transference of spirits. This is what is meant when we read in the next verse that the earth-beast will breathe into the image. Let’s read Rev. 13:15a. It says:

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak...

That is animating the image. Image-making and animating these images, is the second level of development. So you see the “*anointing*” flowing, and all the persons leading the anti-Christ systems doing it the same way.

(May we be so true to God and follow in the footsteps of our Redeemer-King. He has sent tremendous grace and power from His presence to heal, lift and bless humanity, He will give this power unto more and more of His chosen ones but let them patiently wait upon Him. Let none push for power paying no regard to its source. In His own time, God makes everything beautiful).

Now let’s go a bit further in our meditation. Let’s read a few more verses from our passage and then take some explanations.

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And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of these miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast: saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had a wound by the sword and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

So when they go to a particular city and raise a congregation, these antichrists will set up leaders there. They would ‘lay’ hands and transfer part of their false anointing upon these ones. By them, in a figure, the image would have power to speak and perform “miracles”. The key word is substitution through a method of imitating the operations of the true Church.

At that time, there would be on display terrible wickedness. Anybody who opposes that order would be ‘killed’. This killing would in its early phases manifest in being cast out of the congregations and being denied certain privileges and rights, but it will ultimately show in vicious persecutions and physical assaults. But this latter aspect would only set in at the third stage.

So that is the second stage of the development, the powers behind the scene begins to seek to be known and acknowledged. First there would be image-making: a duplication everywhere of what is happening in the place where the antichrist is operating. Now, with the form put in place, power to work ‘miracles’ comes next to fully commission the scheme.

That introduces us to the third stage of development of the

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antichrist system. This stage sets in when the earth-beast begins to speak like a dragon. At that time the mask is taken away from the face of the main operators of the infernal system. This exposes the antichrists, which as such, will rely on absolutely wicked schemes to keep control of the mass of deceived followers. So the hour of the full manifestation of the earth-beast as a dragon is the hour of the unveiling of the sons of the devil (the antichrist). 2 Thes. 2:3b says *...and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*

So there is the hour of unveiling, when the mask is taken away and that which is covered comes into full glare. Even though the passage talks of the 'man of sin' as if it is just one individual, we have already shown in chapter four that the man of sin is of many persons; a composite man.

There is sonship with God, and some who come to full sonship would reveal the fullness of the glory, power and life of the Son of God on earth.

Some would-be sons of Satan are being led into full Satanism. Remember Jesus referred to the false religionists of His day who over time are capable of making someone twice a child of hell. It is thus evident that the satanic kingdom is stratified. People are placed according to the level of authority they command in that enclave.

The principal persons heading the two beast systems would be outright Satanists at the time of their unveiling. The Bible mentions some persons in the visible Church systems claiming they have knowledge of the depths of Satan (Rev. 2: 24); and also of some who the Lord identified as being the synagogue of Satan though members of two of the Churches (Rev.2: 9; 3:9). This is in full harmony with the plain declarations of the Apostle John in 1 John 2: 18f.

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When he speaks, he speaks like a dragon. At what point in time the fulfilment of this can be said to have occurred commences the period allowed it to operate. We are told in Rev. 13: 5b that “*power was given unto him to continue forty and two months*” referring to the sea beast. The earth-beast has the same time frame.

So, for a recap, here are three stages of development of the antichrist system: During the first stage, it appears harmless. Nothing seems to indicate that the ‘*church*’ services they present is any different from what will be seen of a true church.

They have everything in place that commands acceptance. Except perhaps for a few wildly dressed ladies and some odd looking men who evidently bemoan their masculinity, preferring to appear in public as women. All are welcome.

In any case, God does not look at the outward man, does He? “*We are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus*”. The wheat as well as the tare classes has been taught to claim this verse of Scripture.

Rev. 18:2 says “*unclean and hateful birds*” habit and has given character to the evil mystery of a church more fittingly called ‘*Babylon*’.

Of course, Praise God there are some evangelical and Pentecostal churches that are doing measurably well, shunning many of the evil practices that have taken over the church world. The fight is still on. Turning to the wisdom of God and accepting His government over our individual and collective lives and services is the only sure way to walk above the waters of evil.

We must be reminded of the practical wisdom of realizing denominationalism is itself a path to self destruction. It is the middle of a road that leads to Babylon.

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Sometimes we are amazed at what is happening in the church world. Some, there are, who started out in the work of the ministry, great in grace and humble in spirit but who suddenly have become something else altogether. There is certainly something at work that they themselves cannot explain; another spirit has taken over, a satanic field has set in.

Oh that the Lord in His mercy might send a sustained wave of deliverance to recover as many as once truly poured out their souls unto Him in love service.

They say in the religious courts of the earth that the name of the game is money. They even urge the female members, sisters, to go to money-bags, some of them Alhajis, to lure them to come to the churches' fund raising programmes.

'Sit on their laps if need be but prevail on them to dole out large sums of money for the *'propagation'* of the *'gospel'*.

So the name of the game is money, and they go for it using all kinds of schemes. Organise fund raising programs; make the Alhaji or a wealthy politician the chief launcher or father of the day. Let him read the first lesson. Of course, the Alhaji or business magnate donates a 400 x 400 plot of land and ten million naira to the *'church'* amid shouts of *"Amen, glory to God, hallelujah"*! Then the drums and sounds of music and great applause rent the air. What a pity!

Remember in the first stage of the development of the antichrist system, there is nothing to give any lead as to what is really happening. No wonder Jesus said it is when observed traits have come to maturity that the full character of the tare class appears: *"Let them both grow up until the harvest"*.

During the second stage of the development of the substitute church, some of the Lord's people will be able to discern that

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something is wrong. But it is when the last stage has set in that the monster is finally unmasked. That is the hour of full manifestation. At that time, it would not be easy to break free from that order of things for any who may have been wrapped up in it. Breaking away at that stage will have dire consequences but taking the path of wisdom now will spare a man from judgmental fires.

Come out of her now that you be not partaker of her sin, or else you will live with the prospects partaking of her plagues (Rev. 18:4).

May the Lord Jesus Christ graciously breathe on these words enabling many to yield to the divine counsel.

8

Uncovering the False Prophet

Who is the personage referred to in the book of Revelation as the false Prophet? Let us begin by taking a close look at the two of three passages that have something to say about this subject. The first one occurs in the Rev. Chapter 16: 13, 14. The second is Rev. 19: 19, 20.

*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the **false prophet**.*

For they are the spirits of devils working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. (Rev:16: 13, 14).

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on a horse, and against his army.

*And the beast was taken, and with him the **false prophet** that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (Rev. 19:*

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19, 20; see also Rev. 20: 10)

When these verses are read and considered along with Rev. 13:11-18 we have quite some light coming forth that will help in discovering the identity of the *false prophet*. Besides this, we will also find our understanding of aspects of the overall subject sharpened with the additional insight these four verses give. For ease of comprehension, we will be serializing our comments on the above scriptures.

1. The first passage mentions the dragon, the '*beast*', and the false prophet in a common mission: fully resolved to war against God's people. That is, they are together under the same influences and shown as having the same objectives.
2. The order in which these three personages are mentioned in Rev. 16 readily suggests that the '*beast*' refers to the sea- beast of Rev. 13. This also indicates that the earth-beast as having identity relations with the *false-prophet*.
3. All three, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet are shown to be working miracles, employing spirits of devils. The same spirits are capable of exerting influences that will provoke the kings of the earth and their nations to take up arms against the Almighty God.
4. The false prophet is suggested as being in a subordinate position to the sea-beast or at least deriving his authority in some way from him. He is said to be one "*that wrought miracles before him*" (the beast). That agrees with what is said of the earth-

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beast.

5. The strongest indication that identity relation exists between the false prophet and the earth-beast is found in Rev.13:14.

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast

This is what is said of the false prophet also (Rev. 19:20). It cajoles the world to worship the sea-beast in return for some kind of patronage it enjoys.

Is the False Prophet One And The Same As The Earth-Beast?

This question becomes necessary because these two entities have common characteristics and are never mentioned together in the same connection. Yet, there is a hurdle to clear that might restrain some from coming to such a conclusion out-rightly.

We know from an earlier chapter that the symbolic use of the word '*beast*' in prophetic scriptures (as it is also in Rev. 13) points to a highly developed civil government or monarchial kingdom. Its' scope of influence varies but could be global. It is particularly used in prophetic passages in the Old Testament to represent a world empire.

For example, Dan. 7 gives account of four beasts emerging from the great sea, diverse the one from the other. (Dan. 7: 2, 3). Later on in the same chapter, interpretative explanations are given with respect to the beasts saying they represent four kingdoms which

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shall exercise rule over the whole earth one after the other. Bible scholars are agreed that these kingdoms are the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires.

The term '*the false prophet*' generally refers to an individual. However it is evident from the foregoing that it fits more accurately to a compound man. That is, a number of persons are included in this personage.

How then do we reconcile the false prophet with the earth-beast, having previously established that there are reasons to deduce that they have identity relations? It would be worthwhile in seeking to tackle this challenge to draw attention to other prophetic entities in the book of Revelation which are described in ways suggestive of having something to do with the earth-beast.

The Great Whore, the Great City and the Earth-Beast

These prophetic entities are discussed in Rev. 17 (The Great Whore), Rev. 11 and 18 (The Great City) and Rev 13, (The Earth-Beast). It will be a good start to first of all look at these personages individually.

We shall take up some portions of Rev, 17 as we take up '*the great whore.*'

¹ *And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:*

² *With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been*

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made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

³ *So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

⁴ *And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:*

⁵ *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

The great Whore is named a 'mystery' indicating that what she really is does not lend itself to easy discerning. Not only that, this phenomenon is sourced and wholly controlled by an invisible force. What readily comes to mind is the mystery of iniquity; that sum total of the powers and wisdom streaming forth from the infernal domain of the adversary, Satan.

Another aspect of her name is Babylon the Great. The reference, in part, is to Babylon of old: the kingdom of Babylon under Nimrod and the Babylonian empire under king Nebuchadnezzar.

Now, in spiritual parlance, when a phenomenon has occurred before and something new in its mode is breaking forth, it is usual to call it by the same name.

For example, King Solomon, David's son, was the king of Israel in a time when that nation attained its highest estate. King Solomon

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was known for his wisdom and attaining to the status of being the foremost king on earth. The vastness of his kingdom reached far beyond any of the other kings of Israel.

Now, the kingdom of God over Israel is taken as a type of the kingdom of heaven. In this connection, Jesus Christ can be said to be David's greater son, or the greater Solomon or Solomon the great. Certain common attributes are seen in the two persons. But the person of the Lord Jesus Christ far exceeds Solomon in all ramifications.

Returning to our subject, Babylon the great is a phenomenon that far exceeds Babylon of old; even though the basic elements that grew these kingdoms are the same. We need therefore to take a brief history of the two Babylons in ancient history.

The first mention of Babylon in scripture is given in connection with a kingdom founded by Nimrod, the great grandson of Noah by his son Ham. That was a few years after the flood. It can be established that the righteous lineage of the prophet Enoch running through Prophet Noah continued through his first son Shem.

Shem's descendants have notable names as Nahor, Terah and Abraham, 6th, 7th and 8th generations. It can be further shown that Terah and his son Abraham were young men who immensely benefited from the ministry of the righteous prophet Noah and their forefather Shem. This means that Nimrod, the 3rd generation from Ham, witnessed many years of the life and ministry of Noah. However, Nimrod chose another path for himself. He was the lead figure among those who built the tower of Babel.

