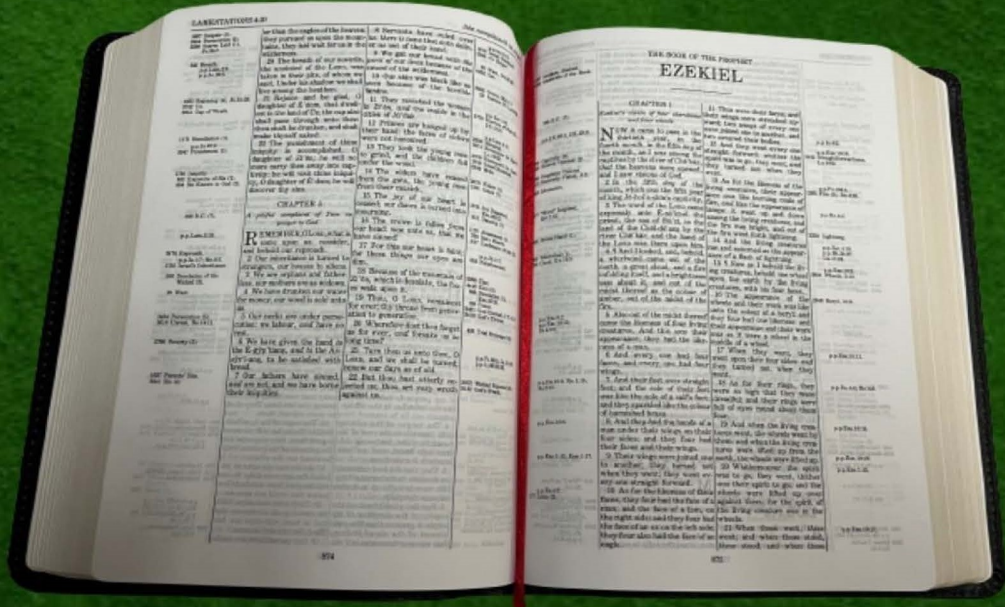


VOLUME I

THE PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL

A VISIONARY AND TYPICAL
PORTRAYAL OF THE GOSPEL DAY



Earl R. Borders

**The Prophecies
of
Ezekiel**

**A Visionary and Typical Portrayal
of the Gospel Day**

Volume I

Earl R. Borders

The Church of God, God's Acres

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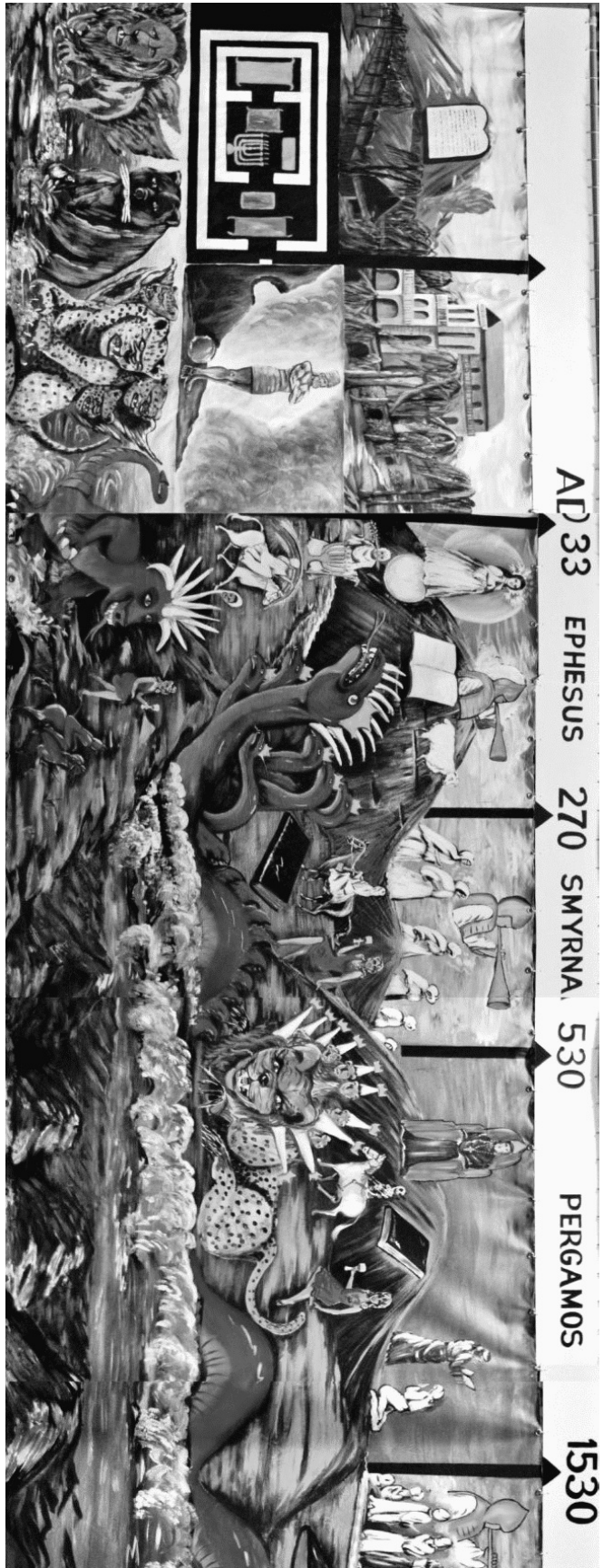
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As this book examines the prophecies of Ezekiel relating to and correlating with the various periods of the Gospel Day and the Book of Revelation, we have included a copy of the Revelation chart.





1530

THYATIRA

1730

SARDIS

1880

PHILADELPHIA

1930

LAODICEAN

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FOREWORD

Before you is Volume I of *The Prophecies of Ezekiel—A Visionary and Typical Portrayal of the Gospel Day*. The writings of Ezekiel are both vast and complex. They consist of what we term as forty-eight chapters. Based on word count in the original language, Ezekiel is the fourth longest book of the Bible (exceeded only by Jeremiah, Genesis, and Psalms). Ezekiel has 29,918 words. Needless to say, an exhaustive exposition of these chapters would be a mammoth and daunting undertaking. However, because it is a work of such pertinent prophetic context and because there is a decided lack of materials concerning the truths of these prophecies, we have felt the urging of divine inspiration to study the Book of Ezekiel, not only for personal satisfaction but for the edification of the church as well. Therefore, we are presenting the results of this study to you in the form of two volumes.

As we consider this book and its host of exceedingly detailed prophecies, we felt impressed by the Holy Spirit of God to follow a single scheme or thread of truth through these writings. The thread we felt led to follow was the *Visionary and Typical Portrayal of the Gospel Day* in these prophecies. The Apostle Peter told us in 2 Peter 1:20, "That no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [not to be isolated or separated from the entire body and scheme of Scriptures]." They are not to be viewed or considered privately or in a manner that isolates them from other Scriptures, but we are to, as Isaiah 28:13 instructs, lay "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

Isaiah 34:16 reveals to us that for every unclear, difficult, or obscure passage in God's eternal Word that there is another passage that "his spirit" will "mate" up with it to bring clarity and understanding. So it is with the prophecies of Ezekiel, there are many parallels with the truths housed in the Book of Revelation, as well as other Scriptures. Obviously, there are many more precious and vital truths in Ezekiel than we have addressed, many other threads of truth that we have not considered in this writing. We have attempted to focalize on one aspect of truth this book of the Scripture *reveals—A Visionary and Typical Portrayal of the Gospel Day*.

It is our intention to present this in a two-volume series. Volume I takes us typically from the inception of the Gospel Day on the Day of Pentecost up to the evening-time portion of the Gospel Day. Volume II perhaps will be a little more unique in that it will deal with those chapters that both typify and convey visions that we have viewed exclusively as corresponding with the evening-time portion of the Gospel Day. We earnestly pray these volumes will inspire, instruct, and edify the church. Therefore, we present to you *The Prophecies of Ezekiel—A Visionary and Typical Portrayal of the Gospel Day (Volume I)*.

Yours in Christ,

Brother Earl R. Borders
Newark, Ohio
July 2023

PREFACE

The Book of Ezekiel is like a beautiful tapestry, consisting of many varied and colorful threads. These threads are divinely and delicately woven into several intricate and detailed patterns. However, it is but one artistic, inspired piece, though it contains many magnificent threads.

Divine inspiration has led us, in this writing, to follow one thread through this astounding prophetic book. I trust this study may encourage and inspire you to consider and examine some of the other threads incorporated within this portion of the sacred canon. Each of these threads helps to comprise the portrayal of various patterns that constitute the tapestry. They are each beautiful, colorful, precious, "given by inspiration of God, and . . . profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16).

I am reasonably confident that no one individual will unravel it all, but oh, what joy and enlightenment it brings to those who attempt to do so! It is like descending into a gold mine and retrieving precious, priceless, dazzling nuggets. Then, as you are working on one glittering vein and securing the precious truths within it, you see other veins lying just beyond it that are glittering in further depths you may mine as well. I encourage you ever to be a student of the Word and allow "the Spirit [who] searcheth all things" to take you into "the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10).

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CHAPTER ONE

THE POSITIVE POSITION OF PROPHECY – AN INTRODUCTION TO PROPHECY

Ezekiel 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

This passage contains the introductory verses to the prophetic writings of Ezekiel. As with all sacred Scriptures, these were "given by inspiration" and are "profitable" to us (2 Timothy 3:16). The prophetic body of Scripture is of great importance in the scheme of the Scriptures. **Verse 3** of our text introduces us to "**Ezekiel the priest.**" This "**priest**" had another calling: "a prophet" (Ezekiel 2:5). By the help of God, we want to set forth a series of studies concerning the prophecies of "**Ezekiel.**" Ezekiel's writings are extensive (forty-eight chapters), and certainly by no means can we even attempt to be exhaustive in our study. Our burden is to look through this writing and examine some of the more pertinent passages that apply prophetically to this Gospel Day. There are great parallels in the prophecies of Ezekiel to the Book of Revelation, many things that are pertinent and applicable to an understanding of the day and time in which we live in this New Testament dispensation. We will endeavor to glean some of the more pertinent prophecies. This does not mean that they are more worthy of consideration than the other prophecies, but we cannot exhaustively examine every portion of the Book of Ezekiel in this study.

Principles of Prophecy: (1) Prophecy Occupies a Unique Position

When considering prophecy, we must keep in mind at least four important principles. The first one is (1) *Prophecy Occupies a Unique Position*. When man experienced his tragic fall in the garden, God's immediate response was prophecy. God stepped up on the stage of action and filled the role of the first prophet. We read in Genesis 3:14-19: "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go [prior to this pronouncement, evidently the serpent did not go on his belly; he must have had another manner of conveyance because the curse was that he would go on his belly], and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The Lord's response to the fall of man was to assume the role of the first prophet Himself. This prophecy was of such a far-reaching consequence that it was

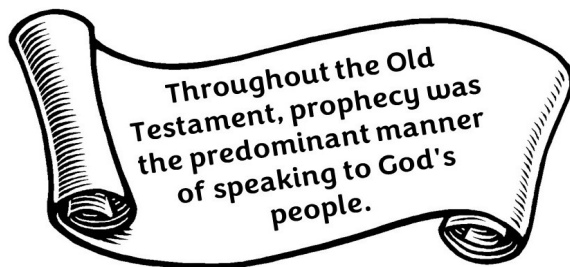
indeed a messianic prophecy, reaching all the way to the institution of the plan of redemption. This prophecy (Genesis 3:15), the first recorded in the Scriptures, is speaking of Christ. He informed the serpent (the instrument of the enemy of our souls), saying, "Thou shalt bruise his heel." Did he bruise Christ? Isaiah 53:5, another messianic prophecy, declares, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."

Christ was indeed bruised, but Genesis 3:15 also says, "It shall bruise thy head." Christ's heel was bruised (a prophetic portrayal of His death), but His head being bruised is a prophetic picture of the resurrection of Christ. Ephesians 1:20-22 reads: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet."

The thought of principalities, power, might, and dominion is later employed in Ephesians 6:12, which states, "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 [or the Greek says 'wicked spirits'] in high places." One scholar says these expressions—principalities, powers, and rulers—are nothing more than the designation of different ranks and classes of demonic powers. Where are they? Ephesians 1:21-22 tells us that every one of these demonic powers, these ranks and classes of devilish spirits, principalities, power, might, and dominion is "under his feet." He bruised their head. We see the unique position of prophecy when man succumbed to sin and God stepped on the stage of action, assuming the role of the first prophet, giving a prophecy that reached all the way out to incorporate the Advent of Christ, His death, and then His Resurrection.

Throughout the annals of the Old Testament, prophecy was the predominant manner of speaking to God's people. The Hebrew writer, speaking to those of Jewish stock, those who were intimately familiar with the Old Testament economy, wrote in Hebrews 1:1, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." Certainly, God spoke in "divers manners," or the *Amplified Bible* says "different ways," but the predominant manner in which He chose to speak under the old economy was by the prophets. A good illustration of this is when Moab and Ammon came up against Jehoshaphat. The king prayed in 2 Chronicles 20:12-13: "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee [that serves as a good example yet today]. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children."

That is still a good practice. People ought to come to service as a family. I am not a proponent of separating the children and taking them off for a separate service. Sectism does that. They pull all the children out of the sanctuary. The infants are put in a nursery, and the older children are sent to junior church. They will never learn to sit still if you take them out of the service. All the children need to hear the message. They need to sit under the Gospel. It is good to have a Sunday school and a story hour (something on their level), but when it is time for the general service, the husbands, the wives, and the children ought to all be in the sanctuary. Why? Because they all need to hear the truth. They need to see the saints rejoice. They need to feel the moving of the Spirit of God. We are going to read an occasion here where, in a very troubling time, God stepped up with a prophet and gave them an inspiring message.



We read in 2 Chronicles 20:13-17: "And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you."

God spoke through prophecy. We read in 2 Chronicles 20:20, "And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." The king told the people to believe in His prophets. God "spake in time past by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). They occupied a unique position, and prophecy occupied a unique position. The predominant manner in which God spoke under the old covenant was by the prophets.

Principles of Prophecy: (2) Prophecy Is of Great Importance Because It Is Divine

The next principle we need to consider concerning prophecy is (2) *Prophecy Is of Great Importance Because It Is Divine*. The Lord, assuming the role of the first prophet, reveals the divinity of prophecy and the divine importance God places upon prophecy. In the very dawn of Creation, when man succumbed to sin, God's first response was prophecy and not just prophecy of literal occurrences (of man tilling the ground by the sweat of his brow and woman experiencing childbirth in sorrow), but spiritual prophecy that envisioned the Gospel Day and the plan of redemption. The divine nature of prophecy is revealed: prophetic utterings are not just a man speaking, but they are a man performing under divine prompting. In 2 Chronicles, Chapter 20, when Israel was on the horns of a dilemma, when they had prayed and did not know what to do, verse 12 says they said, "O our God, . . . our eyes are upon thee." In other words, "We do not know what to do, but we know You are going to provide the guidance." Verse 14 tells us, "Then upon Jahaziel . . . came the Spirit of the LORD."