Many may not readily see the fact that the tower of Babel was a visible expression of the highest aspirations of a counterfeit religious system. Nimrod loved the religion in Noah, but did not embrace the

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lifestyle that he adopted which was in consonance with the message of the Lord God. Rejecting the ministry of righteousness, and cleaving to a passion of wanting to be the lord of all the earth, he led his followers in the path of rebellion.

Yet, Nimrod laid strong claims to being God's true representation on earth. He named what he built in line with the "vision" he had which evidently was Satan inspired. Ambitious Nimrod "hunted" souls to submission contrary to the Lord's will. He was daring, "mighty" and "great"; not one to play a second fiddle to God no to talk of mortals like Noah. Those who came in his mode portray the same personalities. Building a name for themselves, loving to have domineering control over all others, desiring to be seen and worshipped as God.

Gen 11:1-4 contain familiar terms used to describe the ego trips of such men: "*Let us make us a name*", "*let us build us a city and a tower*".

Next is the ancient Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar where the secular state and religion were combined to exert tremendous influence and control over a vast territory of tributary states. This is a new element.

Religion using civil and military power to conquer the people and organize them into worshipping communities whose God is man. More elements can be seen in looking closely at this empire and the way it operated. It will be sufficient however to highlight just these two. The greatness of the reach of Babylon (it is believed that this world empire spread over the whole earth with 127 sovereign nations).

The second element is that all within the kingdom were to worship Nebuchadnezzar. He set up a golden image of imposing

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stature 36 metres (120 ft) tall and 3.6 metres (12 ft) wide in the plains of Dura. Let the scriptures tell the rest of the story.

Dan 3:1-7.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasures, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of the fiery furnace.

Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image

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that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

There is yet another dimension to this mysterious woman called the mother of harlots. This description of her is most apt. This harlot woman is a growing phenomenon being herself a mother of harlot daughters. In spiritual parlance, a harlot is a woman that has turned "*aside from her husband*". Who then may be taken as her former husband from whom she has "*turned aside*"? The answer to this question leaves us to re-affirm that this woman in her early beginnings had a covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a prospective bride, she had served the heavenly bridegroom, until growing weary of him, she "*turned aside*". The seven churches of Rev. 2 and 3 from a certain standpoint are a many sided anti-type of the Old Testament church in her wilderness journeys. The stern warnings to the churches of Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicia and particularly to those in Pergamos and Thyatira, give us insight into how this harlot system developed.

Strongly rejecting the warnings of the heavenly bridegroom and his call to repentance, the disobedient flocked and batched themselves into harlot systems. The illusions of grandeur of the mother harlot continue to attract her daughters to the same lusts.

Once a spiritual movement turns deaf ears to divine monitoring, it denominates her beliefs and practices that are at variance with the Holy Scriptures. Thus, with her wheels already traveling in the dark alleys of self determination and romance with the world, what results with time is full blown compatibility with Babylon the great.

Finally, in being called the abominations of the earth, the character of persons in her membership is indicated. Nothing of real spiritual value that goes into her courts is retained. She empties out

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with time the spiritual strength, life and aspirations of servants of God that give their strength to her. This is why she is said to be “*drunk with the blood of saints*” (Rev 17:5a).

She would rather destroy those who are too ‘*hot*’ to be assimilated than indulge them. Thus in her is found “*the blood of the martyrs of JESUS*” (Rev. 17:5b; 18: 24).

Morally deficient, sin loving mere professors of religion find full welcome in the presence of this whore. She is at work wherever there is a “*falling away*” from the true faith and its spirit. When it is darkest in the Church world, she is brightest and makes haste to cage every foul spirit, every unclean and hateful bird and devils in her habitation. (Rev. 18:2). Great multitudes are held bound to her in pleasurable submission (Rev. 17:1, 15).

But how does she come to such overpowering, pervasive influence on humanity at large, excepting the little flock alone? We are given insights as to the reason behind such a sweeping success in Rev. 17: 2, 4.

Well, she has always been in ‘*ministry*’. She continues to do so even long after turning aside from her former husband though loving to hold still unto His name(Isaiah 4:1). Yes, she serves and eats her own meal, does so with her wine and clothing all of which ought to expose her treachery.

But alas, her power of deception hides her true identity for a long, long time. But not forever!

Now, let’s take a little more detail. In Rev. 17:4 referred to, this evil

Mystery is seen having a golden cup in her hands. The prophet Jeremiah, in another connection, recalls that her type once was a golden cup in the Lord’s hands (Jer. 51:7a) inflicting judgments on

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the nations.

Jeremiah adds, *“the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad”* Surely the type (Babylon of old) fits the antitype (Babylon the great). Her magic is in the illicit wine of the false vine that she is.

Dressed in purple and scarlet coloured garments, she lays double claims to royalty and priesthood appointed by no less than God. Her wine is a substitute gospel; whoso drinketh from that golden cup is overcome with the wine of her fornication and abominable filth.

The great whore, great in her ever widening global reach manages her vast spheres of interest from a headquarter city. She has in place in this city, highly skilled machinery operated by her loyalists under her command. She is thus both a kingdom and a city within that kingdom. Rev. 17:18 simply states this fact.

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth”.

And again Rev. 11:8

“And their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city...”

From the foregoing, and Rev. 17:3, we can deduce that the scarlet coloured beast is to the great whore, what the sea beast is to the earth beast. Both the sea beast and the scarlet coloured beast have been shown to be one and the same thing. Furthermore, the great whore certainly has a strange sameness to the earth beast. We will show that the one is a later day, end-time development of the

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other. And just as the great whore can be resolved into her two parts: the city and the kingdom; so also, the earth beast has her two parts.

In the first case the city speaks of the domain of the key rulers of the religious system (concretely, kingdom). That is to say, the great Whore, in varied contexts, could stand either for the system or for the domain of the ruling authority, or in the fullest sense, both of these.

In the second, the false prophet is the miracle working arm of the earth beast; the corporate head of the religious kingdom.

Wherever the earth beast has measurably full expression, those who are the lead persons in 'ministry' are part of the false prophet.

Finally, whereas the great whore has always been the counterfeit spiritual order claiming to be in covenant with Christ all through the Church age, she has metamorphosed in the end-time into the earth-beast with 'miracle' credentials.

What an evil wisdom! She has read most correctly the mood of the times. She knows that troubled humanity bedeviled with myriads of self caused problems will slave for and worship anyone who gives her '*respite*'. Mostly self willed, humanity at large care not for the source of the lying wonders.

The harlot systems (mother and her '*anointed*' daughters) seem to be having a field day. But her doom is near to be revealed and her utter destruction certain to come swiftly.

However, let it be said that faithful believers everywhere know the reality of the supernatural in her assemblies. The diverse distributions of the Holy Spirit in the operation of spiritual gifts are ever abounding toward those who walk in the footsteps of the Master. Things that come with the coming of the rains of the Spirit

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are witnessed to by these in their private lives and divine services.

We have the promise that the outpourings of the Spirit will continue to be given till perfection sets in. To our God be praise forever and ever.

While we await this, there is a refreshing available now. Ministry giftings and their employment whenever the church is in session glorifies Christ, breaks yokes, lifts burdens, heals, saves, delivers, blesses and directs her labours of love. Blessed be His holy name.

9

The Mark of the Beast (Part One)

In the last but one chapter, we examined how the earth beast comes into full development. We saw that in the hour that the earth-beast begins to speak like a dragon, it shall compel the “*inhabitants of the earth*” and “*all nations*” both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.

It shall also be the hour of the patience and faith of the saints (Rev. 13:16, 10; 14:12), a time of tribulation for the remnant of the woman’s seed. In verse 18 of Revelation 13, we are told that the number of the beast is six hundred threescore and six (666).

In this and the next chapter we will be looking at “*The Mark of the Beast*”. The subject is interesting and also very important. But before going to the mainstream of our meditation, we will establish the utmost importance of this subject. Let us read Revelation 20:4.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the

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beast, neither its image, neither had received his mark upon their forehead, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

So sitting with the Lord Jesus Christ in His throne to administer the affairs of His kingdom in the millennial reign; coming to that blessed hope of reigning with Christ a thousand years, requires the believer to have victory over the beast, over his image, over the mark of the beast, the name of the beast and the number of his name.

In other words, it is as the believer is found to have overcome the beast and its various marks that he is counted worthy of the honour of reigning with Christ in His throne.

Yes, overcoming the beast and its associated elements is a requirement for the throne glory. It is required of all those who must rule with Christ, coming into the same inheritance He received of the Father.

It is not something exclusively required of the Lord's people at the time of the tribulation. Neither would it be after the church has been "*raptured*" away, as some would have us believe. It is something God has always required of His people throughout the course of the church age.

This observation connects with what we began to say in the earlier chapters. The apostle John said in I John 2:18 that even in their own days, the antichrists and antichrist systems were already in manifestation. He said "*even now there are many antichrists*".

Also, Paul says in 2 Thes. 2:7 that the mystery of iniquity was already at work. Since the time the church was instituted by Christ in His first advent, the Lord's people have had to contend with the beastly system and its trademarks. The challenge of overcoming

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these things continues even until the end of the church age.

The above thought should immediately recommend to our minds that the mark of the beast (666) cannot be a physical mark that men are forced to take on their foreheads and/or in their hands.

Receiving this number or other evil marks are not realities that are exclusively reserved for the time of great tribulation. Otherwise all believers who lived before the tribulation, and even the twelve apostles, would not be qualified to reign with Christ in His throne (since overcoming all these things is a pre-qualification for the throne).

Since we know this cannot be true, it should then be obvious that the things revealed in Rev. 20:4, the details of which we shall find in Revelation 13, are things that have always been there throughout the church age. Paul, Peter, John and the other Apostles must have fought with the beast and overcame him and his name and the number of his name.

For example, Paul recounting an experience he had said in 1 Cor. 15:31-32 *"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die"*. And in verse 33, he explains himself saying *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God"*.

Thus, the apostles and many other faithful followers of Jesus Christ had to contend with this world's evil system and its incursion into the church. There was a system of things that sought to corrupt the Church's testimony and derail the cause of Christ which things they had to wage war against. At least, we know from the

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scriptures that all the apostles overcame and would sit with Christ in His throne. The Lord Jesus Christ said to them in Matt. 19:28

“Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me (who have forsaken all to follow me), in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”.

And again, in Luke 22:28, he said unto them *“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as my father has appointed unto me”.*

Also, when in Revelation 21 the glory of the heavenly city was shown, we are told that the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are written in the foundations of the wall (verse 14).

These passages of scriptures confirm to us that the apostles will reign with Christ, showing them to have overcome the beast, its image, its mark, its name and the number of its name. This observation is very important and must be noted carefully.

What we have done in introducing this important topic is to show that the bestial mark or its name are realities that have always been since the inception of the church age. All who have lived in the course of the church age and who overcame these things are qualified to sit with Christ in His throne as we found in the promise to the church in Laodecia (Rev. 3:21). If this is so, the mark of the beast, received and retained, and thus disqualifying the believer from attaining to the honour of reigning with Christ, cannot be a physical mark. This should be so since the beast in reference is not a physical beast as we have seen in previous chapters.

The number 666 imprinted all over my skin a thousand times

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over, will not change what I am in the Lord Jesus Christ. It will neither increase nor decrease my acceptance before God. Brethren, this attempt by some to mystify things that the Lord has spoken so clearly in His word, is partly responsible for the sleep and spiritual dullness we find in our assemblies. Please take this to mind, the imposition of the number 666 upon you forcibly, if it were possible, cannot make you unacceptable in the sight of God.

Of course, we know that there are developments and alleged plans to develop computer chips and related instruments which are to be inserted into people's hands and forehead. But all of these are mere distractions and attempts to becloud the real issues that the word of God witnesses against. These things will be addressed in this part of our mediation.

Now if the mark of the beast is not a physical number or physical symbol that will be inserted on man's skin or forehead, what then is it?

We begin by saying that the original language in which the Book of Revelation and the whole of the New Testament was written is Greek. And it is far richer than the English language. For example, there are two Greek words, which the English language translates as beast in the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 4, we read of four beasts which are shown to be in heaven and to be associated with the throne. The word translated beast there is "*Zoon*", and it emphasizes life. So, those four beasts as translated by the King James Version could better be rendered "*four living creatures*". (Other translations have taken note of that and have so rendered it). They emphasize certain aspects of the divine life (the nature and characteristics of God) that are to be fulfilled in them that sit on the throne.

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However, the word translated beast in Revelation 13 is “*Therios*”, and it emphasises moral characteristics in human nature that are akin to those of brute beasts. That is, while “*Zoon*” points to life, “*Therios*” is used to indicate the wild nature of brute beasts.

The word “*beast*” as used in that passage (Rev. 13) refers to a religious/political kingdom and prominent persons that will head such system as discussed in previous chapters. The “*beast*” is essentially of an evil nature, character or attribute. When such nature takes prominence in a man's life or becomes characteristic, then the individual can be said to be beastly, possessing character marks of a beast.

We are shown four things associated with the beast in Revelation 13 any of which could be sufficient to keep an individual from favour with God. In other words, these four things attract the fiercest judgement from the presence of God. The first is the image of the beast, the second is the mark of the beast, the third is the number of his name, and the fourth is the name of the beast. In the closing verse of chapter 13, we are told "*Let him that has wisdom count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. And the number is 666*".

In prophetic scriptures, the number 6 is often associated with man. This is common knowledge among many Bible students. Man was created on the sixth day. Thus six emphasised thrice (666) will talk of the sovereignty of man, man in self-enthronement, having rejected the headship of God. Thus, man as sovereign, man as god apart from the Almighty God is the issue brought forth in the number 666. And it has practical implication.

It is commonly known that Adam bequeathed a sour legacy to the human race: the sin nature. When that nature gains ascendancy

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over a man's life, it leads to the abandonment of the headship of God and the installation of man's headship over himself. So the first point being made is that 666 refers to a rejection of God through a rejection of His word. This may be described as that state of affairs in a man's life or in the Assembly of God's people when the Lord's Word and Spirit are set aside and carnality rules.

In practical terms, let it be realised that God has never hidden the things He approves from His people, nor has He been vague in declaring the things that He rejects. These things are not esoteric; they are not things which man cannot relate with. Take the Ten Commandments for example. We are told that they are given to us in two tables of stones written by the finger of God and handed over to Moses.

The first table contains such commandments that have to do with man's duty towards God. It begins with this: "*thou shall have no other god before me*" and ends with the words: "*remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*".

All the commandments in that bracket represent the first table and speak of man's duty towards God. Then from the commandment "*honour thy mother and thy father that thy days may be long in the land wither the Lord thy God shall give thee*" to "*covet not thy neighbours wife or property*" constitute the second table and represent man's duty towards his fellow man.

These "*Ten Commandments*" represent forever the things that God is looking for in His creation and which only the power of Christ can reproduce in man. In Rom. 8:1-6, we find that Christ makes possible the fulfilment of the righteousness of the law. The reference is to the Ten Commandments fulfilled in those who believe in him. It says:

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There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law (the Ten Commandments) could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son (taking on humanity) in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sin offering condemned the power of sin. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. “For to be ruled by the flesh is death, but to submit to the rule of the indwelling Spirit is life and peace”.

When talking about the things that God reacts against and brings severe judgement upon therefore, the mind is clear that they have to do with either disobedience to the first table, the things that have to do with our duties toward God, or disobedience to the second table, the things that have to do with how we relate to our fellow men.

In the New Testament, we also find the Lord speaking plainly concerning the things that disqualify man from partaking in God’s kingdom. Consider Gal. 5:19-21 for example. It lists what the scriptures call “*the works of the flesh*”. They include adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like.

These things are deviations from man’s responsibility towards God and towards his fellow man. The closing part of verse 21 says a man who partakes of them cannot inherit the kingdom of God. So when these things are found in a man’s life it disqualifies him from a

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place in God's kingdom. Using the language of the New Testament therefore, we can say that the works of the flesh are what constitute the mark of the beast in a general sense, the things that disqualify a man from an inheritance in God's kingdom.

Again if we read Revelation 2, 3, we find the Lord in the seven letters that He caused Apostle John to write to the churches speaking plainly of the things He will not have in His Church or in any assembly of people who profess to belong to Him and gather to worship Him. They are shown to include the abandonment of our devotion to Him and the incorporation of the spirit of the world, gross materialism and worldliness, grievous moral failure, and priest-craft (man's exaltation and worship) which is idolatry; and such teachings and doctrines that sponsor and promote these things. So the things revealed in those seven letters together with the black list of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19-21 give us a full range of the issues bound up in receiving the mark of the beast.

Now the beastly nature has been fatally destroyed in the believer at the point of salvation. When the believer receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour, there is a death blow struck to the nature of sin such that it no longer can exercise mastery over him. If from that point the believer takes on a life of consecration, walking closely with the Lord and submitting to his word and to his Lordship indeed, the sin nature will eventually be *utterly* destroyed when he is brought into the perfection of life in Christ.

This is the understanding we find in Romans 6. Verse 6 says: "*knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin*". In verse 2, we are told having been dead to sin; we should no longer live therein. But when through earthiness, the believer

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begins to build an image, an altar to sin, as it is said of Ephraim in Hos. 8:11, then the sin nature will revive and gain dominion over his life. We are shown in Revelation 13 that the beast had a deadly wound (which wound was received on the cross of Calvary) but the deadly wound was healed.

Thus the gradual coming to prominence of the works of the flesh in a believer's life is the gradual taking on of the mark of the beast. The words of the Lord in Revelation 2 and 3 show that when the believer does not take heed to himself and to his doctrine to watch over his soul (as Paul admonishes Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:16), or when in an unfaithful state, he does not heed the call to repentance, there is the possibility of the flesh coming to prominence and dominating his/her personality. Such will in a matter of time have the mark of the beast written over him.

We are told the mark could be received on the forehead or else on the hands. The forehead speaks of the mind, where the thoughts are formed and the course of action determined. To write upon the forehead or put a mark upon the forehead is to seal up a person unto a nature (a way of behaviour) through continuous instructions, teachings and doctrines. What a man is taught, what a man believes and is instructed in, shapes his life and conduct. Paul says "*evil communication corrupt good manners*".

Thus to receive the mark of the beast upon the forehead is to receive erroneous and false teachings, which leads to worldliness, carnality and evil practices. Heresies, seditions, false teachings, and wrong emphasis are part of the mark of the beast. Such doctrines tells you that as a believer, you are free to relate loosely with the opposite sex and you can engage in 'holy kiss' and do all such things even when you are not yet married to the person. Teachings that

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bring into your mind the evil knowledge that once you are a believer, your faith is sealed in Christ Jesus and you need not watch over your soul, you can in fact go on sinning that grace may abound, mark those who receive them with the beast name.

Equally evil and of the same import are sermons that bring into your consciousness that the Lord wishes above all things that ye should prosper and so you can pursue this world's riches without any moral restraint. Such doctrines only make men worldly, sensual, carnal and dull of hearing, so that they cannot pursue the matter of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Rev. 2:20 says: *“Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols”*. So it always begins with some teachings, some knowledge ministered to men's mind. That is how it was in the Garden of Eden. The seed of evil entered into the human race through some knowledge, *"hath God said..., ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"*. That seed, that knowledge, began to work upon the mind, the thoughts, the emotions, desires, and will until it found expression in physical acts of disobedience.

When evil and erroneous principles are established in a believer's mind, he has the mark of the beast upon his forehead. It will not be long before it is revealed in the works of his hands. The hands stand for services whether religious, social or economic. (The Bible says God shall bless the labour of our hands). So whatever we do in day-to-day living in our homes, in our offices, in our businesses, in the midst of God's people, among unbelievers etc, reveal what is ruling over us on the inside.

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To receive the mark of the beast in the hands is to express in moral conduct and services that sin is a master over one's soul. It is to be found in sinful living or being involved in promoting a system of things that does not represent God's interest, a system of things that does not glorify God. In Rom. 6:6 that we read earlier, we are told we should no longer serve sin. And again in John 8:34 Jesus said to the people, "*he that comitteth sin is a servant, a minister, of sin*". So there is something like serving sin or serving a system that is opposed to God's purpose.

Dishonest dealings in business are a proof that the mark of the beast is already being formed in somebody's hands. If you are a Christian employer and you do not pay those who work under you their wages when due, and you allow that evil to be a growing feature in your life, you may get away with it, but it is a sign you are taking on the mark of the beast. Putting away God's rule in His church and imposing the carnal mind or promoting the rule of man is a clear sign that this obnoxious thing is come upon the right hand.

Now in order to strengthen your confidence in the factualness of these observations, we will draw attention to some scriptural passages. First, Exo. 13:9 read and considered side by side with Deut. 6:4-8 and Deut. 11:18, shows that when the word of God comes to us, and we live in obedience to Christ's preaching, we are taking on a mark upon our foreheads and upon our hands. Again in Songs of Sol. 8:6, Ezek. 9:1-4, and Rev. 7:1-4, this is made all the more manifest. Just as the positive is set forth, we will be able to understand clearly the negative. So let's read Exo. 13:7-9

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall

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there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying this is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand...

Recall that in this passage, the children of Israel had just been delivered from the Egyptian captivity, and certain instructions are given to them. Here it was the celebration of Passover, a type of that which the Lord accomplished for us in His death and resurrection (1 Cor. 5:7). Here we are told that when they celebrate the Passover, it is as a sign upon their hands.

The same is true for the New Testament believer. When we celebrate the Passover, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son, we receive a sign on our hands which may be seen without any physical imprint. Our actions and deeds are increasingly governed by the power of the indwelling Christ, by the fact that a new life now dwells in us and flows through us, a life of victory over sin and all the works of the devil. Let's take verse 9 again and complete the reading.

And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand and for a memorial between thine eyes (that is, upon the forehead), that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.

We are thus, made to see the close connection between receiving the law, and allowing it to crystallise the nature of Christ in us.

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God sees this as taking on a sign upon our right hands and upon our foreheads. Now let us read Deut. 6:4-8 and 11:18. Deut. 6:4-8.

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine
heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And
these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in
thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy
children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine
house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou
liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shall bind
them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be
frontlets between thine eyes.*

Here again observance of the word of the Lord which consists of loving the Lord with all our being and resisting anything that may want to come between us and God, is regarded as taking on progressively the mark of the nature of Christ.

Deut. 11:18 says “*Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes*”. Now you may write the “*Ten Commandments*” in a paper and tie it to your hand and head. But if it is not a life lived, if in your life Christ is not expressed in any significant measure, it will all be vain religion. It is important we have a very clear understanding of this and stop submitting to conjectures that only sends us to sleep, spiritually speaking.

We must allow our eyes to behold Him who is Jehovah Mecheldeshkeh and in beholding Him, His sanctifying power

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delivers us from the works of the flesh. That is how to be freed from the mark of the beast.

Entrenched in our old nature is the very beast itself. We come into this world carrying its marks in our hearts ever before it becomes visible in our hands or in our foreheads. Christ comes into our lives to take these marks away. But when we do not allow Christ to do so, the beast expressions begin to reflect in our services and in our thinking. To be carnally minded is death, but to allow the indwelling Christ to govern all our thinking and actions, to be spiritually minded, to be minded by the things the Holy Spirit says and does, is life and peace (Rom. 8: 6).