God moved on this man with prophetic utterance. It was not a man speaking, but it was "the Spirit of the LORD" speaking. True prophecy is the Spirit speaking through a man. That was the predominant manner of how prophecy was given under the old economy. God told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 3:17, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." True Biblical prophecy is not merely a man's utterance, but it comes from God's mouth. He reiterated that in Ezekiel 33:7, which states, "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." The words "at my mouth" have supreme importance! Prophecy has supreme importance attached to it because of its divine origin.

Ezekiel 21:8-9 says: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy." We read in Ezekiel 21:28, "And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord." Again, this lets us know that true prophecy has a divine origin. It is not of man, but it is of the Lord. It comes through a man's mouth, but it is God's mouth providing the words. Second Peter 1:21 says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Prophecy did not come "by the will of man" but from "the Holy Ghost"; it comes through the Spirit of God. We must recognize the supreme

importance attached to prophecy because of its divine origin and because of its import. It is "thus saith the Lord." It is divine utterance that comes through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus attached great importance to prophecy. In the inaugural message of His public ministry, He set forth the basic tenets of the new economy. He said in Matthew 5:17, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Jesus came to bring the reality of what was prophesied prior. When He was on the road to Emmaus with the brethren, Luke 24:25-27 tells us: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Jesus told the leaders of that day in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures [at this juncture, all they had was the Old Testament; none of the New Testament was penned yet]; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Christ is spoken of repeatedly throughout the Old Testament.

Luke 24:44-45 tells us: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures [the Old Testament]." Jesus attached great importance to prophecy. We must recognize God's "understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5), but ours is finite. Because our understanding is limited, God has given prophecy. He is the only One who knows the end from the beginning; we do not. Isaiah 46:9-11 reads: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, [He knows the end before the beginning ever starts. His understanding is infinite.] and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

Isaiah 42:8-9 reads: "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." God said a day would come when He would send Christ into this time world. The enemy would bruise His heel, but Christ would also bruise the enemy's head. Evidence of this prophecy is found in this expression in Isaiah: "before they spring forth, I tell you of them." Prophecy was given so that we might know what is going to "spring forth," so that we might know what is on the prophetic horizon, so that we can "study . . . rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) and know what portions of prophecy apply where and when.

Sadly, in the religious realm, there is great confusion. However, 1 Corinthians 14:33 tells us, "God is not the author of confusion." God never sent His Word to confuse. There are those who are devoid of the Spirit of God and take everything at a literal face value. They have taken many of the prophecies of God's eternal Word and relegated them to some future point in time. In reality, the truths of many of the prophecies are to be enjoyed right in this Gospel Day, or Christian dispensation, in which you and I are privileged to live.

Principles of Prophecy: (3) Prophecy Has a Surety

The next principle is (3) *Prophecy Has a Surety*. Consider the words of the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:16-18: "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 honour 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." Peter was referring to what was recorded when the disciples were with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew 17:1-8 states: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias [Greek for the Hebrew Elijah] talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid, And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." When Peter wrote that they were "eyewitnesses of his majesty," he was referring to the three men who were "eyewitnesses" there on that mount (Peter, James, and John).

Second Peter 1:17-21 states: "For he received from God the Father honour 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; [Peter was setting forth a comparison; there is something 'more sure' than a miraculous occurrence, and that is prophecy. Only three saw that miraculous manifestation, but when prophecy is fulfilled, thousands can see it. It is a 'more sure word.' It is historically verifiable.] 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: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Peter compared and contrasted what occurred in what he termed as "in the holy mount" (verse 18), or the Mount of Transfiguration, revealing several truths concerning prophecy.

People elevate miraculous events so high they feel nothing can compare or equate. Yet, prophecy is the one thing that can surpass miraculous manifestation. Peter made an astounding statement when he declared prophecy is "more sure" than miracles. This was not someone who had not seen a miraculous manifestation. If that were true, Peter could have easily said, "Well, prophecy is more sure." No, Peter was there. He said clearly in verse 18, "This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." This was not a secondhand account. We believe Peter was there on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. We believe that he was there when the voice spoke. We believe that, but Peter did not have to believe that because he was an eyewitness. Peter did not need anyone to tell him; he was there. Since he was one of only three men there in this encounter, he had the authority to use this experience and to compare it and contrast it. "All scripture is given by inspiration" (2 Timothy 3:16). God inspired Peter to write, "We were there, we heard, we were with Him in the holy mount." However, Peter proceeded in 2 Peter 1:19, saying, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed."

It is more vital to take heed to the Word than miraculous manifestations. There is something more sure than a onetime miraculous event. Why is that? Prophecies can be historically verified, but often miracles cannot. Many times, miraculous events are not substantiated. Prophecies are verifiable in their fulfilment. Luke 24:44 states, "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets." Jesus was letting them know the things that occurred, the things that they were seeing, were fulfillments. We are not minimizing the importance

of miracles. The Lord performs them yet today, but they do not have the broader exposure fulfillment of prophecy has.

Acts 13:29 reads, "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre." The Thompson Chain Reference Bible has a section called "Prophecies and Their Fulfillment." It goes throughout the life of Christ and shows the Old Testament prophecy and the New Testament fulfillment; old and new; prophesied and fulfilled. We find that prophecy is verifiable. It can be historically substantiated. It can be enjoyed by more than a minute few. It can be enjoyed by the masses. Prophecies in their understanding and fulfillment can be seen and enjoyed by all; whereas often, miraculous occurrences cannot.

Who was on the Mount of Transfiguration? Who were the "eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16)? According to Matthew 17:1, only three men: "Peter, James, and John." Yet, when prophecy is fulfilled, such as the desolation of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, that is historically verifiable. Look at the words of Matthew 24:1, where "his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple [Herod's temple]." According to John 2:20, the temple took forty-six years to build. These were walls that were outstanding in the caliber of their stones. Matthew 24:2 states: "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."

Herod's temple covered somewhere between thirty and thirty-five acres. Many of the stones in this temple were thirty feet long and six feet wide. There were some that were sixty-seven-and-a-half feet long by nine feet wide. These enormous marble stones were plated with gold between the white marble. When the sun shone on this temple, it was a blinding, dazzling effect. While the disciples marveled at Herod's temple, Jesus uttered a prophecy: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another." Matthew was writing to those of Hebrew/Jewish stock, so he spoke in terms that were more familiar to the Hebrews. He called it "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15).

Luke's rendering is a little clearer. He was writing to the Gentiles, and in Luke 21:20 he gave more understanding, saying, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." This prophecy was fulfilled when Prince Titus and the Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem in A.D. 70. When the siege was complete, they laid that structure level with the ground. They wanted the gold that was between those stones. Therefore, not one stone was left on another, just as Jesus said. The famous Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, verified that it happened just as Jesus prophesied. In 2 Peter 1:19 where the King James Version says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy," *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says it this way: "We have the prophetic word more confirmed." The prophetic word can be confirmed.

Principles of Prophecy: (4) The Rules of Prophetic Study

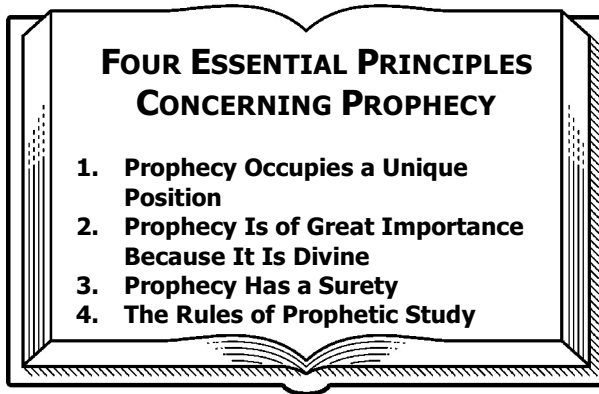
The fourth principle we must recognize is (4) *The Rules of Prophetic Study*. There are four rules we need to consider. The first one is (1) *Prophecy Has a Positive Place*. Too many people say: "That is the Old Testament. We should dismiss it." There are sixty-six books in the Bible, and there are more Old Testament books (thirty-nine) than there are New Testament books (twenty-seven). When Jesus told the Jewish leaders to "search the scriptures" (John 5:39), He was speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures, which are still legitimate to be searched.

In Revelation, Chapter 12, we see the institution of the church on the Day of Pentecost and her appearing in her pristine glory. Revelation 12:1 states, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet." The foundation on which the New Testament church arose was the Old Testament. That moon, the lesser light, is a symbol of the Old Testament. Genesis 1:16 tells, "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the

day, and the lesser light to rule the night." Psalm 136:8-9 says, "The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever."

The "greater light" spoken of in Genesis 1:16 "to rule the day" is the sun. The "lesser light to rule the night" was the moon. If you study Genesis, Chapter 1, you will find that on each one of these occasions where the writer talked about the day, the evening is listed first (Genesis 1:5,

8, 13, 19, 23, 31). The Jewish time reckoning began with the evening (or night) first. So, prophetically the Jewish night came before the Gospel Day. Peter referred to the Gospel Day as "the day dawn" (2 Peter 1:19), or a new day dawned. Preceding the day that dawned was the Jewish night, and the moon (the lesser light) ruled the night. That moon represents the Old Testament, and the woman had the Old Testament under her feet as a premise upon which to build the New Testament.



An Unveiling of Old Testament Mysteries

We must recognize the positive place of prophecy. God's Word is not confusing (1 Corinthians 14:33) nor contradictory when rightly divided. It only becomes such when men are not "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We are in a day of revelation, and much of the revelation is comprised of prophetic truth, an understanding of things that have been kept secret since the world began. We read in Romans 16:25, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation [the Greek word, *apokalypsis*, means 'an unveiling, a taking away of the veil,' or a revealing of something that had not been seen previously] of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." Those mysteries were not made known to those in the Old Testament. First Peter 1:9-10 reads: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you."

It did not come *to them*. It came "*unto you*." It was not for the old economy (the Old Testament dispensation), but it is for the new economy (this New Testament dispensation). They "searched diligently," they "inquired," but they did not receive the promise. Hebrews 11:13 and 39-40 say: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . . . And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect [the Greek word is *teleioo*, which means 'complete']."

When Romans 16:25 talks about "the revelation," the unveiling of the mystery kept secret since the world began, that sentence is not complete. Verse 26 says, "But [a conjunction] now [this New Testament dispensation] is made [present tense] manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets." The prophets penned as the Holy Ghost moved upon them, but many of them did not realize the full import, impact, or implication of what they wrote. "The mystery . . . was kept secret since the world began." How does God make His Word "manifest"? Titus 1:3 reads, "But hath in due times manifested his word through *preaching*." One thing that is to be preached is "the scriptures of the prophets" (Romans 16:26). We live in a brilliant day of revelation when

God is making known things that have been kept secret since the world began. Revelation 10:7 reads, "But in the days [plural, speaking of a period of time] of the voice of the seventh angel [the day and time in which you and I are privileged to live], when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished [*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says 'completed'], as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."

God is completing a revelation of the mystery that was revealed to the prophets under the old economy. He is revealing them in this day and time, right when the seventh angel is sounding. We read in Amos 3:7, "Surely [here is the more sure word of prophecy] the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Throughout these prophetic writings, God has incorporated within them the mystery, and now we are living in a day when the prophet's words are being enlightened. We now have a revelation of the mystery.

Isaiah 30:26 reads, "Moreover the light of the moon [the lesser light of the Jewish night] shall be as the light of the sun." In this dispensation of time, that lesser light (the truths of the Old Testament) is just as clear as the greater light (the truths of the New Testament). The moon represents an understanding of that dark Jewish night. That is why the psalmist said, "Weeping may endure for a night" (Psalm 30:5). The Jewish night was the Old Testament dispensation. They were under "a shadow" (Hebrews 10:1), or unclear light. Moonlight is not a clear light. They were under the lesser light that ruled that Jewish night. Why did they weep? Because the Old Testament "concluded all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). There was no deliverance as we enjoy it today. They looked forward in faith to He who was to come, and they were justified by their faith. They were just men, but they were not made perfect until Jesus paid ransom's cost. Then the spirits of just men were made perfect (Hebrews 12:23).

I have been told (and it is probably good advice) to never buy a car at night. If you go to the car lot and look at a car in the dark, under the lesser light, it may look pretty good. However, if you buy it and take it home, the next morning you may find it has scratches and dings and dents and all kinds of things. Under the lesser light you did not see those things, but the sunlight makes it very clear. In that Old Testament dispensation, the people could see enough for their dispensation, but they did not see, or understand, the realities of the promise. They were still "concluded . . . under sin" (Galatians 3:22). Hebrews 10:3 says there had to be a "remembrance again made of sins every year." The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). Also, because they were under a lesser light, many of the prophecies of the Old Testament (their full impact, import, and implications) were not truly understood. Isaiah 30:26 states, "Moreover the light of the moon [the Old Testament] shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day."

Because the Sun has risen, Jesus Christ, a new day has dawned, a day star has arose (2 Peter 1:19). Thank God, we have clear light, not only of the New Testament but of the Old Testament as well. We can know this "light of the sun" represents the New Testament, for Malachi referred to Jesus Christ as "the Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2), and John 1:1 lets us know He is the Word. The sun represents the New Testament that Christ ushered in. That is what the woman was clothed with (Revelation 12:1). She had "put on Christ" (the Word) as Paul admonished in Galatians 3:27. This day is "the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). There are seven days in "the day," and we are in the seventh day of the seven days, a time where the mystery is being finished, or completed. The things that have been kept secret since the world began, things that were not clear under the old economy (the moon), are now clear as the sun.

The Old Testament has a great body of truth and relevance to us in the day and time in which we live. We live in a brilliant day of revelation. Those truths incorporated in the annals of prophecy are for us. They occupy a positive place. Romans 15:4 reads, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime [At the time, these words were written by Paul to the Romans. Other than a few

of the Pauline Epistles, the only Gospel account that had been written was the Gospel of Mark. Paul was not talking about the New Testament, but Old Testament Scriptures.] were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." The Old Testament Scriptures were penned and preserved throughout the annals of time for "our [present and plural sense] learning."

The first ten verses of 1 Corinthians, Chapter 10, talk about Old Testament occurrences in the Exodus. Verse 11 reads, "Now all these things [these Old Testament occurrences] happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, [Who was Paul writing to in this Corinthian letter? The 'our' is 'the church of God'; 1 Corinthians 1:2.] upon whom the ends of the world are come [present tense]." The word "ensamples" in the Greek is the word *tupos*, which means "a type." *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a *type* as "a person, a thing, or event that represents or symbolizes another, especially another that is to come."

<p>At Least Two Types</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prophetical (using representative language) 2. Historical (using literal occurrences)
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Ezekiel's writings are known as prophetical types. That is where a prophet is divinely inspired to employ external symbols in the speaking or writing or as a result of visions to signify things present or, more commonly, things to come. Much of what "**Ezekiel**" spoke of has never occurred in the literal realm. Later in the Book of Ezekiel, "**Ezekiel**" described a temple and its various furnishings. Historians and scholars tell us there has never been a temple such as "**Ezekiel**" described. Why? Because he was not describing a literal temple. He was prophetically describing the church. However, unless we have eyes to see, we will not understand that, and sadly, many people do not. Thus, Ezekiel was filling a prophetic office. He was taking the telescope of time, looking down through that prophetic glass, and envisioning another day. He was envisioning things to come. They are prophetical types.