Let us take the other set of scriptural passages and we will see this same thing and how it is applied to the church. In Songs of Sol. 8:6, we see the church coming out of a desolate condition (the wilderness), leaning upon her beloved, and Christ saying unto her as it were “*set me as a seal upon thine heart, and upon thine hand*”. In Rev. 7:1-4, we are shown that this seal is also required upon the forehead.

So the sealing process begins with the heart. It is concluded in the sealing of the forehead, which in practical terms is the crystallisation of the mind of Christ. We are beheaded of our natural mind, and we take on the mind of Christ. This is a requirement for sitting upon the throne. All who sit upon the throne are beheaded people (Rev. 20:4). This includes martyrdom, but it is not limited to it, otherwise many faithful followers of Jesus who did not suffer martyrdom (like the apostle John for example) will not qualify to sit on the throne with Christ. The thought goes beyond physical martyrdom. *It is a life sold out in the service and support of truth* allowing the Lord to be the Lord indeed in all aspects of one's

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life and service, even in the face of fierce opposition and persecution.

Throughout the church age, all of the Lord's people who have dared to become servants of truth, striving against error, sin, and wickedness have had to suffer persecution not merely from the world but also from that system of religion found in the midst of the Lord's people which opposes the plans and purposes of God (Is. 59:14-15). No wonder John says in Rev. 17:6, "*and I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*".

So we are talking about beheading, and what we have said is that whoever gives up his own head and receives the headship of Christ over him is truly beheaded. But whoever lives by his carnal understanding, do his own thinking and imposes his thoughts upon his spiritual life or upon the assembly which he is privileged to take oversight of, has lost Christ his head and has substituted, in His place, his own head.

Now let us read Ezek. 9:1-4 and Rev. 7:1-3. We begin with the first. Ezek. 9:1-4.

He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the

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cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.
Rev. 7:1-3

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

We are shown in these two scriptural passages how a people, said to be the true servants of God, who sigh and cry for the glory of God in the midst of His house, are sealed on their foreheads before the outbreak of divine judgements upon the religious and secular world. We are later to learn in Rev. 14:1 that what is sealed into their foreheads is the name of the Father. Truth received and lived by brings into and upon us the name of the Father. Truth ultimately produces life, and, what we are shown in these scriptural passages is the ministration of God's word empowered by the Holy

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Spirit producing the life of Christ in a body of people who yield to his rule and influence. This agrees with what we saw in Exo. 13:7-9, Deut. 6:4-8 and Deut. 11:18.

In the same way, but in a contrasting picture, erroneous and outright false teaching reproduce in the lives of those that open up to them the unpleasant fruits of unrighteousness, sealing them up unto an evil nature. Just as God is putting His name upon a people, the evil one is writing his nature into all who will let. And at this time of the end, the nature of evil in man will be brought into full expression through satanic incursion just as the fullness of salvation and perfection will be fully revealed in all who follow the lamb wherever He goeth (Rev. 14:1-3).

So there are two kinds of mark that are to be fully revealed in these last days: the nature of Christ, the true lamb of God, his moral beauty, gentleness, meekness and total submission to the Father's will fully revealed in the foreheads, hands and hearts of all true followers of Christ, and the nature of evil and rebellion which indwells the devil revealed fully in all that will not allow Christ to rule over them. While majority of those who merely profess Christ and all in the unbelieving world will have the mark of the beast revealed in them, the true followers of the Lamb will have the Father's name written upon their forehead. May you be on the right side of history in these closing days of the Church age.

As we close the first part of this meditation, we want you to reflect deeply on what has been said. The mark of the beast which disqualifies a soul from God's kingdom has no reference to any physical mark or object. Now of course there is a car, called "*the Beast*", a luxury car with the state of the art incorporated. And some suppose to drive that car is to take on the mark of the beast.

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Whereas vanities and illicit pleasure do not reveal a life submitting itself to God, nevertheless just lying or sitting or driving in a pleasure car does not give you the mark. Otherwise, Revelation 13 would not say both the rich and the poor receive the mark. The mark of the beast is the beastly nature fully revealed in man.

While throughout the church age, the greater majority of professed Christians have not allowed the nature of Christ to be formed in them sufficiently, there are those who have chosen to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, choosing a closer walk with Him and submitting to Him in all things. When the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over your life, and you submit totally to His headship, allowing him to take over the reins of your life so that the works of the flesh are taken out and the fruits of the spirit are crystallized in you, you are already delivering yourself from the mark of the beast and you shall stand acceptable in the sight of God. The Lord bless you, the Lord cause his face to shine upon you, and give you the wisdom to chose right to the praise of His glorious name. Amen.

10

The Mark of the Beast
Part Two

We continue our examination of “*The Mark of the Beast*”. One of the things the fall of man has created is that man sometimes calls good evil and evil good. When a choice is made or an individual takes a decision, it is because that choice or decision appears to him at the time to be a wise one. But if it turns out later to be foolish, then, it is only a reflection of the fact that man's faculties were damaged in the fall.

In redemption, God recovers our faculties from the fallen state and begins to lift us up unto the estate that Adam had before the fall and far beyond. One of the telling characteristics of spiritual maturity is the ability to distinguish between good and evil. No matter how long the individual has given his life to Christ, Heb. 5:12-14 read and considered together with Is. 7:15, tells us that the ability to distinguish between good and evil, to choose the good and reject the evil is what shows that the individual is matured spiritually.

Two contrasting views of the same unchanging object may be used to illustrate the things that we have just observed. The vision of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in Dan. 2 is concerning the history of

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the kingdoms of this world. In that vision of his head upon his bed, he saw a mighty stature, with head of gold, breast of silver, thigh of brass and feet of iron and clay. We are told in Dan. 2:31 that this image was of an excellent brightness. That view of the kingdoms of this world is as seen from the standpoint of Nebuchadnezzar.

When we come to Daniel 7, the kingdoms of this world are again portrayed. But here, they are represented as four beasts. So to Nebuchadnezzar who does not know God, these kingdoms represent an image of glory and brightness, but to Daniel and again to Apostle John (Rev. 13), these kingdoms are seen to be beasts. Thus, we have two different views of the same object. What was glorious in Nebuchadnezzar's value system was actually despicable and beastly when viewed with the eyes of God.

Hence, whatsoever way an individual responds to God's word reflects his inward disposition. Good men may make bad mistakes, and great men may make foul mistakes; but, to go on in that which is revealed to be evil either because one lacks the ability to discern what is evil or because it suits one better to continue in one's own way, shows the individual as defiant, and as setting himself against the authority of God.

Now one of the things that make many of the Lord's people to go on drowsily as though they are blind is because they do not take out time to look closely at the things the Lord Jesus Christ is saying to the churches through those seven letters that He caused John to address to the seven representative churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

Actually, when we give so much attention to other things, it will not be because we cannot employ our leisure hours for our spiritual betterment, but because we neither see the great prospects of the kingdom of God nor appreciate how spiritual pursuit is relevant to

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our lives.

We trust that as you go over these teaching again and again, the Lord will quicken you and impart you with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the accurate knowledge of Christ (Eph. 1:17). Our lives can only remain the same if we chose the path of rebellion. Let that not be our choice, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the previous chapter, we saw that the mark of the beast has to do with the evil and rebellious nature of Satan revealed in man, the works of the flesh coming to full prominence and totally taking control of a man's life. Gal. 5:19-21 says the works of the flesh are these adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like. We are told that anyone who does these things shall have no part in the kingdom of God. So the full imprint of one or more of these things in a believer's heart, his spiritual or temporal works (hands) or his mind (forehead) disqualifies him from the inheritance that is in Christ.

We also saw that in contradistinction to the mark of the Beast is the mark of the true Lamb of God (the mark of Christ). Paul says in Gal. 6:17 (just a chapter away from the passage that lists the work of the flesh), "*Let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*". When fully written upon the believer, it is seen as the father's name (the father's nature, character written upon his/her forehead: Rev. 14:1).

It becomes clear that while some professing believers through their lifestyles are taking on the mark of the beast, others take on the mark of the true Lamb of God.

There is the mind of Christ (Christ's nature fully crystallized in

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man's mind, thoughts, emotions and will, so that all he does reveals the lamb-like nature of the Son of God) and there is the mind of the beast. Praise the name of the Lord.

We also noted that these marks or names are written in man's heart, hands, and foreheads through spirit-empowered words. The Bible shows this to be a sealing process (Rev. 7:1-3 for example). All who are yielding to the Lord in all things are being sealed by the Holy Spirit through the medium of the revealed word of God unto the name of the Father, unto the nature and character of the Almighty God who also is the true Lamb.

God does not write on tables of stone. He writes upon man's heart, hands and foreheads. He does not write His nature into men with physical ink or marker, He writes through the Holy Spirit-empowered ministrations. *"Forasmuch as ye are **manifestly** declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart"*, Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:3. Also the Lord Jesus Christ says in John 6:63 *"...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"*.

Thus, words (teachings and doctrines) are important especially when they are sourced and empowered by the Holy Spirit or by demonic spirits. It was by Satan-inspired words that sin entered into man and corrupted his entire being. First the words were sown into man's heart imprinting a mark on his heart (his emotions, desires, longings and will).

Not too long after, the mark appeared in his hands. Verse 6 of Gen. 3 says *"...and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave*

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also unto her husband with her, and he did eat". With time the sinful nature became fully crystallized in man becoming a mark upon the forehead.

Rom. 3:8 says: "*For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*". But it all began with Satan's inspired word craftily addressed to an unsuspecting Eve.

We see the same things in the Lord's letter to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. We are told of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing the Lord hates (Rev. 2:15). Later, it is shown to have progressed beyond mere teachings (imprinting a mark in the heart) to deeds ("*the deeds of the Nicolaitans*": Rev. 2:15), a mark on the hands. Again we find the above true of the doctrine of Balaam (which has the same effect as the teachings of Jezebel). We read that the doctrine of Balaam (as well as that of Jezebel) seduce God's servants and cast a stumbling block before God's people, making them to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:14, 20).

It is important what things you give your earnest heart attention and devotion to. Demonically-inspired doctrines are instrumental to impairing a man's reasoning faculty. With time the mark of the beast begins to shape the man's thought pattern. This is receiving the mark of the beast in one's forehead.

In the same vein, understand that whatever governs the mind shows up in the individual's moral and religious works. A pattern of works emerges which relative to the individual becomes characteristic. This is receiving a mark on the hand. So whatever begins by merely accepting to hear and hearken to someone who is false in character and ministry gradually develops into possessing moral and spiritual qualities at variance with Christ and His word.

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Only the ministry of the word of truth proceeding from a Christ ruled life that has sanctifying power. Ministry coming from uncrucified flesh or from the spirit of error imparts uncleanness. They cause the works of the flesh to gain ascendancy in a man's life gradually sealing him up to an uncertain future.

Now let us take some scriptures to further establish what has been said. We will read Rev. 22:1. It says:

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Notice that this verse says, '*the throne of God and of the Lamb*', not the thrones of God and of the Lamb, but '*throne*', the word is used in the singular sense. If the word is given to us in plural, we will be talking of two personages, but being singular; it shows us that the occupant of the throne is called both God and the Lamb, thus two great attributes of the Occupant of the throne are set forth in this verse.

Both of these attributes give character to the ministry of the word accepted as proceeding from this throne. That is what gives those who faithfully receive such ministries blessed hope.

The blessed hope is secured to him who manifestly desires to be like Jesus the Lamb. The blessed hope of reigning with Christ also has to do with developing other character and wisdom of God. However, he that is to sit on the throne must first of all be a Lamb.

In contrast, Satan's plan is to make man god apart from God.