There are at least two different types: *prophetical* types and *historical* types. An example of historical types would be the Exodus (a literal occurrence). Pharaoh was a hard taskmaster (a type of Satan, the taskmaster). Israel was in Egyptian bondage (a type of the bondage of sin). God raised up a deliverer in Moses (a type of Christ). Aaron became his mouthpiece (a type of the ministry). Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage (a type of the deliverance from sin). Those are historical types (things that actually occurred). Those literal occurrences have a spiritual significance that can be used as a typology or a representation; although they occurred literally, they can also represent something spiritually.

Rules of Prophetic Study: (1) Prophecy Has a Positive Place

Much of Ezekiel's writings are *prophetical* types. His writings use typical language; yet they are speaking not only as a representation but also of things that prophetically had not occurred at the time they were written. Many of the things "**Ezekiel**" penned about have occurred from the perspective of our day. However, in the day when he wrote these words, they were prophetical; they had not yet occurred. These Old Testament Scriptures serve as types, representations, symbolic expressions. We will deal more with that as we continue this study. It is important to be reminded that the number one rule of prophetic study is (1) *Prophecy Has a Positive Place* in the sense that, if God spoke it, He will perform it. There is no error in prophecy. Ezekiel 12:25 says, "For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD."

God's Word is positive. Numbers 23:19 reads, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and

shall he not make it good?" God is as good as His Word. He said in Isaiah 46:11, "Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." God, who knows the end from the beginning, who speaks of things that are not as though they were, whose understanding is infinite, has provided prophecy to give great insight to the occurrences that *have* occurred, those that *are* occurring, and those that *will* occur.

As we look at this introductory lesson to prophecy, we need to understand these essential truths before moving into the study of Ezekiel's prophecies proper. God had these things penned and preserved, down throughout the annals of time, for a purpose. There are no superfluous words in God's eternal Word. The Bible is the most condensed book in human history. John said if all the things Jesus did were written, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books" (John 21:25). That lets us know everything within the sacred canon is divinely inspired, has purpose and importance. God placed them there for our learning, for our benefit, to enlighten the eyes of our understanding (Ephesians 1:18) so we can, as the psalmist said, "behold wondrous things" (Psalm 119:18). When we study these prophecies, we will see some wondrous things set forth, things that have been kept secret since the world began. Thank God, we are living in a day of revelation, and much of that revelation is concerning prophetic truths! We are living in a day, such as Brother D. S. Warner penned, when "*Brighter days are sweetly dawning.*"

Romans 16:25-26 states through "the preaching of Jesus Christ," the Lord is taking "the scriptures of the prophets" and revealing truths that have been "kept secret since the world began." The seventh angel is sounding, and the mystery of God is being "finished," or completed (Revelation 10:7). It is like placing the final pieces of a puzzle and then standing back and saying: "I see the picture. I see it now." God, in His infinite wisdom, uses prophecy in a unique manner. He considers it vastly important, and it is indeed sure. He designed it "for our learning" (Romans 15:4). But to rightly divide it, there are rules we must apply as we study. Again, that first rule is we must understand prophecy's proper position accorded to and the importance and the position attached to it by God.

Much of the Old Testament is comprised of prophetic writings. Unless we understand these principles and rules and let the Spirit of God give us insight and enlighten our understanding, a great deal of God's Word is going to be closed to us and merely viewed as history. God does not want it closed. The seals are loosed; understanding is being given. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," but if you know the truth, John 8:32 tells us, "The truth shall make you free." Truth will keep you free from falsity and error, but to be kept free, you have to come to a "knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). God wants to reveal it to us, and I trust we desire to receive understanding.

The Importance of Putting Down Spiritual Roots to Understand Prophecy

Perhaps there are no more misused portions of the Old Testament than the prophetic portions. We have those on all sides of various persuasions, especially those of the dispensational persuasion, who take many of the prophetic utterances recorded in the annals of the Old Testament and relegate them to some distant point in the future. They are prone to literalize these Scriptures and teach things from these passages that have no basis in truth, which certainly is not God's intent. We need to "study" (2 Timothy 2:15), for many times truth does not lay on the surface. Truth is like a mine. In Matthew, Chapter 13, Jesus gave seven prophetic parables. Verse 44 reads, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field." What He was actually alluding to was certainly not a treasure chest that lies on the surface. If that were the case, he could have just secured the treasure chest, but the reason the man had to buy the field was because the treasure was "in a field." It had to be mined.

When the patriarch Job talked about truth, he referred to it by such qualities as silver and gold, things that readily relate to having great value and rarity. Job 28:1 reads, "Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it." Both the Hebrew and the *Amplified Bible* render the word "vein" as "a mine." We cannot be superficial in our studies. We have to get below the surface and into this "mine." The Proverb writer talked about the hidden treasure Jesus alluded to in Matthew, Chapter 13. Proverbs 2:1-4 says: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver" Silver is sought for in a mine. Yet, he was not talking about literal silver, but the preciousness of what is denoted as "my words" (verse 1).

We are living in a time when people's experiences are shallow, and it is because they do not get down into the depths of God's eternal Word. Ephesians 3:17 talks about the importance of "being rooted and grounded." We must put down some spiritual roots. There has to be some depth. The rest of Proverbs 2:4 reads, ". . . and searchest for her as for hid treasures." These "hid treasures" are the truths of the Word that are down in the depth, below the surface, in the mine. There is a grave danger in being superficial, shallow, and having no depth.

The Parable of the Sower depicts the various conditions of men's hearts and the three types of ground that were unprofitable. Matthew 13:5 reads, "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth." That verse lets us know that "deepness" (depth) is important, and without depth, there is a grave danger of not being able to maintain and endure. Mark's rendering of the same account is found in Mark 4:5-6: "And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away." There is an importance in having depth to our experience. This comes from having depth concerning the teachings of God's eternal Word. It is necessary to understand prophetic writings. Many will not exert the effort to understand anything that is the least bit beyond the surface, but God still instructs us in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "study." Why? So, we can be "rightly dividing," so that we can be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

If you do not understand prophecy, what are you going to do when you encounter a sectarian who wants to talk about Daniel's seventy weeks, telling you that the seventieth week has not yet come, that there is going to be a seventieth week out in the future, and that the old Jewish temple is going to be reestablished? When they say that the antichrist is going to make a covenant with the Jews, then he is going to break the covenant, then there is going to be the battle of Armageddon, and the blood is going to run up to the horse's bridle, if you do not know the truth, you certainly cannot stop the mouths of "the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). You will be a workman who is ashamed when they tie you in knots because you are not deep enough in God's Word. It is essential we understand these truths! Prophecy is a major portion of God's eternal Word. Prophetic writings constitute a whole host of Biblical books, and it is necessary we understand the truth concerning those writings.

Rules of Prophetic Study: (2) Understand Prophecy Has Prophetic Time Parameters

The second rule of prophetic study is of major importance: (2) *Understand Prophecy Has Prophetic Time Parameters*. Many are so far askew on this. Ezekiel 12:25-28 says: "For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD. Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the

times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD." Old Israel was saying, just as many today in the realms of religion say, it "is for many days to come." It is "far off," but we need to understand it is not "far off." These prophecies are not to be relegated to some point out in the future, but they speak truths that are pertinent to us in the day and time in which we live. This is where many misconceptions occur and much misapplication takes place; hence, sadly, there is much confusion. We must be "rightly dividing," and to do that, we must "study" the time sequence, or the time scheme. We must understand that there is a proper delineation of prophetic time. Sadly, those of the dispensational heresy want to relegate everything to some future point in time, just as the Israelites did.

Look at what other prophets tell us concerning much of what they were pointing to. Daniel 12:4 reads, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, [Many today say, 'Well, it is just sealed; we cannot really know it now.' Notice the time frame.] even *to* the time of the end: [It was not always to be sealed. Only '*to* the time of the end.' Then it would be unsealed.] many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Biblically, what is "the time of the end"? Is it a time yet to come? When we lay "line upon line" (Isaiah 28:13), we will find it differs totally from what many men entertain.

Hebrews 9:26, talking about the sacrificial offering of Christ, says, "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." *When* did He "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"? It was in A.D. 33. When did "the end of the world" commence? It was in A.D. 33. Why does it refer to this as "the end of the world"? Because Christ ushered in this final dispensation before the Consummation of all things. This Christian dispensation is the final dispensation. When Christ ushered in this dispensation, it is referred to throughout the Scripture as "the end of the world," or "the last days," because it is the last dispensation of human history.

First Corinthians 10:11 reads, "Now all these things [Old Testament occurrences] happened unto them for ensamples [types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are [present tense] come." When the Apostle wrote this Epistle to the Corinthians (approximately A.D. 54-59), they were already "in the end of the world," or the final dispensation of human history. Look again at Daniel 12:4, which says, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even *to* the time of the end [when the last human dispensation began: A.D. 33; what will they do in that day?]: many shall run." Are we running? First Corinthians 9:24-26 says: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run." We are running a race. When God spoke to Daniel in His infinite wisdom, He foresaw this race. He knows the end from the beginning. The Hebrew writer spoke about this race in Hebrews 12:1, saying, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

The prophecies Daniel was told to "seal" in the Old Testament dispensation are loosed and opened today. Habakkuk 2:2 states, "And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run." Putting it "upon tables," or on pictorial charts, can help us understand the vision. It will help us in our race, making clear the distinction between truth and error. It can prevent us from being tripped up by false teachers, false preachers, false prophets, and false spirits. It will keep us from getting knocked out of the race and will keep us in the way. Habakkuk 2:3 reads, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time [it was not for Habakkuk's day; neither was it for Daniel's day], but at the end [the same thing the Lord told

Daniel] it shall speak, ['The end' commenced when Jesus became the sacrifice for sin in A.D. 33. That is when this vision began to be unsealed and understanding began to be given.] and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come." We have "a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19). It will "surely come." Notice what else is written in Daniel 12:4. It says, "Knowledge shall be increased." When the seals are loosed off this book, when understanding is given, it will increase knowledge.

Hosea 4:6 warns, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Peter admonished in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge." How can we do that? Jeremiah 3:15 tells us, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." This is a prophecy. Back in the annals of approximately 629 B.C., God said, "I will give you pastors." Paul's letter in Ephesians 4:11 reads, "And he gave some [fulfilling the prophecy] . . ." One thing He gave was, "Pastors . . . to feed you with knowledge and understanding." Today (the age in which you and I are living), a time when "the mystery of God should be finished [or completed]" (Revelation 10:7), knowledge is being increased.

In our text (**Ezekiel 1:1**), Ezekiel received "**visions**." Habakkuk 2:3 tells us that at "the end," the "vision" would "speak." Again, we are establishing prophetic rules of study. Is there anything in **Ezekiel, Chapter 1**, at the onset of this prophetic writing, that establishes time parameters? Certainly so. Ezekiel 1:4-5 reads: "And I looked [**verse 1** says he was receiving '**visions**'], and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures."

A "whirlwind," a "fire," and "four living creatures" are among the first things introduced when "**Ezekiel**" spoke of the "**visions**" that he received. These "four living creatures" are identified in Revelation 4:6, which reads, "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts [the Greek word is *zoon*, meaning 'living creatures']." Revelation 5:8-9 says: "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts [*The Nestle's Greek New Testament* says 'living creatures'] and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us." These "four living creatures" are those who have been "redeemed." That is crucial at this juncture because these "living creatures" portray the redeemed of all ages. It takes us through this entire Gospel dispensation in which redemption is offered.

When was redemption first offered? Not under the old economy. Romans 3:24 tells us, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Redemption was not afforded man, in the sense that we enjoy it, until after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Redemption only comes through Jesus Christ. This verse says that "the redemption [singular] that is *in* [solely housed and divine property of] Christ Jesus." First Corinthians 1:30 tells us, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Redemption is a New Testament reality. Concerning the Old Testament brethren, Galatians 3:22 states, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin." That is where the Old Testament left them. The last two words in the Old Testament are "a curse" (Malachi 4:6). It left man under "a curse." However, thank God, there was a promise, but that promise was not realized until Jesus Christ came and paid ransom's cost. Ephesians 1:6-7 reads: "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his [Christ's] blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." There was no redemption until Jesus shed His blood.

Ezekiel received a vision that was a prophetic portrayal of the plan of redemption ushered in by Jesus Christ in His First Advent (Romans 3:24). Hebrews 10:20 says Christ came to bring "a new and living way." New life was not available until Jesus ushered in the plan of redemption. There was justification under the Old Testament, but no deliverance. Jesus came to bring deliverance to mankind so they could die out to sin and become new creatures in Christ Jesus. When we look at these "four living creatures" as the redeemed, we find they are "new creatures." Revelation 5:8 says, "And when he [the antecedent of that word 'he' refers to verses 6-7: 'a Lamb as it had been slain' and 'he came and took the book']." Verse 8 speaks of "the book," which Revelation 5:1 says at that juncture had been "sealed," but verse 5 says Christ "prevailed . . . to loose the seven seals thereof." Revelation 5:8 reads, "And when he had taken the book [the same book Daniel saw], the four beasts [living creatures] and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours [the Greek says 'incense'], which are the prayers of saints." The incense is "the prayers of saints."

The "four living creatures" are the saints. They are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17) who have a "new song." Revelation 5:9 tells us, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us." They had a song, they could offer the prayers of the saints, they had a harp to play and rejoice with because they were new creatures in Christ Jesus. Yet, this could not occur until Christ's blood was shed and the price was paid. Christ "purchased" the church "with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Hebrews 9:16-17 reads: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." I have a testament (a will). As long as I am living, I can change it; I can draft a new will. But once I die, that will becomes irrevocable; no one can change it then.

Some people struggle about the disciples, asking: "Do you not think they were born again before Pentecost? Do you not think they had New Testament salvation?" They could not have. The testament is not in force until after the Testator dies. These "living creatures" are a time measurement, an identifying factor. This lets us know of what the Prophet Ezekiel was speaking when he saw this "whirlwind" and this "fire" (Ezekiel 1:4). We will study it further, but it is the same whirlwind and the same fire recorded in Acts, Chapter 2, on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came and ushered in this Holy Ghost dispensation. Out of that fire and out of that wind came the redeemed of all ages. This identifies the time setting. God was using the prophet and his prophetic office to pick up that prophetic glass, look down through the telescope of time, and envision a brighter day. "**Ezekiel**" was in captivity "**by the river of Chebar**" (**verse 1**), but he was envisioning a brighter day. He was seeing the New Testament dispensation, the Redeemer, the redemption of mankind, and the redeemed of all ages.

Therefore, the prophetic time setting of Ezekiel 1:4 brings us to A.D. 33, and through these "four living creatures," it takes us down through the entire New Testament dispensation, the time where redemption is being offered through Jesus Christ. It was this era, this dispensation, of which the prophets desired to look. First Peter 1:10 tells us, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." It did not come to them. They "inquired and searched diligently," but their prophecies were pointing to the day that you and I are privileged to occupy: this New Testament dispensation.

Many religious advocates err because they reach beyond this day. Second Corinthians 6:2 reads, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted [Paul was quoting Isaiah 49:8], and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." That is "the day" the prophets "inquired and searched [out] diligently." They wanted to understand this salvation, but it was not for their day. Today is the day to which they pointed. To reach beyond the day of salvation with many prophetic applications causes confusion.

Rules of Prophetic Study: (3) Understand the Nature of Prophetic Language

Much confusion begins when people violate the next rule, a vital rule to be "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). This rule is (3) *Understand the Nature of Prophetic Language*. We live in an age of literalism. The Jews were caught up with it back in the first century. "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Today, many religious teachers lack real regeneration. They are natural men, having not the Spirit, and because of that, they view everything literally. However, prophetic truths are spiritual truths. Let us look at some Scriptures. Ezekiel 2:2 reads, "And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me." How? "The spirit entered into me." Ezekiel 3:12 says, "Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing . . ." How? It was by "the spirit." Ezekiel did not hear "a voice" until he was in "the spirit." The reason many people do not hear "a voice" is they are not in "the spirit."

Ezekiel 3:14 states, "So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away." Also, Ezekiel 11:5 tells us, "And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak." Ezekiel 11:14 says, "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying." This took place after "the spirit" moved upon him. There are many other places throughout his writings, letting us know it was through the avenue of the Spirit. The New Testament teaches the same truth. Many say today, "Oh, these things are still sealed," but they need to understand, the seal is the "holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13). If you do not have the Holy Ghost, they are sealed; but if you have the Holy Ghost, we are living in a dispensation where they are no longer sealed. They have been loosed for our understanding.

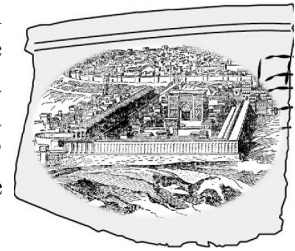
First Corinthians 2:9 says, "But as it is written [quoting Isaiah 64:4], Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." That is as far as some people read. They say, "That tells us we just cannot know," but the next verse reads, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things." If you want to get off the surface and get down into the mine and understand the deep things, it is going to take the Spirit of God. First Corinthians 2:14 tells us, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The way to receive prophetic truth and to understand the nature of the spiritual language is in the Spirit. Ephesians 1:17-18 reads: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation [How are you going to get a revelation? Through the Spirit.] in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Who enlightens it? The Spirit. Look what John said while on the isle of Patmos in Revelation 1:10-11. It tells us: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega." That same expression is used in Revelation 22:13, which reads, "I am Alpha and Omega." Revelation 22:16 tells us who that is: "I Jesus." However, John did not hear the voice of Christ until he was "in the Spirit." The only way to receive spiritual truths is to be "in the Spirit."

If you want to receive a telegraph, you must have a telegraph machine. Someone can be on the other end just tapping away, but if you do not have a receiver, you cannot receive the message. It works the same with the telephone or a radio. They can be transmitting. There are radio stations transmitting live right now, but if your receiver is not tuned in, you do not hear a thing. Without a receiver, you will never receive the transmission. God is sending the transmissions, but we have to have our receiver tuned in to receive the transmissions, and that receiver is through the Holy Ghost. Many other Scriptures validate this truth as well. To understand spiritual truths, we must be "in the Spirit."

What language does the Spirit use in prophecy? It is the language of symbols, figurative

expressions. Ezekiel 4:1 is a vivid example. It reads, "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem." Ezekiel was told to take a piece of tile, like a floor tile, and draw a picture of Jerusalem on it. When Ezekiel drew a picture of Jerusalem on that piece of tile, was it literally Jerusalem? Was it literally the city? Or was it a representation (or symbol) of the city? Certainly, it was a representation, or a symbol. Ezekiel 4:2-3 reads: "And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan [a literal iron pan], and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: [Was that 'iron pan' a literal wall? No. It was a symbol.] and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign [a symbol'; *Webster's New World Dictionary*]." This is a symbolic picture.



Drawing of Jerusalem

Ezekiel 4:4 says, "Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it." Lying on his side beside this tile was a picture of Ezekiel assuming "the iniquity," not in the literal sense but symbolically. This is a symbolic expression. It is vital to understand the nature of the language that is being employed. Verse 1 speaks of a "tile," and verse 3 speaks of an "iron pan." Verse 3 says they were "a sign" (or a symbol). Ezekiel 37:1 tells us, "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD [he did not physically go anywhere, but the Spirit carried him in his mind], and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones." Ezekiel 37:11 says, "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel." They could not literally have been the whole house of Israel because Ezekiel was alive at that time. It is a spiritual picture. This vision of "bones" is used to portray truths to us. Prophecy speaks in symbolic tones. When **Ezekiel 1:1** says that "**the heavens were opened, and I saw visions,**" we must remember the nature of visions.

Acts, Chapter 10, relates what happened to Peter on the housetop in Joppa when the sheet was let down three times with many unclean beasts. He was told to arise and eat. Verses 14-15 read: "But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common." Three times that sheet came down. Acts 10:19-20 states: "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." The lowering of that sheet with unclean things was not to emphasize dietary law or habits, but it was to get Peter past his prior thinking and beliefs and to go with the Gentile messengers to a Gentile's house, something that was contrary to the Jewish practices (Acts 10:28).

In Acts 11:3, we have the recorded account of when Peter was explaining to the brethren, because of the charge made, what occurred and why it occurred. Acts 11:3-12 reads: "Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them [that was the charge]. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, [What was the nature of this vision?] A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

"And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. And the spirit bade me

go with them, nothing doubting." When Peter saw a vision of the sheet with all manner of unclean animals, the vision was not about unclean animals at all. God was preparing him for those three Gentiles who had come from Cornelius' house. The nature of the language of visions is symbolic.

In Revelation 9:17, John let us know he was receiving a "vision" while he was on the isle of Patmos. The nature of the language of the Revelation is found in Revelation 1:1, which reads, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and *signified* it." The word for "signified" in the Greek is *semaino*, and it means "revealed by signs." Again, *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a *sign* as "a symbol." Thus, the nature of prophetic language is symbolic language. In our text, Ezekiel was receiving "**visions of God**" (**verse 1**). These visions are symbolic.

We need to understand that the nature of prophetic language is figurative. If we lose sight of that, the Scriptures become very chaotic, confusing, and almost any type of doctrine can be devised from them. We see many false and confusing doctrines being devised by religious teachers today. Prophecy reveals spiritual truth and is revealed by the Spirit. Therefore, it employs spiritual language. When the Word of Truth is rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15), it is not confusing or contradictory. "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33), and He certainly never sent His Word to bring confusion. Confusion comes when *natural* minds try to look at *spiritual* truths. The Holy Ghost is still the Teacher, and you must have the Teacher if you are ever going to receive the lesson. Natural minds are so prone to run to literalism, but these are symbolic portrayals.

Rules of Prophetic Study: (4) Understand Prophecy Must Not Be Isolated

The last rule we want to consider is (4) *Understand Prophecy Must Not Be Isolated*. Second Peter 1:20 tells us, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." You cannot get the true meaning of a prophecy or a prophetic text of Scripture by isolating it from the surrounding context or other texts throughout the Scriptures. There is a harmony and a scheme to the Scriptures; they are compatible and complementary. When rightly divided, they do not contradict. Many make the charge that the Bible is contradictory. Nay, nay, nay! Not when it is rightly divided.

What is true in prophecy will mate up and be true in the Gospel and in the Revelation as well. A true understanding brought by the Spirit of God will cause all truth to come together as a cohesive whole to depict one beautiful picture. Isaiah 28:10 reads, "For precept must be upon precept, [Truth builds on truth, Scripture builds on Scripture, and verses build on verses. They complement, they are compatible, and they show a more composite picture. It is like the pieces of a puzzle. The more pieces that you put in proper position, the clearer the picture becomes. It does not produce a different picture, but you have a clearer picture.] precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

There is a scheme and a compatibility to the Scriptures, and to get the full composite picture, you cannot only look in one place. You have to find what mates up with it through the Holy Spirit and let those pieces be brought together. When a precept is put with the other precept, it makes a more complete picture. We read in Isaiah 28:13, "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." This principle certainly applies as a rule of prophetic study: precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little—there is a scheme and a harmony to the Scriptures.

We are enjoined in Isaiah 34:16, "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: [For every dark, unclear, or obscure statement or Scripture in God's eternal Word, there is another Scripture that the Spirit of God can 'mate' up

to it that will bring light and understanding. God wants us to have understanding.] for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them." One illustration of this is found in Genesis, Chapter 28, where Jacob laid down, used a stone for a pillow, fell asleep, and dreamed about a ladder, commonly referred to as "Jacob's ladder." He saw angels ascending and descending on that ladder (Genesis 28:12). What does that mean? What was that ladder? In John 1:51, Jesus talked about how you will see the Son of man with the angels ascending and descending upon Him. That tells us Jesus is the ladder. You would not know that if you did not lay line upon line, here a little, there a little, and let the Scriptures be mated up by the Spirit of God.

Psalms 119:130 tells us, "light" is "understanding." God wants us to understand. He said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Therefore, it is so important to be in a spiritual position where the Spirit of God can work with you and enlighten the eyes of your understanding (Ephesians 1:18). Thus, it is needful to be "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:10), because it is the Spirit who does the gathering, who brings you here and brings you there, tying the Scriptures together. He cannot do that if you do not study. If you will study, He will aid you in your study. Isaiah 34:16 promises, "His spirit . . . hath gathered them." If you possess the Teacher, thank God, He will teach you.

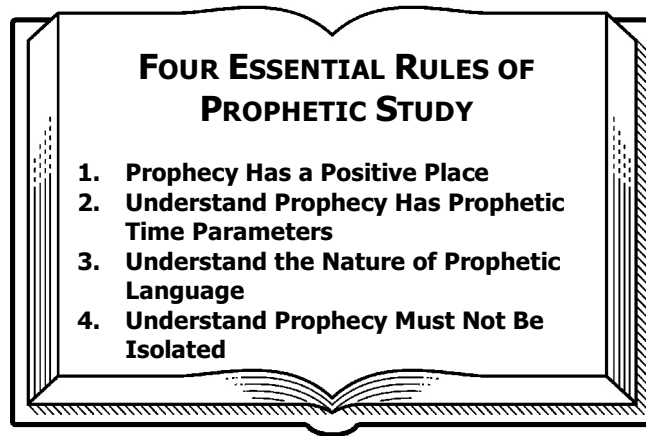
While there are those who hold the office of a teacher (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11), a true revelation of truth comes through the Divine Teacher. We read in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." The real Teacher enables you to see the truth. God has ordained for truth to be seen, but people who isolate Scriptures are not allowing the Holy Ghost to work as He desires. Enlightenment will not come to those who isolate and fail to allow the Holy Ghost to "mate" the Scriptures and instruct them. Because of that, they come up with almost every imaginable concoction, such as what is being taught in the realms of religion today. We must recognize truth is spiritual, and it takes the enlightenment of the Spirit to give the proper understanding. These writings have been penned and painfully preserved down throughout the annals of time. They could have easily been dismissed and discarded. Many have perused them and found them complex, difficult to understand. So, they have dismissed them, discounted them, or worse yet, taught them in a manner that is Biblically unsound.

God desires we see the truths that are contained therein. We must follow the Biblical injunction in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "study" and not isolate Scripture. It is dangerous to isolate Scriptures. What does that mean? I am reminded of a man who had a method of Bible study, which can be dangerous. I call it "Bible roulette." Similar to the game of Russian roulette, where someone takes a pistol with a cylinder with one bullet, spins the cylinder, and pulls the trigger. Many people's daily Bible reading consists of, "Lord, whatever You want me to read now, let my Bible fall open to that." One man practiced that style of Bible study, and the Bible fell open that day to the verse that said, "And he [Judas] . . . went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5). He thought, "That cannot be right." So, he closed his Bible back up, let it drop open again, and his eyes fell on another verse that said, "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). He said, "That surely cannot be the verse." So, he opened it up again, and it said, "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). That is an example of isolating a Scripture from its context (from the scheme and harmony of the Scriptures) to where you can teach most anything imaginable.

I am also reminded of the man who was extremely emphasizing water baptism. He said, "I can teach baptism from any verse in the Bible." When he was challenged, "What are you going to do with Matthew 3:10, where it says that 'the axe is laid unto the root of the trees'?" he said: "That is simple. They were cutting a path to the creek to have a baptizing." If you have a preconceived notion, or a carnal mind, and you isolate Scriptures, you can get them to say most anything imaginable; sadly, much of religion does just that. When we lay line upon line, precept upon

precept, here a little, there a little, when we are in the Spirit and we are studying and we let the Spirit mate up the Scriptures, the Holy Ghost will give a clear vision and understanding of prophetic truth. I trust we can see that there are at least four essential principles necessary to successfully studying prophecy (see box on page 7), and there are also at least four rules of prophetic study that are necessary to be understood (see box below).

If we can understand these principles and rules, I am confident that the Lord will bless us in our study of Ezekiel's prophetic writings. His prophetic writings are very lengthy, and we will certainly in no way be able to consider each of the forty-eight chapters or all the content within these chapters, but by the help of God, we want to examine those particular prophecies that have specific pertinence to this Gospel Day and that can help us successfully to run this Christian race. It is my burden that our "knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4) through this study so that we will not be tripped up and so that we can run to receive the prize.



NOTES:

CHAPTER TWO

AN INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

Ezekiel 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." When we try to work for God and when we try to witness, unless we have exerted the effort to study, we could be put to shame. There are those, even in the realms of false religion, who are extremely studious; they are very informed on their teachings. Those teachings may be amiss, or erroneous, but if you are not knowledgeable in the truth, if you do not have the rooting and grounding in truth that you should have, then they can tie you in knots and put you to shame. We are admonished to study God's Word, not just for intellectual enhancement, but so that we can be successful workmen when contending with those who are wrongly dividing. All manner of teachings that are certainly far off the path of truth have been taught and supposedly substantiated with the Bible. Thus, the importance of studying so we can know the truth.

First Timothy 2:4 tells us what the will of God is for every man. It reads, "Who will have all men to be saved [He is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'; 2 Peter 3:9], and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." That is crucial! It is one thing to *gain* the new birth, but quite another thing to *keep* that new life alive. Just as when a child is born in the natural, it can be born healthy, it can be vibrant, but that babe has to be fed, cared for, and nurtured. Likewise, Peter let us know in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." He does not want us to always remain as "babes." He wants us to "grow," or mature in our experience. When a new baby is born into a family, and that little child is maybe five or six pounds, everybody makes over that baby, and rightfully so. However, if that baby was still five or six pounds a year later, there would be grave concerns because that is not natural. Once birth occurs and life begins, growth is the natural byproduct. It is the same way with our experience. When we are "born again" (John 3:7), we are not to stay as "babes," but we are to drink the "sincere milk of the word," so that we may grow, mature, develop, increase, and enlarge.

What is "the truth" the Apostle Paul wrote of in 1 Timothy 2:4? Pilate posed essentially that same question to Jesus when he asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Jesus, in that high priestly prayer, revealed the answer when He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). That is why the Apostle Paul admonished the young minister Timothy to "study!" One thing that God desires His people to study is prophecy, a vital portion of the "word."

Prophecy comes from a divine source, and it is of a divine nature (2 Peter 1:21). It is a "sure word" (2 Peter 1:19). It helps us to have a rudimentary understanding concerning God's Word, concerning the work of Christ, and concerning that which is to occur throughout the course of the Christian dispensation. If we study those truths, they will give us a foundation, a basis to build an experience that is sound and solid and that will convince the gainsayers.