The One who is the Almighty, Sovereign and perfect in all of His attributes, who is able to exercise that sovereignty for the

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blessing of humanity, is Jesus the Lamb. The ruler of the whole universe who has all power has Lamb-like qualities. Revelation 14 that sets forth the true picture of the Christ says

“And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand (other lambs), having his Father's name written in their foreheads”.

Our inheritance, among other things, will consist of the attributes of divine power and wisdom coupled with the lamb like qualities of love, peace, patience, gentleness, meekness and loyalty that we see fully developed in Jesus, the Lamb.

The terms “*God*” and “*the Lamb*” as used in the two passages refer to certain spiritual and moral attributes we see in the Lord Jesus Christ. As God He is supreme, He has all power and wisdom. As the Lamb, He is morally pure, meek, lowly and loyal to the Father and to His purposes.

Phil. 2:5-8 says “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God (that is he did not meditate upon an usurpation of God's rights): But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”.*

That a man's life may be expressed by his name is in all scriptures. For example, the angel announcing Jesus' conception and birth, and what he should be called said in Matt. 1:21 “... *and thou shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from*

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their sins." Thus, name signifies character, characteristics, attributes or office.

If you are going to look at a Bible character, what name he answers has a lot to say about what kind of person he is. But when he is the exact opposite of what his name indicates, you know that there is a subtlety, some hypocrisy about that individual. Like Jezebel, for example, her name means virtuous, but we know that Jezebel is the mother of harlots. And the very fact that she portrays herself other than she is makes her all the more dangerous.

In addition, every letter of the Hebrew alphabet carries a number. So every word in the Old Testament carries a number, which is a summation of the various numbers of the letters that make up that word. Therefore every name in the Hebrew language carries a number. This becomes important when we see that the mysterious lamb of Revelation 13 that speaks as a dragon has a number. We are told that the number of his name adds up to 666.

Now this knowledge has led many at various times in church history to begin to look at some certain individuals who have stood in positions of authority and manifested much evil against God's people and against the cause of Christ, as the antichrist. And they looked at their names and tried to identify those whose names add up to 666 in the original text. Others have named some Roman emperors and some Popes as the antichrist, while yet some have said the antichrist was born as a child in one of the Arabian states sometime in the early 1960s.

Names and numbers are used in scriptures to represent a nature, a characteristic, or attribute, or an office. And as we said earlier on, the number 6 is associated with man. So, 6 thrice repeated represent man as sovereign. (Remember 3 is the number of

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completion in relation to divine things. When we speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are talking not about three gods, but three manifestations of the Godhead). So when man carries his number with a triple emphasis, he conducts himself and is reputed to be sovereign. Having repudiated the headship of God; he has set himself up as god in the place of God.

We have already mentioned in the first part of this meditation that God's requirements are never hidden from God's people. We saw that the "*Ten Commandments*" represent continually God's desire for his human creation. The lifestyle that is pleasing in the sight of God is set forth in those commandments. There are certain characteristics that identify man as belonging more to the animal kingdom than to the human race.

For example, in the animal kingdom might is right, and by brute force things are conducted in that sphere. So when a person has a domineering attitude, he is taking on a bestial nature. Again in that world, there is no respect for individual rights. When a lion, for example, rushes for a goat or any other wild game, and chooses it for its own satisfaction, it does not consider whether the goat has a right to existence. So inconsideration is one thing that must be at work for the Lord's law to be broken.

That is why Jesus said the "*Ten Commandments*" are summed up in these words, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself*" (Luke 10:27). When there is such a consideration for your fellowmen, you would not steal from them, you would not violate their marital rights, you would not covet your neighbour's properties, and you would not kill.

It is this same lack of consideration that makes men give what

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legitimately belong to God to another. God alone is worthy of worship as he has said, "*my glory will I not share with another, for I the Lord I am a jealous God*" (Exo. 20:2-6; Deut. 6:14-15; Is. 42:8). The worship of men and self rather than God is at the roots of all spiritual deviations from the path of truth.

Note something in Rev. 14:6-10, which is very crucial at this time of the end, and which throws much light into the subject-matter that is before us: the worship of the beast, his image and receiving its mark. We read:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...

So much is revealed in this passage, but we shall only touch briefly on that which is relevant for our present purpose. We have already seen that the word "angels" is in most cases used in the

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Book of Revelation to refer to anointed human servants of God. That is the picture we find here. Spirit angels do not preach the gospel. In 1 Pet. 1:2 we learn that the angels desired to look into the details of the matter of redemption but it was not appointed unto them but to us. So the privilege of declaring the gospel, ministering to men the things that pertain to redemption, is given to the saints, particularly to human servants that God raises up and anoints for that purpose.

We are being shown here that in these closing days of the church age, as we approach the consummation of all things when Satan shall seek to unleash unimaginable evil and wickedness upon the earth through his incursion into men, God shall ordain ministries that shall warn and recover all those who have ears to hear from being victims of the evil to come. May all glory and honour be ascribed to His Holy name.

Verse 7 which contains the message of the first angel says: *“fear God and give glory to him, worship Him that made heaven and the earth and the sea, and the fountain of waters”*. So worship is in view in all of these things. The right of God to rulership over His creation is the issue at stake. It was the same in the beginning. Satan told our first parents *“look, if you set aside God's word and eat that which he says you should not eat, you will be as gods knowing good and evil”*.

Thus the rejection of God's rule and the enthronement in its place man's rule is the crux of the matter. Worshipping self, setting oneself or something else as Lord over one's life, over one's home, over the church of the living God, setting aside the principles of God's word and enthroning one's ways and practices, represents a rejection of God's rulership. This must be taken to heart very

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seriously, and must lead to a true examination of oneself.

The activities of the second beast (the beast from the earth) made it possible for an image to be raised to the first beast. And all that the first beast stands for are given in Rev. 13:3-10. Particularly, we find that it blasphemes the name of God, wars against the saints and take on dominion over the earth, ruling it as sovereign and asking "*where is God if there is any God*".

However, it is the false prophet that sets up an image to the beast and causeth "*all that dwell upon the earth*" to worship the beast through receiving the mark upon their hands and foreheads. Verse 8 of Revelation 14 says this false prophet (the earth-beast, which is also called "*Mystery Babylon*") made all nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

There is a true wine that flows from the true vine, which is Christ (John 15:1). When we drink that wine we bring forth fruits of righteousness, we reproduce in our lives and works divinely-pleasing attributes. But there is a false wine that flows from the false vine. When men drink of it they become overcome and lose their moral and spiritual senses, they increasingly give themselves over to the works of the flesh.

It is disturbing, yet quite revealing, to note that the earth-beast operates in a "*churchian*", set-up with persons who were once true servants of God heading such systems. And that is why the warnings against taking on the mark of the beast or the number of his name, while directed to humanity in a general way, are particularly towards those who profess Christ but are found in situations and environments that betray their testimony. The objective is to recover them from their evil ways and to strengthen the determination of the faithful at heart to follow the Lord unto the end.

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Thus, when we are looking at the beast and its associated elements, we are to understand that the central question is who has the right to worship? Who or what is ruling over you? The Almighty God ruling through total submission to His will, or another?

Notice from 2 Thes. 2, we find that this is something that has always been there. This issue of men showing themselves to be gods in the way they carry on and others submitting to such influences, has been an on-going issue throughout the church age (The last verse of I John 5 says: "*little children, keep yourselves from idols*"). And at this time of the end, the man of sin, that corporate man: that man that consists of many members, would sit in the temple of God showing himself to be God.

Some suppose that this temple of God is a physical temple that will be built in Jerusalem where this man of sin would sit upon and declare himself to be God. But brethren, in understanding we should be men. God has forever done away with worship and sacrifices of the Old Testament arts. The knowledge that God shall restore in the age to come the Old Testament order of temple worship is as erroneous as it is destructive.

We are told that at the offering of Christ, the perfect sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, the *veil into the holiest of all was torn asunder from top to bottom* (Luke 23:45). Men may now freely approach unto God, their Creator in true worship.

If a physical temple like that obtained in the Old Testament is built and the Aaronic priesthood and its order of worship are restored in Jerusalem in a time to come, it would profit nothing, it will only be a mere distraction. God can never be drawn back to that order of things. The temple of importance is the temple of our being, "*know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the*

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Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Paul asked. And he goes on to say "if any man defile the temple of God him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

When we talk of defiling God's temple, the first thing that comes to our minds as Christians is moral failure, especially sexual sin. While that is true and constitute a grievous mark of the beast, worldliness and carnality are things that equally defile God's temple. And more importantly, that passage (2 Thes. 2:1-12) reveals that when men are held in reverential adoration that border on worship, it is idolatry and constitutes a defilement of God's temple. It brings very severe judgements. Jas. 4:5 says: "*know ye not that the Spirit of God that dwelleth within us lusteth unto envy*".

So whenever another sits over the throne of our hearts, exercising lordly control over our lives, and doing so pretentiously, giving religious reasons and that he has right from God to so exercise himself over the thrones of our hearts and affections, that scriptures in 2 Thes. 2 is being fulfilled.

So you can see that there is a deception that comes with supposing that the Antichrist is first going to be one man. True, there is going to be a head of the coming World Empire, the head of the antichrist system, which shall take on both political and religious expressions. This shall become known more prominently years after the church has been perfected in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. But such would simply be taking on those characteristics that are already being developed in a multitude of people.

Antichrist is a spirit, and whoever incorporates that spirit in his life is an antichrist. It means something set in an opposition to Christ. And we know that the setting aside of God's clear word is the setting aside of Christ.

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So what we have said so far is that man's attempt to lord it over his fellow men whether in the political, religious social or economic sphere has always been a problem. This is more dangerous in the religious sphere especially in the sphere of God's own kingdom. When a man's power becomes so prominent that it is celebrated, he will want to think himself as God and to gather the people around to lord it over them. This has always been a temptation among God's people.

Remember in the days of Paul, he went ministering somewhere together with Barnabas, and there was so much display of grace, glory and power. And the people said, these are the very gods that have come down from heaven, the first is Jupiter and the other is Mercury. The people bowed down to worship them and were ready to make sacrifices.

But notice the reaction of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14). It is something all of us in our little worlds, whether the world of our office or the world of our homes would contend with. We have good example in Paul and Barnabas. They tore their clothes and said "*God forbid, there is only one God and He alone is to be worshipped*". If it were to be a modern day preacher, he would rejoice on the occasion and get it filmed and use it to give evidence of his greatness.

But now look at John a great apostle, the Bible reveals (Rev. 19:10 and Rev. 22:8) that he was ready to bow down and worship the angel that was showing him the visions contained in the Book of Revelation. But he was told by the angel, "*See that thou do it not...worship God.*" This subtle working of Satan is something that has always been a temptation to the Lord's people, and which we have to think upon very seriously if we must stand approved in the

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sight of God at this time.

Remember we said this in a previous chapter; God's purpose is never hidden from His people. In Mic. 6:8, the prophet says, "*he hath shown thee, O man, what is good*". And in the same verse he spells out in three sentences, which read and considered properly reveals man's duties towards God and towards his fellowman. It says ... "*but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*".

When a man walks in disobedience to the revealed word of God, when he sets aside his duties towards God or goes about it in the way his carnal mind tells him, when he imports the spirit of the world and patterns his life after the world, such a one is actually setting aside God and taking on the image of the Beast.

Recall that the desire of the children of Israel to become like other nations informed the installation of Saul as king. And Saul was made king on the day of Pentecost. There is so much packed into that situation that it is not just a passing incidence. He was said to be head and shoulder above all the other Israelites, and his natural mind ruled for him in God's kingdom. God said "*destroy the Amalekites (and everyone with spiritual exposure knows that Amalekites stand for the works of the flesh), this nation upon whom my rejection stands*".