The Historical Setting of the Book of Ezekiel

Ezekiel 1:1-2 introduces the historical setting of the writing of this prophetic book, addressing when and where it was penned. We must never lose sight of the fact that 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration [the Greek word is *theopneustos*, meaning 'God breathed'] of God and is profitable." Just as God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7), there is a life-giving quality in the Scriptures. Proverbs 30:5 reads, "Every word of God is pure." Even words we might consider being incidental have a truth contained within them. There are no superfluous or nonessential words in God's eternal Word. "Every word" is by divine design, and there is truth incorporated within it.

John 21:25 tells us, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." The Scriptures are already divinely condensed; therefore, everything that is in the Scriptures is inspired, inerrant, infallible, and "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Scriptures are designed to teach us how to live right. We do not know how to live right without being taught. God has set forth His Word to teach us how to live right. Second Timothy 3:17 reads, "That the man of God may be perfect [a better rendering of that word is 'complete'], thoroughly furnished unto all good works." He furnishes the man of God with an understanding of the Scriptures to profit each individual in their experience so that they may gain an understanding of His Word and instruction on how to live right.

Prophecy may seem to be far from that, but in the truest sense, it is not. As the prophet picked up the prophetic glass, looked down through the telescope of time as it were, and envisioned this New Testament dispensation, he saw many truths concerning this day of salvation, truths that are essential for us to understand in order to have and maintain a victorious experience. These things were not just penned and preserved throughout the annals of time, merely for historical lessons. In Romans 15:4, the Apostle Paul wrote, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime [talking about the Old Testament Scriptures; most of the New Testament had not been written at this juncture] were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

These things have been penned and preserved "for our learning." The first ten verses of 1 Corinthians, Chapter 10, all refer to Old Testament events that occurred in the Exodus. Then, 1 Corinthians 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened unto them [those in the Old Testament] for ensamples: [The Greek word is *typos*. It is the word from which our English word *type* is derived, which is defined as 'a person, a thing, or an event that represents or symbolizes another, especially another that is to come' (*Webster's New World Dictionary*). The Book of Ezekiel is full of prophetic types. Those prophecies set forth representations of the realities that have been and are being enjoyed right in this New Testament dispensation.] and they are written for our admonition [to instruct us], upon whom the ends of the world are come [present tense]."

"**Ezekiel**" began this chapter by setting forth *when* and *where* this prophetic writing was penned. **Ezekiel 1:1** says, "**Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.**" What is the significance of this "**thirtieth year**"? **Verse 2** gives us a different time measurement, saying it was "**the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.**" By mentioning the "**thirtieth year,**" it properly establishes Ezekiel's Jewish credentials to be employed as a prophet.

This "**thirtieth year**" that **verse 1** speaks of is not associated with any event or any other measurement, such as **verse 2** is when it talks about "**king Jehoiachin's captivity.**" It is only

associated in this verse with the word "I." Why did "Ezekiel" begin with this, and why did he use this expressed time notation? "Ezekiel" identified himself as a "priest" (Ezekiel 1:3). Under the Levitical law, one could not enter or engage in sacred service until they were at least thirty years old (Numbers 4:22-23, 30, 39, 43, and 47). This was the age that the Levitical law established for one to become active in the priesthood or to engage in divine service. This was the age that both John the Baptizer and Jesus were when they entered their sacred service (Luke 3:23).

Six Features Established by the Prophet Ezekiel

At the very onset of this prophetic writing, "Ezekiel" firmly established his qualifications and credentials, revealing he was qualified to be a "priest" (verse 3). He also had received the divine call to be a prophet. In Ezekiel 2:5, he is referred to as "a prophet." By setting forth in verse 1 that it was "in the thirtieth year," he was establishing the critical fact that, in accordance with the Jewish law, he was qualified to engage in sacred service. There are six features we want to establish. Number one: "Ezekiel" established his appropriate measurement for sacred service. He waited until he was the appropriate age ("the thirtieth year"). We are now in the New Testament dispensation, and that thirty-year measurement is no longer a measurement because we are not under the Levitical law. Yet, the Bible clearly teaches in Romans 12:4-7 that though we may receive a calling, or a gift, and have grace for that calling, there is a need to "wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching." There is an appropriate time after one has sat and learned the message and the divine hand has moved upon him.

There is a time for young ministers to sit under older ministers to learn the message, to be schooled in the doctrine, to receive instruction before they try to instruct. It is always good to learn to be a follower before you try to be a leader. Second Timothy 2:6 tells us, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." If you have never followed, you cannot lead. "Ezekiel" was establishing the measurement under the old economy for sacred service.

Second, "Ezekiel" established the civil measurement in our text by giving the historical time setting. Ezekiel 1:2 reads, "In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity." *The Pulpit Commentary* and the Thompson Chain Reference Bible say this took place in 595 B.C. We can read about this in 2 Kings 24:11-12 and 14-15, which state: "And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city [Jerusalem], and his servants did besiege it. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. . . . And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon."

Next, "Ezekiel" established the third feature: where the "visions of God" (verse 1) were received. In verse 1, he said he was "among the captives." Second Kings 24:14 says that "none remained [in Jerusalem], save the poorest sort of the people of the land." Verse 1 tells us Ezekiel was "by the river Chebar," and verse 3 tells us it was "in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar." The "land of the Chaldeans" was Babylon. Ezekiel 12:13 confirms this, saying, "I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans." The Chaldeans were the type of people that they were. Babylon was the geographical location. The specific place "Ezekiel" spoke of, "by the river Chebar," was a location known as Telabib. It was a channel, or irrigation canal, that brought the waters of the Euphrates into a loop, and this is where the exiles built their exilic

communities. (See the *Tyndale Commentaries*, pages 21 and 22, in the volume of Ezekiel.) No doubt, that is where the Prophet Ezekiel was. To understand the encouraging message this reveals, let us move from the historical to the practical. Regardless of the surrounding conditions with which we must contend, regardless of how negative and hopeless the situation may appear, God does not abandon His people.

Psalm 139:7 tells us, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" They were in a dark hour of Hebrew history. They had chosen to become a rebellious house, and because of that, God allowed Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans to come and overthrow Jerusalem, carrying them away captive for seventy long years. Yet, during one of the darkest hours of Hebrew history, God reached out and raised up a prophet to bring a brilliant light amid a dark condition, showing them a better day was on the horizon. This should encourage us that regardless of how hopeless the surrounding conditions may seem, God's eye is upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry (Psalm 34:15). The Lord will be faithful.

Lamentations 3:23 says, "They [His compassions, His mercies; verse 22] are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Even when people are not faithful, God remains faithful. He remains faithful to His Word. We need to see this message as a bright and shining light amid an engrossing darkness. Can you imagine being moved away from all you have ever known? Carried off to a strange land, full of strange people with a strange tongue who were your conquerors? Living as a captive among other captives? That was the position in which "**Ezekiel**" found himself through no fault of his own. There will be times when you will find yourself in certain circumstances through no fault of your own, but God is faithful.

The fourth feature we see is "**Ezekiel**" established the authorship of this writing. In **Ezekiel 1:3** he identified himself, saying, "**The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi.**" "**Ezekiel**" was a "**priest**"; therefore, he was of the priestly tribe of Levi, as was his father "**Buzi**" and his ancestors. When God separated out the tribe of Levi for sacred service, He designated them to be wholly dedicated to sacred service. They were not to own land; they were not to receive an inheritance passed from generation to generation (Deuteronomy 18:1-2). The priest was to live by what the people provided (Deuteronomy 18:3-5). (That is God's will yet today. Read 1 Timothy 5:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 9:14.) In **verse 3** of our text, "**Ezekiel**" established both the authorship and the authority: he had reached the "**thirtieth year**" that the law required to be an eligible candidate, and he received the spiritual qualification by pronouncing, "**The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel.**" The latter portion of that verse says that "**the hand of the LORD was there upon him.**" There is the divine credential. These words establish authorship and authority.

The Burden of the Book of Ezekiel

The fifth feature is, "**Ezekiel**" established the burden of the book. There was a purpose behind this writing. This is the most tremendous truth transmitted in these introductory verses. It was a dark and difficult day. Jeremiah 29:10 says that this captivity was designed to endure for "seventy years." Jeremiah 29:28 clearly warns, "This captivity is long." It was a distressing time, yet, God, in accordance with Romans 15:13, is "the God of hope." He did not leave those people in a hopeless position. There are consequences to sin, but God still does not leave one bereft of hope. He is "the God of hope," "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). In those dark, dreary hours of foreign captivity, the people needed some "hope." In essence, Ezekiel's prophecy was saying: "It will not always be as it is now. A brighter day is coming."

The psalmist said in Psalm 30:5, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Prophetically, when did this "morning" come? Who ushered in a new day? Who made

"joy" available? In Revelation 22:16, Jesus said: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Science tells us that the sun is just a large star. When we see it in the morning, it begins a new day. When Jesus said He is that "bright and morning star," He was telling us He is the Sun. We read in Malachi 4:1-2: "For, behold, the day cometh, [This is future tense. It was not for Malachi's day; it was not for the Old Testament dispensation. They were under that dark Jewish night, the 'lesser light'; Genesis 1:16.] that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh [again, future tense; it was not in Malachi's day] shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise."

The "Sun," that "bright and morning star," is Jesus. Right in a very dark and dismal time of Jewish history, "the God of hope" was enabling the prophet to fulfil the prophetic office, pick up that prophetic glass, look through the telescope of time, and envision a bright day. We read in 2 Peter 1:19, "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."

God's people were in a dark place. They were in Babylonian captivity. The temple had been desecrated, the sacred vessels had been taken, the people (all but the poor sort) had been carried away captive and put in a strange land under rulers who spoke a strange language and had strange practices. You can read in Daniel how Nebuchadnezzar made an idol of himself and wanted everybody to worship him (Daniel 3:1-5). The people were in dire circumstances. It was dark, but right in that dark place, the prophets prophesied of a day when the day star would rise, a time when Jesus Christ would come on the stage of action and usher in a new day. What day was He going to usher in? We read in 2 Corinthians 6:2, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

That is the day that Malachi said "cometh." When Jesus ushered in a new day, man could get out from under darkness and receive an experience of light that produces joy in the soul. The new day, "the day of salvation," became a Holy Ghost dispensation. What is one thing the Holy Ghost brings? We read in Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy" When the Holy Spirit brings the kingdom experience to an individual, there is joy. Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; [The kingdom of God is not literal nor temporal. It does not come with observation (Luke 17:20). It is not a literal entity.] but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. When did the kingdom come? Notice what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, when He was setting down the tenets of this new economy in its very first published message. He taught them the formula for prayer, not something to be repeated by rote, verbatim, or using vain repetitions, but He set forth the principles of prayer. In Matthew 6:9-10, we read: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father [He was not saying that you must start out with those specific two words, but He was letting us know that before you can pray, you have to have a relationship. You cannot appeal to a Father whom you do not have. He has to be your Father. You must be born again. You must have a father-son relationship that puts you in a position to pray.] which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. [When does the 'kingdom come'? How does the 'kingdom come'?] Thy will be done [His will is that 'all men to be saved'; 1 Timothy 2:4], in earth"

God's "will" will never be done *on* earth; it says "*in* earth." What is the earth He was talking about? Second Corinthians 4:7 says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." We are the earth. Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells us we are "the dust" of "the earth." In 2 Corinthians 5:1 we read, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle" When His will (salvation) is done

in your earthen vessel and you receive righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost, that is when the kingdom experience comes. Christ came to usher in a new day to enable man to become a new man. Second Corinthians 5:17 describes it as being "a new creature." That new day has brought an experience that enables us to have "joy." In this prophetic book, "the God of hope, the God of all comfort," was providing the prophet with "**visions**" (**verse 1**) that allowed him to look past his night of gloom and envision a day of glory. In many prophetic writings, there is both a major and minor fulfillment. Some are spiritual, some are literal. However, the writings of "**Ezekiel**" are unique because there is much that is purely prophetic type, that is purely spiritual, that only has spiritual significance. Though other things are strewn through these chapters, the predominant burden is to convey a spiritual message.

Ezekiel Saw "Visions of God"

What was "**Ezekiel**" seeing "**visions**" (**verse 1**) of? When he made the expression, "**I saw visions of God,**" he was not speaking of God personified. How do we know? In Exodus 33:20, God, speaking to Moses, said, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." This was in 1491 B.C. Let us come up through the annals of time to chronologically the last books of the Bible, which were written in A.D. 100. John said in 1 John 4:12, "No man hath seen God at any time." If "**Ezekiel**" did not see God, what was he saying? One rendering says "visions *from* God." These "**visions**" were of divine origin. They were not of Ezekiel's own invention or of his own concoction, as some men's are today. How many times have false preachers said, "Christ is going to come on this date"? No man knows the day or the hour, not even Jesus (Matthew 24:36). There are a lot of "**visions**" that are not of God, but it was not so with "**Ezekiel.**" His "**visions**" were "**of God,**" of divine origin.

What was the burden of those "**visions**"? **Verse 1** says that "**the heavens were opened.**" The divine desire was to get the prophet's and the people's eyes off their earthly exile, off their dark day in distress, and enable them to envision a day of "brightness" (**verse 4**). What brings this day of "brightness"? Isaiah 62:1 tells us, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." This day of "brightness" is "the day of salvation," the New Testament dispensation. Isaiah 61:1-3 says: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

What was the Prophet Isaiah envisioning when he spoke of one "anointed . . . to preach" and sent "to preach good tidings"? When did that prophecy begin to be fulfilled? Luke 4:16-21 reads: "And he [Christ] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [Greek for the Hebrew Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written [Isaiah 61:1-2], The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture ful-

filled in your ears." The "day of salvation" was ushered in when Christ came as "the bright and morning star," "the sun of righteousness" that caused "the day dawn," and that day is "the day of salvation." It shone with a "brightness." This "brightness" in Ezekiel 1:4 is a portrayal of what was ushered in with the New Testament dispensation.

Another vital truth in this introduction that must be understood, the sixth feature, is that "**Ezekiel**" established the nature of prophetic language. This prophetic book was penned under divine inspiration. Second Peter 1:21 says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man [**Ezekiel** was not writing his thoughts or his feelings or his theology]: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "**Ezekiel**" clearly told us that the language in which these truths were conveyed was "**visions**."

What is the language of "**visions**"? We read in Numbers 12:6, "And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." The language that many times the prophets employed was the language of "**visions**." "**Ezekiel**" made it plain that what he was receiving came from a divine source, "**the heavens were opened**," and he was receiving "**visions**" that were "**of God**," of divine origin. What is the nature of the language of "**visions**"? "**Ezekiel**" repeated it several times. Ezekiel 11:24 says, "Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea." It is the language of "the Spirit of God," a spiritual language. It does not lend itself to literal rendition, for it is the language of "the Spirit," the manner in which "the Spirit of God" conveys spiritual truths.

What is the nature of spiritual language? Ezekiel 40:2-3 says: "In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, [**Ezekiel** was carried away by the Spirit in his mind. He never physically, or literally, left Babylon.] and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed." In the "**visions**" that "the Spirit" brought, "**Ezekiel**" saw, in this instance, "a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass." That is a symbolic picture of the role of Christ.