Instead, Saul said, "*I don't know why God is so old-fashioned. He keeps telling us to sacrifice animals and here he is saying we should destroy man and beast*". So, he saved some alive, even the king of the Amalekites. And God said, "*Because you have rejected me from being Lord over you and have set up your own rule in my own kingdom; I have rejected you from being king over Israel*". Now think deep and think much over that situation.

As we begin to round off this aspect of our meditation, recall that in chapters 1 and 2 where we considered "*The Language of*

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Prophecy”, we drew attention to two great divisions in the use of the word “*Beast*”. The word can stand for a kingdom (and that includes all persons associated with that order), or represent prominent persons in the kingdom. So whatever things are true of the beast as a corporate set-up are also true of the prominent persons in that kingdom. That is, when we think of this kingdom as emphasising in its operations brute force or bestial characteristics; we are saying that the same situation is true in the lives of individuals associated with the beast.

Knowing that this beast (the earth-beast) is a religious kingdom and represents Christendom (the entire churchian set-up in its growing unfaithfulness, both leadership and followership), we can say that it is also symbolising those who in Christendom bear the rule over the people. This is a very solemn observation and calls for sober reflection.

Notice that some do not just have marks upon them that answer to the nature of the beast, but take on the name of the beast. That is, they identify straight away with the beast. Then some are said to take on the number of his name. These are two divisions of those who stand in leadership positions in the beastly religious system. They constitute those who carry and minister the mark of the beast unto the generality of people that dwell upon the earth.

In particular those that carry the number of his name are persons in the leadership over such religious set up. The ones having the name of the beast are their immediate lieutenants. While the rest, thronging on, supporting things in their lives, their homes, their offices and their religious assemblies which God’s words witness against, are receiving the mark upon their foreheads and hands. These are merely allowing the depravity, the work of the flesh that

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has gained ascendance in their lives to blind their eyes to what God requires of them.

In closing, we want to say that in the hour of great judgements that is already beginning to come upon the whole world, it will be a most terrible thing for any to be found with the mark of the beast either as a minister or a receiver of it. Rev. 14:10, 11 says: they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is ***poured out without mixture*** into the cup of his indignation ...and they will have no rest day nor night.

However, if the marks are already upon us, we can yet take advantage of the great mercies of God towards all as revealed in the great cry of the angel in Rev. 14: 7 “*Fear God, and give glory to Him, worship Him that made heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountain of waters*”. Yes, it is possible to have these evil marks completely wiped off our lives when we yield to this great call of God to repentance.

The marks of the beast become permanent marks upon a soul only when such has failed to take advantage of God’s mercy in this hour of intervention. When the time revealed in Rev. 22:11 sets in, it becomes impossible for men to experience a change in terms of their various positions and standings before God. At that time, the only line of advancement for the unjust is for him to increase in his unjustness, and for the filthy to become even filthier. In other words, men become fixed in their natures.

This is an hour of mercy, and that is why the Lord is causing these words to be spoken to you. We believe each and every one of us may choose to line up with obeying the call to repentance from the things which the Lord does not approve, or else settle for disobedience. The repercussions and reward of either of the two

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options are set forth in scriptures. May the Great and Almighty God cause you to make a choice for Him and Him alone in these last days, in Jesus Name.

11

The Collapse of Antichrist Systems

*“And after these things, I heard a great voice of many people in heaven saying, **Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour and power unto the Lord our God.***

For true and righteous are his judgements; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

*And again they said, **Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.***

*And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne saying, **Amen, Alleluia”.***

(Rev. 19:1-4)

Song:

*Sing O ye little ones to the goodness of God
Praise the Lamb of righteousness for shedding his blood
Ye one hundred and forty- four thousand lift up your voice
A voice of great triumph and joyful song*

*Babylon is fallen, the great city is fallen
The smoke of her burning we see with our eyes*

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*Babylon is fallen, the great city is fallen
The smoke of her burning we see with our eyes*

*“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God,
and the song of the Lamb, saying,
Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God
Almighty;
just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints
Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy
name?
for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come
and worship before thee, for thy judgements are
made
Manifest” (Rev. 15:3- 4).*

The triumphant rejoicing of the Lord’s people in the songs, declarations and heavenly scenes, captured in part in verses above, is a reflection of the joyous mood with which the absolute collapse of the antichrist systems is being anticipated and shall be celebrated.

In both new and old testament scriptures, prophetic utterances respecting this event are accompanied by great outbursts of emotions: some of praise, worship, thanksgiving, adoration and joyful comforts. Others of cries of unimaginable woes and anguish; death embracing misery mingled with deep frustrations of helplessness at the sight of sudden, swift and complete destruction. Yes, heart breaking words registering deep regrets of neglects of divine warnings rend the air as the judgements take their toll.

This is written that many dear saints might under God be delivered. Living in careless ease, many romanced and dined with

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this cursed system. May God's redeeming mercy prevail. Amen.

Babylon the Great Is the Federation of Antichrist Systems

This much has been made plain in the foregoing chapters. The collapse of antichrist systems is taught in a couple of passages of the book of Revelation and elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures. There are thus many entrances into this subject but we shall in this chapter give brief coverage to the main aspects.

We have until now emphasized the religious character of this hideous phenomenon because the readership this book will serve is mainly but not exclusively the Lord's people. However, in the interest of all who may be divinely influenced to take up this book, we would widen the horizon significantly at this point.

Political Babylon is both a separate and included phenomenon

The beast that rises out of the sea is a political entity. It has had many lives indicative of histories of its existence in past eras. As a political entity, it has well structured civil and military formation. This is saying that the sea beast has a sovereign recognition in the committee of nations. It is structurally alive, but has not attained to the status given it in Rev. 13:1.

We have shown in a previous chapter that it is in the final phase of its 3-stage development. Now let's take a little bit of its former history.

The Beast which rises out of the sea has an existence that predates Christ the body, the Church. We see it in Daniel's prophecies (Dan. 7) appearing at various times as the Babylonian,

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Mede Persia, Grecian and Roman empires. It is thus secondarily antichrist compared with the earth beast, who is primarily the enemy of Christ.

However, as a kingdom, political Babylon was set in opposition to the kingdom of God which predates it. The kingdom of God has been from eternity. Political Babylon is therefore primarily anti-God, and desires to come against anything that is an expression of religion if it cannot annex and rule it.

The church which is the body of Christ, rightly seen, is the kingdom of heaven under preparation. The kingdom of Heaven is the kingdom of Christ soon to be installed at the conclusion of God's redemptive programme for the church age. It is because of this that the sea beast which in its former existence was anti-God primarily, will take on a similar status at some point in the near future against Christ. It is in this secondary sense that it is anti-Christ. This distinction must be understood.

The term anti-Christ which is used both for the false church system and her key figure(s), may thus also be used for the future head of the beast rising out of the sea. He takes on this designation as it is led of the false prophet to persecute the saints.

It is important to have a clear understanding of when the time frame engages itself, with measurable success, to vex (make war with) the saints. In this regard, please note that Rev. 11:7, in its final cycle of fulfilment, relates to and is a part expression of the onslaught of political Babylon against saints (Rev.13:5; Rev12:17). As to the time frame, it sets in after the manifestation of the sons of God commences. That is when the event of Rev. 12:8-11 respecting the man child would have occurred.

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Put simply, the persecution of the saints under reference is the main interest of the prophetic burden dealing with issues of the great tribulation. A visible expression on earth of the war in heaven and its attendant result is summed up in Rev17:14.

(The beast) shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome (him) for he is the Lord of lords and the King of kings; and they that and with him are called, are chosen, and faithful.

The powerlessness of political Babylon against the Christ class (the overcomers; man child). Is one of the two reasons for which it is incensed against the remnant of her seed. Rev 12:17, 11:7; 13:5. Of course, political Babylon is led in this aggression by religious Babylon.

Political Babylon becomes the chief adversary soon after the earth beast has fallen out of favour with him. God will use political Babylon to judge and utterly destroy the great whore (religious Babylon). We will take more details on this later in this chapter.

COMMERCIAL BABYLON, AN INCLUDED ASPECT OF BABYLON THE GREAT

A careful reading of Rev. 17 and 18 will divide these two chapters as follows: Rev.17 reveals the identity of political Babylon and uncovers the famous prostitute, religious Babylon. It also shows the romance between the two and the ruin of the latter by the former.

On the other hand Rev.18 discusses the collapse of Babylon the great with reasonable emphasis on the doom of an associated economic system that indirectly funds her. We call this '*Commercial Babylon*'.

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She is to religious Babylon what river Euphrates was to the ancient Babylonian empire. This is a note worthy statement as shall be seen later.

The doom of the bestial commercial system is the precursor of the ultimate ruin of the great Whore. It is actually seen by writers of the prophetic portions of Scriptures as the most telling woe of her irredeemable fall.

SOCIAL BABYLON

In Rev. 12:12 we have mentioned two classes of persons described as inhabitants of the earth and of the sea. They form the bulk of what may be described as social Babylon. A very interesting figure is used to set it forth in the book of Revelation. Social Babylon is described as clusters of grapes growing on the vine of the earth, the false vine. (Rev. 14:18 which contrasts with Jer. 2:21 – degenerate vine).

The word “*clusters*” is an obvious reference to massed groups of persons in the human society, diverse from one another, yet having common characteristics – they are unsaved persons. Three distinct groupings are recognisable of this lot.

1. The Churched or non Christian religious devotees (inhabitants of the earth).
2. Cultic free thinkers
3. Atheists who are a god to themselves.

Strange enough, these have a strong influence on religious Babylon. They have made much more inputs into the development of the belief structure of the harlot system than is often realized

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(wine of harlotry – Rev. 17:2). It is a situation that fits perfectly into that sorry state predicted by the prophet Hosea – “*and there shall be, like people, like priest...*” Hos 4:9. You will not agree less if you take a cursory look at the “pagan” doctrines and practices of the Romish institution.

Her wine with which she gets people under her control was expressed from the clustered grapes of the vine of the earth. It is highly instructive to see that the strong warnings respecting the fierce judgement that will befall those who take on the marks of the beast were given just before the disclosure of the false vine (social Babylon) and her doom. They are the first to be intoxicated from the wine of the harlot system even though they are the suppliers of the grapes... they are the first victims of their own acts.

Now each of these several aspects of Babylon has their specific judgement revealed in Revelations. However, common reasons are given for their judgements. That is separately judged for the same offences. Rev. 18:5-8 lists three reasons for the divine judgements that are visited upon Babylon. They are the same reasons given why the divine command to flee Babylon is addressed to the Lord’s people.

1. Rev. 8:5 says: *For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.* Two things are to be noted here. It is not just that Babylon is godless, and has no qualms about their moral state; it is about the nature of their godlessness. They dare God whenever they cannot discount him in their operations. The chief ally of the great whore, political Babylon, like her, carry names of blasphemy (Rev.17:3). Secondly, in religious Babylon, we have the worst example of a woman that has turned aside from her husband and done wickedly against her vows. That God

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“remembers her iniquity” is a clear reference to Num. 5:11ff. The Lord is a jealous God.

2. Rev. 18:6 *Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she has filled, fill to her double.* A second reason given for divine judgement against her is that Babylon has been the greatest enemy to the church. We only need to read Rev.17:6 and Rev.18:24 to understand this assertion.
3. Rev.18:7 *How much she had gloried herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrows give her, for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

She had left her first Love, abandoned the Husband of her youth and for all intent and purpose, she had lost Him. Yet, she cannot be called a widow she is the sweet bride of countless suitors, each one of them, called a king of the earth.