The nature of the spiritual language (the language "the Spirit" employs in "**visions**") is symbolism. Ezekiel 37:1 reads, "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones." Then, Ezekiel 37:11 states, "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel."

They could not have literally been "the whole house of Israel" because "**Ezekiel**" was part of the house of Israel. It was symbolizing the spiritual condition of the people. Ezekiel 37:2 says, "And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry." They were all spiritually dead. It is a spiritual picture. It is a picture in symbolism. The language of "**visions**" is symbolic.

Let us lift one more example. In Acts, Chapter 11, Peter had come back from Cornelius' house. This was the first time that the Gospel was intentionally taken to a Gentile. It was forbidden for those of Jewish stock to be with a Gentile (Acts 10:28). That is why God had to let down that sheet three times (Acts 10:11-16). In Acts 11:4-10 we read: "But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A

FEATURES ESTABLISHED BY THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

- 1. Ezekiel's Qualifications**
- 2. The Civil Measurement**
- 3. Where the Visions Were Received**
- 4. The Authorship of the Book of Ezekiel**
- 5. The Burden of the Book of Ezekiel**
- 6. The Nature of Prophetic Language**

certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven."

This sheet was filled with all manner of things unlawful to eat under the old Levitical law (Leviticus 11:29-30). Peter, being of good Jewish stock, said, "I cannot eat that; it is against the law." The Lord said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common [or unclean]." This reveals that there had been a transition in testaments. This was done three times, representing the "three men [who] already come unto the house where [Peter] was" (Acts 11:11). Verse 12 says, "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting."

The lesson did not concern dietary habits or unclean foods, but it was letting Peter know he was to go with these three Gentile men to Cornelius' house. It was a symbolic lesson. The language employed in "**visions**" is symbolic. People are so prone to run off with literalism, but spiritual truths revealed by the Spirit are given in a spiritual language, the language of symbolism. That is not novel to prophecy, but it is used all the way through the Bible. Psalm 23:1 reads, "The LORD is my shepherd." Is He a literal shepherd? Does He walk with a literal staff on the Judean hills, leading sheep? No, this verse is using it as a word figure to bring an image to the mind.

When John saw Jesus coming, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Psalm 23:1 says He is a "shepherd." So, is He a shepherd or a lamb? Is He a man or an animal? A lamb is a sacrificial animal, and John 1:29 brings an image to mind. Jesus said, "I am the door" (John 10:9). Is He made of wood with hinges? If you believe the Bible is speaking literally, you would have to say that. What was Jesus saying? He was conveying an image. A door is a mode of access, a mode of entrance. It keeps some things out, and it keeps some things *in*. The door brings a separation. Likewise, Christ brings a separation: some people are *in*, and some are *out*. If they want to get in, they have to come through Christ, the door.

Is Christ the shepherd, a lamb, the door, or a vine (John 15:1)? He is all of those things because they are all used to bring an image to the mind to convey a spiritual truth. "**Ezekiel**" and prophecy are the same way. These "**visions**" "**Ezekiel**" "**saw**" are very rich, and they hold forth many truths that we need to be mindful of. "**Ezekiel**" was looking at a bright day, and we now occupy that bright day, that "day of salvation," the Gospel Day. Zechariah 14:7 tells us we are well within the evening part of this Gospel Day. It is a most unusual evening because it says that "at evening time it shall be light." In the natural realm, it becomes dark in the evening time, but this "light" is "understanding" (Psalm 119:130). The songwriter penned, "*Brighter days are sweetly dawning.*" This "evening time" is a time of "brightness" and brilliance. As the "light" shines on our pathway, we can "walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7) and have that "fellowship" (divine sharing in common) with God.

As we continue this study, I trust we will see the encouraging picture that is shown with the commencement of this Gospel Day and ultimately its glorious conclusion! Thank God, we are not in a time of darkness, but we are in a time of "light"!

CHAPTER THREE

A PROPHETIC PICTURE OF PENTECOST

Ezekiel 1:4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

5 Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

In this portion of the prophetic passage, we will predominantly consider **verses 4, 5, and 10**. In reality, this is a prophetic portrayal of Pentecost. Not only do these verses reveal what occurred on that day, but they portray what took place subsequently as well. Recall in verse 1 of this writing, Ezekiel said that the message was being conveyed to him in the form of "visions." This text is one of those "visions." **Verse 4** tells us, "**And I looked.**" Ezekiel was seeing a vision.

We must be reminded the language of visions is a figurative, or symbolic, language. Matthew 13:52 reads, "Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." We will look at the Old Testament, and we will look at the New Testament. We will lay "line upon line" (Isaiah 28:13), and it will help us see the complete picture of the truth being revealed. The nature of the language of visions (or symbolic expressions) is using literal things with which we can relate as word vehicles to convey spiritual truths with which we may not be as familiar. It is essentially learning by association. It is important that we properly understand prophecy, because this will aid us in our experience and in our spiritual warfare. God is not merely trying to enhance our intellect, but He wants to give us the understanding needed to be victorious against the foes that we face.

The Apostle Paul penned in 1 Timothy 1:18-19, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them [by the prophecies] mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience." A proper understanding of Biblical prophecy is not merely to stimulate thought, but it is so that we might "war a good warfare," so that we will not "depart from the faith" (1 Timothy 4:1).

Consider what the prophet described in our text. **Ezekiel 1:4** reads, "**And I looked,** [Again, he was receiving 'visions of God'; verse 1. God carried him away in the Spirit, as it were, and he received a spiritual vision.] **and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.**" "**A whirlwind**" coming "**out of the north**" is an unusual event. According to Job's writings, whirlwinds came "out of the south" (Job 37:9). Our text is describing just the opposite of what is natural. This reveals at least two truths: (1) the

spiritual condition when this event occurred; and (2) a supernatural event, not a natural occurrence, is being depicted. First, let us determine *when* this occurred.

"A Whirlwind Came Out of the North"

Prophetically, what time period was the prophet envisioning? Ezekiel was not speaking of his own day, for he was in a dark day, but he was envisioning a day that was going to bring in "**brightness**" (verse 4). To understand what day Ezekiel was describing, read what he saw (keeping in mind, visions deal in symbolic expressions): "**A whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself**" (verse 4). Where else do we see these expressions employed? We read in Acts 2:1, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." God never ordained that Pentecost be a supposed church. It is a day. The word "Pentecost" comes from the Greek word *pentekoste*, and it literally means "fifty." Pentecost was fifty days after the Jewish feast of the Passover (Leviticus 23:15-16). It was also called the ingathering of the first fruits (Exodus 23:16; 34:22). Christ became our sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26), our lamb (1 Peter 1:19), when He was slain on Passover (John 13:1). Fifty days later was the Feast of Pentecost, and when Peter finished preaching, three thousand first fruits were gathered in, or saved (Acts 2:41). It is a type and an antitype.

Acts 2:2-3 states: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind [there is the '**whirlwind**'], and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire [there is the '**fire**']." The "**whirlwind**" and "**fire**" of our text correlates with this fulfillment in Acts, Chapter 2. Luke penned these words in Acts, letting us know that this wind and fire appeared on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 33. Our text, particularly **verses 4-5**, gives a description of the Day of Pentecost. Why did God use the symbol of a "**whirlwind**"? The Hebrew word is *carah*, which comes from the root word *caar*. According to *Strong's Concordance* and *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, it means "to rush upon; to toss." What is it designed "to toss"? When you think of a "**whirlwind**," or a "rushing mighty wind," you think of something that moves things from their current position. It rearranges. Think of a tornado. When a tornado comes, it picks up a house, often moving it from one location to another. It moves houses off their foundations, changing their positions radically.

The "**whirlwind**," this "rushing mighty wind," was designed to move things from their current position, to rearrange. One definition of *carah*, this word used in **Ezekiel 1:4**, is "a hurricane." Hurricanes move the water about drastically and have a severe impact on the sea. Scripturally, who is the sea? Isaiah 57:20 states, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest [it is continuous; they are in perpetual motion], whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Water represents "the wicked." What was the predominate spiritual condition when this new dispensation, the New Testament period of time, was ushered in? What was the spiritual position of men when Christ graced the shores of this time world? That spiritual condition is what we are seeing portrayed when we read in **Ezekiel 1:4** that "**a whirlwind came out of the north.**"

Job 37:9 speaks of "cold [coming] out of the north." This lets us know the spiritual condition when Christ came to institute this New Testament dispensation was a very cold time. Christ ushered in a new day; it was a day dawn. Second Peter 1:19 describes it "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." When Christ graced the shores of time, it was "a dark place." The time between the Prophet Malachi and John the Baptizer was four hundred and thirty-four years. There had been no public message from God during those years; thus, the people "sat in darkness" (Matthew 4:16).

Galatians 3:22 describes the conditions under the Old Testament dispensation, under the old

Levitical law, saying, "But the scripture [referring to Old Testament Scripture] hath concluded all under sin." There was no deliverance from sin under the Old Testament. Hebrews 10:1-2 tells us: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices [the ones under the old Levitical law] which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?" If they had been adequate sacrifices, the people would not have needed to offer them every year. But under the old economy, every year they had a Day of Atonement when sacrifice was made for sin. The priest offered it for himself as well as for the people (Hebrews 9:7-10). It could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), but it satisfied God. Because they did that in faith, believing, looking forward to Him who was to come, they were put in a justified state. However, even though they were in a justified state during that Old Testament economy, regeneration was not possible. Their sins could not be taken away. Hebrews 10:4 says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Look at the prophetic passage of Daniel's seventy weeks. We read in Daniel 9:24, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people." Both Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 give the reckoning, or the delineation, of prophetic time: "each day for a year." Therefore, those seventy weeks, given seven days in a week, equal four hundred and ninety days. "Each day for a year" (prophetic time) means four hundred and ninety years. Daniel was speaking prophetically of four hundred and ninety years when he said, "Seventy weeks are determined [the Hebrew word is *chathak*, and it means 'to cut off']." God was revealing to Daniel that after four hundred and ninety years, old Israel (after the flesh) was going to be cut off. Daniel 10:2 says, "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks." Daniel understood what the prophecy meant, and he mourned for his people.

The four hundred and ninety years are broken into different segments. Daniel 9:25 tells us, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks [that seven weeks, times seven days in a week, is forty-nine; each day for a year makes it forty-nine years], and threescore and two weeks [a score is twenty; three score is sixty; three score and two is sixty-two]." In this prophecy, Daniel spoke of what would occur under the other segments. In verse 25, he told of what would occur under the "seven weeks," and in verse 27, he spoke of what would occur in the "one week," representing seven years.

When Daniel spoke of the "threescore and two weeks" (sixty-two weeks), the biggest segment of these years, nothing was mentioned. Those sixty-two prophetic weeks times seven days per week equals four hundred and thirty-four. Each day for a year lets us know this is four hundred and thirty-four years, the time between the last Old Testament prophet, Malachi, and when John the Baptizer came to prepare the way of the Lord. During that time, no public message was being preached. There were no prophets—only silence. Because of that, old Israel was in a cold, dry, dark place. (For a more complete treatment of this prophecy of the seventy weeks, see my book entitled *Daniel and Revelation Texts Examined*.) In Isaiah, Chapter 53, which is a messianic prophecy, verse 1 says, "Who hath believed our report?" What is the "report"? In Romans 10:16, Paul quoted this verse when he said: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias [Greek for the Hebrew Isaiah] saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"

The "report" is "the gospel." I might just clarify: many people say they believe, but according to this verse, you do not *believe* unless you *obey*. In Isaiah 53:1, the prophet posed a question, asking, "Who hath believed our report [the gospel' (Romans 10:16); then, he posed a second question]? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" The second question is answered by the first question. The "arm of the LORD" is only revealed to those who believe the report, or to those who have "obeyed the gospel."

Isaiah 53:2 says, "For he [The arm of the LORD] is a 'he,' a personal pronoun is employed. This 'arm' is the One who brings victory; Psalm 98:1. 'The victory' comes 'through our Lord Jesus Christ'; 1 Corinthians 15:57. Christ is the One bringing victory, and the route to victory is revealed to everyone who will obey the Gospel.] shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." After four hundred and thirty-four years of not hearing a public message, they were spiritually cold, "a dry ground," and in darkness. Matthew 4:16 confirms this, saying, "The people [the Israelite tribes; Matthew 4:13], which sat in darkness"

The Spiritual Condition When Christ Instituted the New Covenant

Matthew 4:14-16 tells us, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias [quoting Isaiah 9:1-2], the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." The light "sprung up" from that time when Jesus began to preach (Matthew 4:17). That is how the light "sprung up." Until that time, the people were in darkness; they were "in the region and shadow of death." It was a dark hour. This "**whirlwind [which] came out of the north**" depicts the spiritual condition (the spiritual climate) when Christ instituted this new covenant. Matthew 15:9 states, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

As we go through Ezekiel and see the pictures that are portrayed typically, we will find that religion today is in much the same state as it was when Jesus came in the first century. Ecclesiastes 1:9 says, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be . . . there is no new thing under the sun." Jesus let the people know their worship was vain. People today are under such a deceptive spirit. Many are saying, "Well, if it is religious, it must be good." Not according to Jesus, not in the light of the Judgment, not in the light of eternity. The people in Matthew, Chapter 15, were actively engaged in the practice of worship, but Jesus denounced their worship as "vain." We also read Jesus' words in Matthew 23:2-4, where He declared: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat [they were in the place of authority, in leadership roles]: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not [they were full of hypocrisy, and much of religion today is full of hypocrisy]. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." They do not do as they say.

I was born and raised in Kentucky, the second largest tobacco-producing state in the union. It seemed like everybody smoked. When I was in the fifth grade, my teacher began talking to the class about tobacco and how young we were and how we should not use tobacco. One day, during recess or lunch, I was walking by the teachers' lounge, and who do you think I saw in there smoking? Well, being the young, fifth-grade genius that I was, I did not have any better sense than to confront her. I said, "I thought you told us not to smoke, but I saw you in there smoking." Her answer to me was, "Do as I say, not as I do."

People follow examples. That is why we are to be an example, especially parents. There is a poem entitled *Children Learn What They Live*. If children live with criticism, they learn to criticize; if they live with negativism, they learn to be negative; if they live with a liar, they learn to lie. They learn what they live. That is why we are to be examples.

Jesus reproved these hypocrites. He said in Matthew 23:27, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." On the exterior, they looked "whited," but they were only whitewashed. They appeared beautiful, but inside they were "full of dead men's bones,"—no life. Hypocrisy was running rampant! That was the spiritual condition

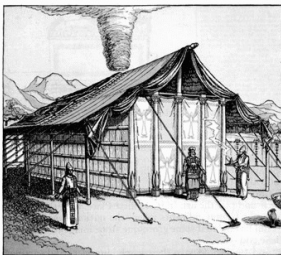
when Jesus graced the shores of time. The spiritual condition was indeed very cold. The people were in a deplorable condition.

The "**whirlwind**" coming "**out of the north**" reveals at least two things: (1) the spiritual condition that it was coming into was cold, dry, and dark; and (2) this was not a natural occurrence; it is portraying a picture of a divine act, something supernatural. This is a portrayal of the presence of God moving on the scene. Whirlwinds are associated with the presence of God. When the Lord came to take Elijah home to Heaven, 2 Kings 2:1 says, "And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven [how?] by a *whirlwind* [it is commonly taught he went in a chariot of fire, but it was by a whirlwind]"

Whirlwinds are associated with the presence of God.

Second Kings 2:11-12 tells us: "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; [What was the purpose of the 'chariot of fire' and the 'horses of fire'? Elisha had asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elijah told Elisha if he saw him taken up, then he would get his request. As they were walking, suddenly a 'chariot of fire' and 'horses of fire' came right down between them. Would you think that might be distracting? Not for Elisha. He kept his eyes right on Elijah. He did not let the chariot or the horses distract him.] and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it." Elisha received what he requested: a double portion.

The "**whirlwind**" is a picture of God moving on the scene. It is a picture of the presence of God intervening in the affairs of men and rearranging the current circumstances. It portrays a divine act. Job 38:1 states, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind." We read in Job 40:6, "Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind." The "**whirlwind**" is a divine intervention in the situation of man. This is what the event was on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 33. It was a divine act. The presence of God moved on the scene. We previously have found that a "**whirlwind**" tosses, rearranges, and changes things. That is exactly what happened to the religious landscape when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. It changed and rearranged everything.



The Cloud Over the Tabernacle

Ezekiel 1:4 confirms this "**whirlwind**" and "**fire**" represent God's presence, the Spirit of God. It tells us, "**And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself.**" A cloud is spoken of in many other places in the Bible, but let us go back to Exodus, Chapter 40. Moses built everything according to the pattern shown to him in the mount concerning the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 40:16). Then Exodus 40:33-38 says: "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD [the cloud is the glory of the Lord] filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."

When Solomon was dedicating the temple, we read in 2 Chronicles 5:13-14: "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one [what a picture of unity], to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the

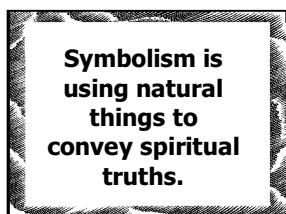
LORD had filled the house of God."

The "**cloud**" represents the glory, or the presence of God. Let us come up to the New Testament. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Matthew recorded in Matthew 17:2, "And was transfigured before them: and his face [the face of Jesus; verse 1] did shine as the sun." Verse 3 says that "there appeared unto them Moses and Elias [Greek for the Hebrew Elijah]." Then verse 5 says, "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son." The voice was God the Father. Where was He? In "the cloud." Thus, the "**cloud**" denotes the presence of God.

The Day of Pentecost Produced "Four Living Creatures"

What about the "**fire**" in our text? Acts 2:2-4 reads: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind [a '**whirlwind**'] . . . And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The "**fire**" represents the Holy Spirit. Revelation 4:5 tells us, "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." The "**fire**" is the Spirit of God. The "seven Spirits of God" this verse is talking about is the "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4) working throughout the seven periods that comprise this Christian dispensation, which are "seven days, in the day" (Isaiah 30:26).

The "**fire**" (the Spirit of God) is a great cure for a cold condition (the spiritual climate when the Holy Spirit came on the scene). This presence on the Day of Pentecost, according to **Ezekiel 1:4**, had "**a brightness . . . about it.**" It was a brilliant light. The strength of a new day began to shine. What was produced out of this "**whirlwind**"? What came out of this "**fire**"? What did the Holy Spirit produce on the Day of Pentecost? We read in **Ezekiel 1:5**, "**Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures.**" Ezekiel described these as coming "**out of the midst,**" referring us back to **verse 4**. The "**four living creatures**" came out of this "**whirlwind,**" out of this "**fire,**" representing that much promised day of the advent of the presence of God through the Person of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.



The Day of Pentecost produced the "**four living creatures.**" Keep in mind, we are receiving a symbolic picture. There have never been and never will be literal creatures such as those being described in Ezekiel, Chapter 1, because Ezekiel was relating a vision. A vision speaks in symbolic terms, figurative expressions; it uses natural things to convey spiritual truths. The Bible is replete with symbolism, and the language of visions is symbolic. To understand what these "**four living creatures**" are, look again at **Ezekiel 1:5**, which says: "**Also out of the midst thereof [this was produced by the Spirit of God on the Day of Pentecost] came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.**" The "**four living creatures**" represent a specific people.

The expression "living creature" (singular) is employed five times in the Book of Ezekiel, and the term "**living creatures**" (plural) is employed nine times. To understand what they represent, remember, when they appeared, they came "**out of the midst thereof**" (**verse 5**) of the "**fire**" (**verse 4**), representing the Holy Ghost. Thus, the Holy Ghost produced these "**living creatures.**" When did this take place? Why were they described as "**living**"? Where did this life come from? Romans 8:10 says, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life." Spiritual life resides in the spirit. What was the condition of man before Christ ushered in the new covenant? In Romans, Chapter 7, Paul described his condition under the old Levitical law.

We read in Romans 7:24-8:2: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death [that is the condition he was in under the Old Testament]? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . There is therefore *now* [in the new dispensation, the New Testament] 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." Under the Old Testament, they were under the law of sin and death. The law "concluded all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. All they could do was to be considered as in a justified state, but they could not live victorious lives as we are privileged to do under the New Testament. But when Jesus came, He told them in John 16:7, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away [to Calvary and then ultimately to Heaven; John 16:27-28], the Comforter [the Holy Ghost; John 14:26] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

When Jesus Christ, the "High Priest of our profession" (Hebrews 3:1), ascended to Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit. We see this in a symbolic picture in Revelation 8:3 and 5, which say: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer [He performed the role of the high priest]; . . . And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire [the Holy Spirit] of the altar, and cast it into the earth ['earthen vessels'; 2 Corinthians 4:7]: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." This is a symbolic picture of the Day of Pentecost.

When was the Holy Ghost sent? On the Day of Pentecost. Because the "Spirit is life" (Romans 8:10), those who were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) are made "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Second Corinthians 3:6 tells us that "the spirit giveth life." Where did these "**living creatures**" get their life? They came right out of the "**fire**"; they received life from the Holy Spirit. Thus, we know this is a New Testament prophecy because this life was not available under the Old Testament dispensation. Why are they called "**creatures**"? Second Corinthians 5:17 states, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says "new creation." They are referred to as "**living creatures**" because of the work Christ does in this New Testament dispensation through the Holy Ghost, making ones new and "**living.**"

Hebrews 10:20 says, "By a new and living way, which he [speaking of Jesus; verse 19] hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Jesus brought in "a new and living way." Ephesians 4:24 tells us, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The "**living creatures**" are new creatures in Christ Jesus. They have engaged in "a new and living way." They are created "in righteousness and true holiness." "The spirit of holiness" (Romans 1:4) produces a holiness people. When we are recreated, when we become new creatures ("**living creatures**") by the spirit of holiness, we are a holiness people.

Ezekiel 1:10 gives a detailed description of these "**four living creatures**," saying, "**As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.**" Where else do we see these "**living creatures**" mentioned and described? Remember, for every unclear, obscure portion of God's eternal Word, by placing "precept upon precept, line upon line, . . . here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:13), by letting the Spirit of God "mate" the Scriptures up (Isaiah 34:16), there is a Scripture that brings light and understanding.

Where else in the Bible do we see these "**living creatures**" mentioned and described? We read in Revelation 4:6-7: "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts [The Greek word is *zoon*. *The Nestle Greek Text* does not say four beasts; it says 'living creatures.'] full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast [living creature] was like a lion, and the second beast [living creature]

like a calf, and the third beast [living creature] had a face as a man, and the fourth beast [living creature] was like a flying eagle." These **"four living creatures"** live in the presence of God. They were right "before the throne," or in His presence. We found in **Ezekiel 1:4** what produced these **"living creatures"** was the presence of God, or the Spirit of God. Here we see that they abide in His presence.

The "Four Living Creatures" Are the Redeemed of All Ages

Revelation 5:8 tells us, "And when he [the 'Lamb as it has been slain' (verse 6), which is Jesus; John 1:29] had taken the book, the four beasts [the Greek says 'living creatures'] and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, [You do not have to wait for the eternal realm to have a harp to praise God. When you become a new creature, you have an instrument of praise.] and golden vials full of odours [the Greek says 'incense'], which are the prayers of saints." If the **"four living creatures"** had the "vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints," then the **"living creatures"** are "the saints." Revelation 5:9 tells us that "they sung a new song." They are the only group of people who can sing a new song.

Psalm 40:2-3 reads: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay [salvation will bring you *up* and *out*], and set my feet upon a rock ['Christ'; 1 Corinthians 10:4], and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth." Psalm 98:1 tells us, "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm [Jesus; Isaiah 53:1-2], hath gotten him the victory [1 Corinthians 15:57]." When Jesus Christ gives you the victory, you have a new song, a song holy angels cannot sing. It is a song of victory. Only a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17) can sing the new song.

Revelation 5:9 states, "They sung a new song, saying, Thou [Jesus] are worthy to take the book [the Word of God], and to open the seals [The Holy Spirit is the seal; Ephesians 1:13. Christ is looses the Holy Spirit to bring an understanding of the Word of God to you, but He can only do that when you are a new creature. When you become a new man, you get a new song.] thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us." These **"four living creatures"** are the redeemed (the saints) of all ages. Pentecost produced the saints. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). When that happened, they started praising God. When you get full of the Holy Ghost, you will give God some praise. There will be some **"fire"**; there will be some "wind" stirring things up. Our worship services need stirred up with some "wind" and **"fire."** They began to praise God, and the rest of Acts 2:4 tells us they "began to speak with other tongues."

Some say that means they were speaking in an *unknown* tongue, but the word "*unknown*" is not used anywhere in Acts, Chapter 2. When you read 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14, you will notice everywhere that word "*unknown*" is used, it is in italics, meaning it is not in the original Greek. It was inserted by the translators to try to bring clarity. Sadly, the devil has taken what was meant to bring clarity and made great confusion out of it. Yet, 1 Corinthians 14:33 says, "For God is not the author of confusion." Other renderings of Acts 2:4 say "other languages." Acts 2:6 states, "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." This was not some unknown jibber jabber. Acts 2:8 tells us, "And how hear we every man in our tongue, wherein we were born?" Then, about seventeen different nationalities, or ethnicities, are listed. When the true Bible gift of tongues, or languages, is working, you do not need an interpreter. There was no interpreter on the Day of Pentecost. "Every man heard them speak in his own language." They were not speaking seventeen different languages, but they heard in seventeen different languages. That is how the Bible gift of tongues works.

Acts 2:14-18 reads: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, [For Peter to wait for the other

eleven to say something first, there had to be a definite change of his nature by the Holy Ghost. Peter's nature was to always be the first one to speak.] lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day [nine a.m.]. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [quoting Joel 2:28-29]; And it shall come to pass in the last days [Biblically, the last day commenced right here, beginning in A.D. 33], saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit."

On the Day of Pentecost, God poured out His Spirit, and Peter preached. When Peter finished preaching, Acts 2:37 says, "Now when they heard this, [Man still has to hear something. God still chooses the foolishness of preaching. The Gospel is still 'the power of God unto salvation'; Romans 1:16.] they were pricked in their heart, [Too often people are not pricked in their hearts because they are not hearing anything. When the true Gospel, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, is preached and poured out, it will still prick hearts today. The true Gospel is not a social gospel, but it is 'the power of God unto salvation.' Peter put out some solid doctrine. It was 'hail and fire mingled with blood' (Revelation 8:7). Hail (solid rain) is doctrine (Deuteronomy 32:2). Thus, it was solid doctrine. Those hailstones started hitting the people.] and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 2:38 says, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized [He was not talking about water baptism, but that 'one baptism' Ephesians 4:5 talks about and which Romans, Chapter 6, tells us we are 'baptized into his death' (verse 3) and resurrected 'in his likeness' (verse 5). Notice what this baptism brings.] . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Verse 41 says that "the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Here is a portrayal of the **"living creatures"** coming out of the **"fire"** on the Day of Pentecost. These **"living creatures"** are not celestial (or angelic) beings. Ezekiel 1:12 tells us, "And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went." These were a Spirit-led people. Ezekiel 1:20 says, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went." We read in Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." These **"living creatures"** are a picture of "the sons of God," a picture of the saints, of the redeemed of all the ages.

The Old Testament Brethren

Some may ask: "If these are the redeemed of all the ages, but they did not appear until they came out of the **'whirlwind'** and the **'fire'** on the Day of Pentecost, what about the Old Testament brethren? Where are they in these **'four living creatures'**?" Hebrews, Chapter 11, is known many times as Faith's Who's Who or Faith's Hall of Fame. The author started back with the first family in verse 4 (Abel) and brought us all the way down through the annals of the Old Testament. We read in Hebrews 11:39-40: "And these all [all these Old Testament brethren; verses 4-38], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they [the Old Testament brethren] without us [the New Testament brethren] should not be made perfect [the Greek word is *teleios*, and it means 'complete']." Verse 39 says that they "received not the promise." Prior to His Ascension, Jesus told us what the promise was. Luke 24:49 says, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Evidently, "the promise" is the "power."

Acts 1:4-5 and 8 read: "And, being assembled together with them [speaking of Christ and His disciples], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise

of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. . . . But ye shall receive power, [when?] after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The promise was the power, and the power was the Holy Ghost. The promise, the Holy Ghost, came on the Day of Pentecost. People are so confused with Acts 1:5, which speaks of being "baptized with the Holy Ghost," thinking that it is a second definite work of grace, or some think that it is receiving the gift of tongues, or speaking in some unknown tongue.

The Bible is very clear concerning what being baptized with the Holy Ghost actually is. In Acts, Chapter 11, Peter explained to the brethren what happened when he went down to the house of a Gentile (Cornelius). He told them in Acts 11:12-18: "And the spirit bade me go with them [the 'three men'; verse 11], nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me [he was wise; he took witnesses], and we entered into the man's house: And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house *shall be saved*. [Some advocate that Cornelius was already saved, that he already had New Testament salvation, and when Peter came down, he was sanctified, or filled with the Spirit, baptized with the Spirit—a second definite work of grace. That is not what he said. Cornelius said that the angel said Peter would 'tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.'] And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning [the Day of Pentecost]. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost [or this passage shows us that it is being 'saved'; verse 14]. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles [what is the gift?] granted *repentance unto life*."

Being "baptized with the Holy Ghost" is being "saved," being "granted life" through the personality and indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. That experience was not available to the Old Testament brethren. Again, Hebrews 11:39 says that they "received not the promise" (the Holy Ghost). The promise was the power that the Holy Spirit brings. That was not available under the old economy. Hebrews 12:23 speaks of "the spirits of *just* men." Those under the Old Testament dispensation were justified when they performed the tenets of the law in faith, believing in Him who was to come. It was counted as justification. They were put in a justified state, a legal declaration before God. The blood of bulls and goats did not take away their sins, but they were justified (they were just men), but they were not made perfect.

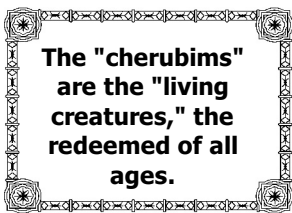
That Greek word for "perfect" is *teleioo*, and it means "complete." They were not complete. Therefore, when Jesus died on Calvary's tree, what did He do? Hebrews 9:15 tells us, "And for this cause he [Christ; verse 14] is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under *the first testament* . . ." When He shed His blood, Hebrews 9:14 tells us, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself." When Christ offered Himself on Calvary, He first redeemed those who were "under the first testament." Christ took those men who had been justified by faith and made them complete, or perfect, by taking their sin away. Thus, they were redeemed.