A queen of queens she would call herself, polyandry’s demeanour. She will however know the full weight of breaking faith with the terms of the covenant of grace she was once exercised under. She portrays by extravagant luxury the message that it pays to be unfaithful. Her judgement completely negates this. She will be completely wiped out. “*So much torment and sorrows give her...*”

AGENCIES CALLED INTO PLAY

1. Religious Babylon:

In the execution of the judgement passed on religious Babylon, political Babylon is employed by God.

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In Rev. 17:13, *these have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast*. We find the beast becoming fully crowned, an event that for a while, appears to occasion a great boost to religious Babylon. This shall however before long turn sour in the experience of the great whore.

We are told in the 16th verse that the principal players in the beast enclave shall *“hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire”*. This description of her travails spells annihilation.

The Lord’s word provides an explanation how this turnaround situation in the relations of the great Whore and the Beast. Rev. 17:17. *For God has put n their (the ten horns) hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their (the ten horns) kingdom unto the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

2. Commercial Babylon

The agency called into play is two -fold.

- a. The prophetic utterances of the church in God’s purpose against the financial supply system that services religious Babylon.
- b. The ministry of the full grown sons of God represented in Rev.16:12 as the sixth angel. It is a needed event to create a most suitable spiritual environment for the final aspects of the work of harvest in line with the call of Rev. 18:4.

3. Social Babylon

Her judgement is the first to be revealed. The agency called into

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play is revealed in Rev. 14:17-19. It is presented as two angels. The destruction of social Babylon is described as casting the clusters of the vine of the earth “into the great wine press of the wrath of God”. We are told in addition the wine press was trodden without the city. The sweeping destruction this leaves in its wake is of unimaginable proportion. See Rev. 14:20.

4. Political Babylon

The agency commissioned to release this final woe is the seventh of the angels carrying bowls of judgement. The doom of political Babylon therefore must be the last. She plays a significant role in the destruction of religious Babylon, but itself is torn apart by the bitterest and fiercest internal conflict. The crowning of the symbolic ten horns lifts the beast to prominence. It actually answers to the ‘*anointing*’ of the beast by the red dragon (Political Babylon, see Rev. 13: 1).

These (the ten horns) “*have one mind and give their power and strength to the beast*”. Rev. 17:13. The effect of the seventh plague (Rev. 16:17) on political Babylon is the dismantling of the structural unity that exists between these ten kings; each one through treachery seeking supremacy over others.

The bitterest war ever will be fought by these kings against themselves until they complete their destruction as it is written “*everyone by the sword of his brother*” (Hag. 2: 21).

Rev 16:18 describes the collapse of political Babylon as an earthquake, so mighty and so great. Then in the next verse it is reported that the “*cities of the nations*” fell to the wrath of GOD.

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A COLLAPSE SWIFT, SUDDEN AND TOTAL

Reading through Rev. 18:8-20, one cannot but have a strong impression that the Lord is emphasising that the judgment of this hydra-headed phenomenon called Babylon the great would be judged swiftly and suddenly. This agrees with what apostle Paul also declares in 1 Thes. 5:3.

For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.

Rev.18:8,

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Again, we see in Rev.18:10, her mourners declaring

Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come

The refrain continues in Rev. 18:15, 16, 17. Note especially in the 17th verse that “*in one hour so great riches is come to nought.*”

See also Rev. 18:19, another round of mourning by a third group declaring

Alas, alas, that great city... for in one hour is she made desolate.

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Quite clearly, one cannot escape the divine message in this passage, the judgemental destruction of Babylon will be swift, sudden and complete.

The Time Frame Indicated In One Day, One Hour

We are reminded in the closing part of verse 8 that strong is the Lord who judgeth her. The whole transaction is only a passing moment in the sight of God. Also, the several acts crystallizing these sweeping judgements proceeding from the spirit realm of the perfected church, taking their stand on the earth, may not exceed this time frame.

However, the scriptures help us to know that the time frame in which the plagues will be executed will cover a significant period of time. Prophetically, the bible talks about the “*day*” and the “*hour*” respecting predicted events that will bring this age to a close. There are no dates for which man may intrude into. There are nevertheless, recognisable events when they set in. We are also given indication as to how long the day will last and how long the hour will take.

Sufficient preparation concerning a proper understanding of this was covered in the first two chapters. We need not repeat ourselves here. It will just be enough to examine the “*day*” and the “*hour*” in their usage here.

The “*day*” is a day of judgement. It is usually in scriptures assigned a period of **40 years**. This Day of Judgement is located within a time frame referred to as the Day of the Lord which spans a much longer time.

The “*hour*” relates to the concluding aspect of this Day of

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Judgment already referred to in the paragraph above. It takes its time measure from it. In John 11:9: Jesus declared: *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* Jesus did not say there are 12 hours in one day as there are 24 hours. What is meant by the day? It is used in contrast to the night, both of which have **12 hours**.

(Relative to the church judgement of the world is a day event. It is carried out when she has come to full age and has full understanding of the issues at stake and principles of judgement. She is not a passive watcher of events transpiring on earth in these last days. Rather, the church is required by God to be in strategic partnership with him in executing judgements in the earth).

Thus, one hour in this prophetic symbolism will represent a time period on the human plane of about **three and half years**. The final acts of judgement concluding this age will fall within this time bracket.

EXECUTION OF JUDGEMENT

The prophetic coverage of the actual execution of the judgement that brings total collapse to Babylon the great is given in the following passages. Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:11-21. Recall that we have said that one of the principal agencies called into play is the church in spiritual manhood and the ministry of the sons of God when they have come to full union with Christ.

These shall make war with the Lamb and the Lamb shall overcome them for he is LORD OF LORDS AND King of kings and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful

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Rev. 19:11-16

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire and on his head were many crowns and he had a name written that no man knew but himself. And he was clothed with vesture dipped in blood and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horse, clothed with linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and his thigh a name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

These two passages are elsewhere shown to relate to the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). They help us understand what is involved in the activities carried out by the seventh angel with his bowl of judgement.

A Call to Rejoicing Now And After

We are closing this chapter in the same way it was started: rejoicing at the revelation and proclamation of the fall, nay, annihilating destruction of Babylon the great. In the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah concerning the ultimate ruin of Babylon, the call is made to

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the righteous to rejoice. Here again, in the 18th chapter of Revelation, the faithfuls are asked to rejoice at the sure, unwavering certainty of the impending doom of the great Whore.

A reason is given for this call to rejoicing. Rev. 18:20

Rejoice over her thou heaven and ye holy apostles and prophets for God has avenged you on her.

It relates to the cry of saints in every generation who have had to contend with the murderous antagonism of the great whore. The cry of vengeance of the martyrs of Jesus Christ described in Rev. 3:10 is answered in the destruction of Babylon the great.

Obedience to this divinely given charge is not only pleasing in the sight of God but does something of immense value in the experience of His own. First, it imparts an inward strength and wisdom to stand up to the challenge of living faithfully to ones consecration vows. This will include moral uprightness and bearing an effective testimony within and outside the household of faith.

Secondly, as the sound of enlightened rejoicing of the righteous goes forth in anticipation of the collapse of anti Christ systems, divine response brings a very heavy sinking weight on the fortunes of the great whore. This brings us to yet another observation. Rev. 18:21 read and considered along with Jer. 51:60-64 provides us an interesting insight. It shows what really happens in the spirit realm whenever the Lord's people are quickened to prophesy the doom of Babylon the great. A great weariness is visited upon her again and again until the ruin fully sets in.

12

The Divine Command

Reading through the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ, one cannot but be greatly moved by the depth of divine concern for all humanity and the out flow of redemptive compassion occasioned thereby.

Divine warnings, whether to the saved class or to the rest of humanity are prompted by God's great heat of love for man. He is long suffering toward us dear friend, not willing that any should perish.

God expects that after being enlightened as to areas of our lives and walk with Him that are out of harmony with His will and for which a call to repentance is made we should with passion render to Him diligent obedience. All of the Lord's people need to pay close attention to the prophetic word through which we are prepared for His return (2 Pet. 1: 16-19).

However, the main burden of this chapter is directed at those to whom the divine command in Rev 18:4 is given. When this is done, a few thoughts will be shared that will be of immense profit to us.

In chapter three, while discussing the sign events of the end of time, we showed two very important features that are to be made manifest in the church world.

They are *signs* in as much as there has been no time in the

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history of the church where these two spiritual entities have been so fully developed.

The first is by far of greater importance and it is the *principal sign indicating* that the *return of Christ* and the events associated with it are especially due. The emergence of a spiritual movement living and operating in full harmony with the prophetic picture given of the *sun clothed woman* of Rev.12:1 and 2 is this *principal sign*.

It is also discussed in Matt. 25:1-13. Please note what the Apostle says in the opening word of this passage – “*Then shall the kingdom of heaven.....*” The reference is to what develops under the ministry that is commissioned and sent forth in Matt. 24:31.

And he shall send his angel with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The work of ‘*his angel*’ can be shown to be carried out by **human messengers** of Christ to be found in different parts of the earth who have had specific dealings under God relating to their mission. The term ‘*a great sound of a trumpet*’ is a reference to the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 24:14) and can only be possibly preached by blood washed saints.

It is important to bear in mind that the ministry of the blowing of the trumpet under the Old Testament dispensation was carried out not by Aaron, but by his sons. Aaron is a type of Christ in this regard and the ministries God ordains for this task are the antitypes of the sons of Aaron.

In Luke 12:32, Jesus Christ speaking prophetically, referred to this class of persons as the little flock. *Fear not, little flock; for it is*

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your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

At a time when the visible church has become **a great house** (2 Tim. 2: 20), **a mixed multitude**, it is a promise fulfilled that God has put in place a recovery work. He is gathering out of men's organized churches, those who have ears to hear Him. He seeks to carry out a further work in them.

Some may have a bit of conflict in their spirit respecting the view expressed here of the intended meaning of Matt. 24:31. It is more generally believed because of the mention of the word '*heaven*', that this event of the gathering together of elects will take place in the celestial realm after the '*rapture*'.

Let it be understood that a gathering together of elects at the sound of the trumpet is for **divine instruction and processing**. In this connection please see Psalm 50:5 read and considered in the light of Num. 10:2, Luke 17:34-37 and 2 Thes. 2:1.

The '*heaven*' under consideration in Matt 24:31 is **the normal sphere of the church's operations**. We are said to be seated with Christ in 'the heavenly places.

Moreover, the term *four winds* indicate that it is an activity carried out either on the earth or in heaven. **The term is used** in the first of these two senses **in Rev. 7:1, for example**.

The second feature, the **lesser sign** is the emergence of a church system so completely false, that it is shown to be **an offspring the great red dragon**. The **lesser sign** is the beast rising out of the earth. It comes across in **sheep's** clothing looking like a **lamb**, operating like the church of Jesus Christ.

The reader can readily appreciate that this **false lamb** phenomenon holds a great danger to the people of God. So many

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persons are swarming into the assemblies run after this manner. A large number of them are God's children for whom the Lord has great desire.

Come Out Of Her, My People

Rev. 18:4 is a command given and divine summons made to dear children of God who love the Lord but are found in the courts of the great Whore, overcome by her wine.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her and that ye receive none of her plagues

Two reasons are given here, and a third elsewhere (Jer. 51.1) for this passionate, intervening call.

1. **Those in 'her', the harlot Churches, will partake of her sins.**

Association to whatever degree, with the great whore, is bound to suck anyone into her evil ways. Evil associations corrupt a man's moral senses and with time lead him gradually into the same filthy estate. There is no way a man will keep himself unaffected by his spiritual environment.

2. **Those that stay put in 'her' will come under the plagues that shall be visited upon Babylon the great.**

This is invariably the lot of those who fail to pay heed to the divine command. Many nominally good souls are caught up in the mess and pains of remaining in the false Church for whatever reasons. It

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is sad and completely avoidable. God still beckons.

3. **Those that are found with the Lord's enemies make themselves His enemies and will be so treated.**

None can reasonably expect something else. The Prophet Jeremiah declares this in Jer. 51:1.

Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;

In a similar passage, but given in another connection, the prophet Isaiah pronounces woe on those who are moral and/or financial supporters of the apostate church of the Old Testament era. Isa. 28:1.

Some Common Objections People Raise

1. When confronted with the divine claims respecting his counsel, nay command, to those in the adulterous church system (Babylon), some say something like this, ***"I am remaining behind to help others in the system to know the truth and be delivered"***.

Those who speak this way feel very strongly about it. It is a very familiar state for many of us who lingered for a while in the hope of bringing help to others. It only amounts to waste of time and always requires a greater struggle to break away from the hold of that woman. Hear what others have had to say who thought along the same line.

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*Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed; howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. **We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even the skies. (Jer 51:8-9)***

Again, let it be realised that getting out of Babylon in any one of its many expressions is only the beginning of a journey to fullness of life in Christ Jesus. *Much of the dealings under God respecting our growth in grace, knowledge and service would commence after we have been cleanly delivered from Babylon.* There is so much God wants to do in our lives and our availability unto Him is required. See Ps. 50:5.

2. *“I know what I am doing; I will keep myself from the sins of the system. There is no perfect church. Sooner or later, whatever is the situation now where I am, would be the same where you are. The Lord knows those that are His.”* This again is a very familiar reaction from many. It is okay for one to be so determined to insulate himself from the error of the way of the people round about him.

However, the claims made by this class of persons assign wisdom to themselves beyond that which is the Lord's. They appear wiser than the Lord who obviously is not ignorant of the power of this class of persons. They have the ability to stay away from the sorceries of that woman and to perfect themselves. *Well, we will do well to pay heed to the divine counsel, for there are many who began with this attitude but are now themselves*

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champions of the cause of Babylon.

3. *“I have my social roots well entrenched in this circle of fellowship. It will be an unbearable price to pay losing the company of so many. I guess their reaction will be hostile towards this change being called for.”*

There will always be some price to pay. No price is really too great to pay for the deliverance of one's soul. Besides, it is better to please God rather than man. If the reactions are just the way predicted, then it is conclusive evidence that one should flee from such a circle. A sane approach of any concerned person is to examine the reason for one's decision.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ challenging us to self denial and to take a stand with Him in spite of the opposition of men. Matt. 16:24.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mat 16:24-26)

4. *“There are some highly anointed men of God I admire. They are also loved and respected by many. They do not see this thing you are saying. If these things are true, why are some of these men not saying the same? I would rather play safe.”*

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Well, we do not lay claim to any special anointing. We are not infallible either. Whatever we cannot lay claim to does no injury to Truth and its spirit.

The word of God does not have the same limitations ordinary folks like us have. It is inspired and its claims carry the same authority as the Lord Jesus Christ. *What could be safer than yielding obedience to the Lord's word?*

What is more, 1 John 2:20, 26, 27, assures that ordinary Christians like you and us have an unction of the Holy One by which we can determine the truth or otherwise of any ministration. We can tell what is of God. We can also tell what is not of God. We are to test every spirit; that is, try any word spoken in the name of the Lord. *To reject what we ought to receive or to accept what we ought to reject has dire consequences.* We are thus required to exercise ourselves in personal communion with God in seeking which way to go.

In any case, the Lord is not bound by whatever rules we set for him. He cannot be told whom to make a disclosure of himself to. Some may feel that they have greater credentials than others in relation to who should be considered a mouth piece for God. Some would even make claims for themselves of having an extra-ordinary calling.

Recall an incident in the Old Testament where a prophet challenged another how come the Spirit of God passed him by to give a word to the king through this other prophet. So confident was this older prophet that he even slapped him for the effrontery. He supposed the younger prophet was merely presumptuous.

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5. *“I agree with you in all that you say. I see daily the very evidence that what you are saying is true. My wife and I earn our living working for this organisation. What will we do if we have to leave now? Even our accommodation is provided and paid for yearly by them. God knows that I agree with his word.”*

“If it was okay for Naaman of old to remain serving idols with his master in order to keep his job, I reckon that God sees my heart and knows that in my heart of hearts I have accepted His word.”

This observation at first seems sincere and worth a compassionate consideration. There is an obvious practical implication bound up with giving up ones job in obedience to the demands of the Lord. It is however evident that those having this conflict do not realize that *the challenge actually lies in the strength of a man's conviction*. When conviction does not run deep enough, grace to make quality decision is lacking.

Nothing can contest with the power of a word quickened to our spirit man. The Spirit of truth is a master of all those he impacts upon. One in this condition needs to expose himself more to the prophetic word. He will find strength to deliver his soul and entrust his life to Him who feeds the sparrow and clothes the lilies of the valley.

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Questions Often Asked By the Willing Hearted

Where may I find a body of people in my locality to fellowship with who are given to walking with Christ in Spirit and in

There are several variants of each of the above questions but they are all to the same intent. When the Spirit of God brings a man under conviction and leads him to break free from the false Church system, a strong desire wells up within him to please the Lord. The questions we are looking at actually derive from this longing. This being so, a good start is to deliberately take out time to build up a vibrant fellowship with Christ. Quality devotion SECURES to the believer in the course of time an ability to hear God and to access divine counsel in all areas of life's interest with growing ease. This is consistent with the purpose of the sound of the trumpet gathering "His saints unto Him".

The Lord will invariably lead the willing hearted to others of His sheep who meet in fellowship in their locality. These necessarily will be operating according to the divine order. The identifying element will be the presence of the proceeding word, the prophetic word kept continually fresh by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In the case of some who will be required to start a fresh work themselves, the personal altar of devotion to Christ which they have raised will, with time, stretch out and be a centre for the eagle saints to gather. Let there be rest and trust in God for it is He who will direct the footsteps of His children to where He is making himself

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known. A home Church resulting from this is a common feature of this work of restoration the world over.

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? (Sol. 1:7)

The Great House and the Great Company

We have seen from an earlier chapter that although the Church age until the time of the end there has only been one class of the Lord's people. However, at this end time broadly speaking, there are **two distinct classes** that the Lord Jesus Christ commits Himself to.

The **first** of these two classes we are sufficiently acquainted with having given it some time and space in this work. It sprang up as a result of a special intervention from God intent on separating the '**vile from the precious**', '**the tares from the wheat**' in His house. The Lord Jesus Christ has indicated He will do this at '**the end of the age**'. He is doing this through the ministry of reaping angels and by a great sound of a trumpet (Matthew 13:37; 24:31).

The symbolic '**wheat**' class under the trumpet sound develop deep longings for the heavenly Bridegroom with whom they seek full union. This **first** class is severally named depending on what is being emphasized; '**the little flock**', '**the five wise virgins**', '**the sun-clothed woman**' being the best known.

The other class is described in 2 Tim. 2; 20. It is a great house consisting of professed and real believers. These persons are neither out-rightly 'tares' nor distinctively 'wheat'. They exhibit to varying degrees the characteristics of both, with the balance tilting in favour

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of the former. They stand in need of opening up to the divine counsel given in part in 2 Tim. 2:21. (The full counsel actually resolves into two definite statements).

1. “If *A Man Therefore Purge Himself From These...*” Vs. 21

The revelation of the great house condition given in 2 Timothy 2:20 is followed by a conditional statement. It leaves the individual to determine his own choice but tells of the blessing that accompany full obedience. Those however that give partial attention eventually make up the *great company*. Rev. 7: 9,14. See also 1st Cor. 3: 12-15 read and considered in the light of 2 Tim. 2: 20

2. “Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate.....”
2Cor. 6: 17

The great house condition requires a sustained period of the ministry of persons who have a strong calling to the first two offices to be able to stem the tide of degeneration. The setting of the great house very rarely can accommodate such ministry. They would rather stand against it. Therefore in the course of time, the tares far outnumber the wheat. What results is pictured indirectly in Apostle Paul’s charge to the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 6:14-16.

The divine counsel when this is so contained in the 17th verse.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto

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you, and shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor. 6:17-18)

When a denominational church is in such a state, deliverance there-from is similar to the Rev. 18:4 charge.

How Cleansing can be obtained in this last Hour

We have seen that the greater many of the congregations of God's people are in a "*great house*" condition. To His dear children, there is a call to purge themselves from moral vices that they have taken on by reason of the spiritual environment they belong to. Moral cleansing therefore is something very crucial in the church world today. In fact, the cleansing of the sanctuary is a primary and continuing feature of the work of restoration. This is saying that moral cleansing is always required all the way through one's walk with Christ until a morally perfect disposition is obtained.

How Is The Work Of Cleansing Effected?

It is in the medium of the prophetic word. Persons who are being empowered by God to flow in that ministry are to be found outside the four walls of organised denominational Christianity. The Church of Laodecia, a type of the visible church system of today is shown in Revelation 3 to have sent the Lord packing from her assembly.

The five-fold description of the sorry condition of the Laodecia church (Rev. 3:17) is true of even many of the evangelical and Pentecostal assemblies today. Wherever the Lord has been sent out of any assembly, His servants have not been spared either.

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Again, let it be known and understood that *the ministry of the refining fire and the fuller's soap (Mal. 3:2) is only available among the little flock company. It is the prophetic word respecting the present day ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to His own that is empowered to prepare them "to offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness"*.

2 Pet. 1:19 mentions the power of the prophetic word (as able to bring about tremendous changes in the inner man) in the context of *"the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ"*.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

(2Pet 1:16-19)

A Concluding Word

We perceive that this message being sent forth unto the Lord's people by the witness of proven channels is an expression of God's great heart of Love and concern for His people at these difficult-to-understand times.

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So much is transpiring in our world at a very fast pace, that it will require communications of the divine mind to enable us have a clear insight of how all of these concern the church. It is only the prophetic spirit that can keep track with the events being reported daily in the various news media.

The situation in the church world is not less exasperating. Many good people are found in very mysterious and daring assault against the testimony of the Lord. In the name of ministry they brazenly make merchandise of the Lord's people while not giving any serious attention to their spiritual development.

Money collecting schemes employ means that are even stinking in the sight of unbelievers. The people are promised miracles of "*prosperity*" and "*breakthroughs*", but what they get for their stripping is mostly entertainment and mere showmanship.

Others in the same stock of trade but who may never have been saved in the first instance flaunt spurious miracles and lying signs to keep the people hailing and coming.

Many dear saints are thrown into confusion in the midst of the conflicting signals emanating from ministries who once were thought to have their beginnings in God. The hard times and the impatient spirit of the average believer today make him easily sucked into the flurry of activities of these self-made "*Elijahs of our time*".

It behoves us to give serious scrutiny to what we hear and what we submit ourselves to. Each man owes himself the responsibility of developing a growing intimacy with Christ and His Word. This is what can keep us above the waters of evil and the sorceries of antichrist systems.

The call to being an over-comer is given to individual believers but the maintenance of the spiritual environment in which they are to

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receive grace to so apply themselves is the main trust of the ministers of Christ. *Proper functioning local congregations is therefore of uttermost interest to Christ and His kingdom.* Sprinkled all over the world is the emergence of an increasing number of such congregations that Christ can own as His in the midst of which He is working.

Dear Friend, if you are not yet in fellowship with others who are under the ministry of Christ our heavenly Bridegroom, look to Him to guide your feet to environments that will enhance your walk with Him. The time is near and the stakes high, but our God is able to perfect us in the image and likeness of His glorified Son, the Lord Jesus Christ!