Under the old economy, those Old Testament sacrifices had a "remembrance . . . of sins every year" (Hebrews 10:3). On that Day of Atonement, when "the high priest" "offered [the blood of the sacrifice] for himself and the errors of the people" (Hebrews 9:7), it brought a year's reprieve. This was done right up to where, in essence, they were rolled right up to the foot of the Cross. When Jesus shed His blood, their "transgressions" were atoned for first. These Old Testament brethren "received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:39) during their lifetime. With Christ's atoning

work on Calvary, these "just men [were] made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23), or complete, and on the Day of Pentecost, when the church was formally instituted, they were brought into the church. Obviously, on the Day of Pentecost, the New Testament brethren were inducted by the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The New Testament church, according to Hebrews 12:23, is referred to as "the general assembly and church." Notice that "church" is in the singular, but it is referred to as "the general assembly." Most states have a general assembly, or a legislature, that is comprised of two chambers: the house and the senate. When the house is in session, you say the house is in session; when the senate is in session, you say the senate is in session; but when they meet together, they are referred to as the general assembly.

The church is made up of a "general assembly." When Christ offered Himself on Calvary, He first redeemed those under the first testament (those "just men," the Old Testament brethren who had received not the promise). He made them perfect, or complete, and on the Day of Pentecost, when Christ instituted His church, He brought them in. That is the "general assembly" consisting of the Old Testament brethren and the New Testament brethren. The place of the Old Testament brethren, as far as the "**living creatures**" are concerned, is part of the morning time because their redemption was not affected until that time. They were not privileged to have this New Testament experience of salvation in their day. They were made complete by Christ and His atoning work.



We read in 1 Peter 1:10, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." They did not have this grace. It was not available because a testament is of no force until the testator dies (Hebrews 9:16-17). The New Testament and its redemption were not in force until Jesus signed His testament with His blood. These "**four living creatures**" portray the redeemed of all ages. These "**living creatures**" are also called cherubims and seraphims, which many people commonly teach to be angels; but they are not angels at all. Ezekiel 10:15 reads: "And the cherubims [the Hebrew word means 'the living ones'] were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar." The "cherubims" are the "**living creatures**," the redeemed of all ages. Thus, the cherubims are the redeemed of all ages.

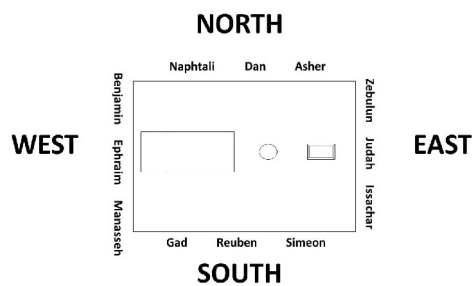
Characteristics of the Redeemed

As we study concerning these "**four living creatures**," we find denoted in our text the characteristics of the redeemed. These "**creatures**" are not celestial nor angelic beings. Angels cannot praise God for salvation. They are not creatures of choice. They have never had a choice. Revelation 4:7-8 gives a description of these "**creatures**," saying: "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts [the Greek says 'living creatures'] had each of them six wings." This is important as it helps us identify some other creatures mentioned in the Scriptures. Isaiah 6:1-2 states: "In the year that king Uzziah died [758 B.C.] I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings."

In Isaiah 6:2 and 6, these six-winged creatures are called "seraphims," but in the Revelation they are called "beasts" (or the Greek offers it as "living creatures"). These "seraphims" are not celestial beings. A very common misconception is that when the Scriptures speak of "seraphims" or "cherubims," they are speaking of angelic beings. However, this is not so. They are clearly

associated with the **"living creatures"** spoken of in both Ezekiel and the Revelation (which represent the redeemed of all ages). Ezekiel 10:15 says: "And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar." This expressly tells us that "cherubims" are the **"living creatures."** The expression **"four living creatures" (verse 5)** was employed for two reasons: one prophetic and one practical. First, let us consider the prophetic aspect. When old Israel (the favored people of God under the Old Testament dispensation) encamped, the twelve tribes were divided into four major divisions, and each was comprised of three tribes.

Much of the prophetic imagery and the imagery in the Revelation is drawn from the old Hebrew economy (the Old Testament). Numbers 2:1-2 tells us, "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch." We read in Numbers 2:17, "Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp: [God told them when it was time to camp by using the pillar of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to guide them (Exodus 40:36-38). When they encamped, the tent that served as the tabernacle was put right in the midst of the camp.] as they encamp, so shall they set forward, every man in his place by their standards." When the twelve tribes of Israel broke into four divisions and camped, the tabernacle of God was right in their midst. God has always wanted to be in the midst of His people. Under the old economy, as close as He could get to the people was inside that tabernacle.



Numbers 2:3 tells us, "And on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch." In addition to Judah, the eastern division included "the tribe of Issachar" (Numbers 2:5) and "the tribe of Zebulun" (Numbers 2:7). Verse 10 tells us that, "On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben." The south side included the tribes of Reuben, Simeon (Numbers 2:12), and Gad (Numbers 2:14). The west side was "the standard of the camp of Ephraim" (Numbers 2:18), which also

included "the tribe of Manasseh" (Numbers 2:20) and "the tribe of Benjamin" (Numbers 2:22). The last side is the north side, which is composed of the tribes of Dan (Numbers 2:25), Asher (Numbers 2:27), and Naphtali (Numbers 2:29). Thus, the twelve tribes broke into four divisions, and they camped on all four sides: the east, the south, the west, and the north.

The word "standard" in this context was an emblem or an insignia. We would call it a flag. Every division in the military today has their own flag. The artillery does not have the same flag as the armored division. The infantry has another flag. Paratroopers, or the airborne division, have another flag. That is how one can tell them apart. When Israel put up each flag (that insignia or standard), then each camp knew where they were to assemble.

Look at the insignias used for those four major divisions.



THE LION: Numbers 2:3 says that "on the east side . . . shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah." When Jacob, or Israel, was giving his final blessing and benediction to his twelve sons who became the progenitors of the twelve tribes, we read in Genesis 49:9, "Judah is a lion's whelp." The insignia of those three tribes that camped on the east side (Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun) was a lion. Both Ezekiel and Revelation tell us that one face of the **"four living creatures"** was a lion.

A MAN: Numbers 2:10 says, "On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben." That insignia was a man. Jacob's prophecy tells of Reuben acting as a natural man demonstrated by his natural, selfish passions. This will all take on greater significance as we study. When Jacob talked about Reuben, Genesis 49:3-4 tells us: "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it; he went up to my couch." What did Reuben do? We read in Genesis 35:22, "And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine." Reuben acted like a natural man. He acted upon his natural passions. Thus, the insignia of the camp of Reuben (which also included Simeon and Gad) was a man.



A CALF: Numbers 2:18 says, "On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim." What was the standard of the camp of Ephraim? In his final blessing, Moses referred to them as a bullock. Deuteronomy 33:16-17 says: "And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph [Joseph was the father of Ephraim], and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim." Ephraim was likened to a bullock. Thus, their insignia of the camp of Ephraim (which also included Manasseh and Benjamin) was a calf.



AN EAGLE: Numbers 2:25 speaks of the standard of the camp of Dan. This emblem was an eagle.

As Hebrews, both Ezekiel and the Apostle John were very familiar with these four emblems and these four divisions (composed of the twelve tribes that represented all of Israel, the complete people of God in the Old Testament dispensation). The employment of these "**four living creatures**" let Ezekiel and John know they represented the four divisions (or all the tribes of Israel, all God's people) under the Old Testament. However, Ezekiel and John were not seeing them under the time setting of the Old Testament. They were seeing them portrayed in the New Testament dispensation, revealing a full and successful transition from the old economy to the new economy. Old Israel was God's people under the old covenant, but they repeatedly violated that covenant. That is why they were carried away captive. Speaking of Jesus, John 1:11 says, "He came unto his own [the Israelite nation, the Jewish people], and his own received him not."

These "**four living creatures**," or these four different insignias, represented all of God's people under the old economy. Seeing them in a vision, representing the institution of the church on the Day of Pentecost (a New Testament setting), lets us know God made a complete and full transition from the old to the new. Just as God had a people under the old covenant, He has a people under the new covenant. Just like those "**four living creatures**" with their insignias represented all God's people under the Old Testament, they represent all God's people in the New Testament as well.

"The Twelve Tribes Which Are Scattered Abroad"

James, the pastor in Jerusalem and brother of our Lord, wrote in James 1:1, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting." Who were "the twelve tribes . . . scattered abroad" to whom James was alluding? This is a New Testament Epistle. Under this new economy, who are "the twelve tribes"? Many false teachings

have been generated from this thought, but James wrote to "the twelve tribes which are *scattered abroad*." Who was scattered? We read in Acts 8:1: "And Saul was consenting unto his [Stephen's] death. [That is a very malignant expression. Acts, Chapter 7, tells of Stephen being stoned. A man could not be executed lawfully without a judicial order. Saul was a Jewish member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews of the day. He gave the execution order, or the sentence, for Stephen's death.] And at that time there was a great persecution against *the church* which was at Jerusalem [where James pastored]; and they were all *scattered abroad*."

When James, under divine inspiration, took pen in hand and wrote to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," he was writing to "the church." "The twelve tribes" are symbolic of the church. Just as the twelve tribes under the Old Testament represented all the people of God under the old economy, the church represents all God's people under the new economy. They are referred to symbolically as "the twelve tribes."

Revelation 7:4 reads, "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand [a multiple of twelve, which Biblically is a number of completeness] of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Revelation 7:5-8 gives the description listing the twelve tribes and twelve thousand out of each tribe, again, letting us know that there has been a complete and successful transition from the old economy to the new economy. Do not listen to preachers who say God has special favor for old Israel. Old Israel must come the same way everybody else comes. There is no more "Jew nor Greek" (Galatians 3:28). God will not have a special favor for one group of people. Dispensationalists are rife in their teachings that Christ is going to come back riding a white horse; the blood is going to run up to the horse's bridle; there is going to be a battle of Armageddon; and then Christ is going to rebuild the temple, assume the throne of David, and usher in the Kingdom of God. That is quite a story, but there is not an ounce of truth in any of it! Let us stick with God's Word.

"An hundred and forty four thousand" is a multiple of twelve, which Biblically is a number of completeness.

Jesus let us know that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Corinthians 10:4). He is not coming back to fight in a literal battle. The battle of Armageddon is not a literal battle. According to Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost in Acts, Chapter 2, Christ has already assumed David's throne (verse 30). Luke 16:16 reads, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." The kingdom is not some *coming* reality, but it is a *present* reality.

In Revelation 7:4, all twelve tribes are described as "all the tribes of the children of Israel." This is a symbolic portrayal of a complete and successful transition from the old economy to the new. Jesus said in Matthew 21:43, "Therefore say I unto you [the leaders of Judaism; Matthew 21:23], The kingdom of God shall be taken from you [old Judaism], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." What are "the fruits" Jesus is interested in? Matthew 3:7-8 tells us: "But when he [John the Baptizer] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, . . . Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." God is interested in a people who want to change their ways, change the direction of their lives. That is what "repentance" is.

Matthew 21:44 tells what repentance consists of. It says, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone [Jesus Christ; Acts 4:10-11] shall be broken." Psalm 51:17 tells us, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Jesus was letting them know that the Kingdom of God was not for some literal nation, for a people who had a literal lineage, or a literal birth. No, the Kingdom of God was going to be taken from them. It was going to be taken from having a literal measurement to becoming a spiritual kingdom with a spiritual measurement that consists of bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance."

The Kingdom of God Is an Experience, Not a Locality

When you come in old-time Bible repentance, when you are under conviction for your sins and you are sin-sick, wanting to change the direction of your life, you will come with "a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart," and you will fall down before the stone, Jesus Christ. That is when you receive a kingdom experience. The kingdom is an experience, not a locality. We read in Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God *is* [Not the kingdom of God *is going to be*, future tense. Many people talk about the kingdom to come. When does the kingdom come? Jesus described the elements necessary for how and when a kingdom experience comes to an individual in Matthew 6:10, saying, 'Thy kingdom come.' How and when does this occur? 'Thy will be done.' His will is that we get saved; 1 Timothy 2:4. That is when the kingdom comes into a heart and life.] not meat and drink; [It is not literal, nor temporal. The Kingdom of God has been a present reality since John came and began to herald it; Luke 16:16.] but righteousness, and peace, and joy [spiritual attributes] in the Holy Ghost."

This kingdom is a spiritual experience. You receive a kingdom experience when you serve Christ (Romans 14:28). It is not a literal kingdom. Luke 17:20-21 states: "And when he [Jesus] was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come [the same question that many in false religion ask today], he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [it is not something you are going to see with the literal eye]: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, low there [the Kingdom of God will not come down with observation and land over in Palestine, Salt Lake City, Pasadena, or some other place]! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

It is a spiritual kingdom, a spiritual experience. In the inaugural message of His public ministry, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus set down the basic tenets of the new economy. Matthew 6:9 says, "After this manner therefore pray ye: [He was not giving the exact words to pray, because verse 7 says 'when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do.' Yet, people call this 'The Lord's Prayer.' (The Lord's Prayer is in John, Chapter 17.) This is the formula of prayer, telling us the principles that should be employed when we pray. These are the truths needed to have a successful prayer life.] Our Father [Unless you are born again, you cannot pray because He is not your Father. Praying is reserved to those who have been born again and are His children and have a pure heart. Psalm 66:18 says, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' The only prayer God hears from a sinner is a prayer of repentance. Also, John 9:31 tells us that 'God heareth not sinners.'] which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. [When does it come? How does it come?] Thy will be done [it is God's will that all men be saved; 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4] in earth [not *on* earth, but *in* earth]."

The Scriptures refer to man as the "earth." In Jeremiah 22:29, the prophet cried, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." This is not referring to the terrestrial earth but to man. Second Corinthians 4:7 tells us that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels," or as 2 Corinthians 5:1 speaks of it, "our earthly house of this tabernacle." The kingdom comes when God's will (being saved) is done in our "earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). When you come in old-time repentance, with "a broken and a contrite spirit," it enables His will to be done. It enables you to be saved. Second Corinthians 5:17 reads, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." We read in Galatians 6:15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision." We are done with physical measurements. The new measurement is spiritual: "a new creature." When you "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," come with "a broken and a contrite spirit," fall on the stone Jesus Christ, and let His will (salvation) be done in your earthen vessel, then the kingdom comes. The Holy Spirit brings righteousness, peace, and joy, and you become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 6:16 tells us, "And as many as walk according to this rule [being 'a new creature'; verse 15], peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." This new nation that Jesus said He was going to give the kingdom to (Matthew 21:43) is the New Testament "Israel of God." Those who walk according to "this rule" are "new creatures"; they are the "Israel of God."

Genesis is where the name "Israel" was first introduced in the Bible. Jacob, whose name means "supplanter, or trickster," lived up to his name. He tricked Esau out of the birthright (Genesis 25:29-34) and out of the blessing (Genesis 27:18-29). Afterwards, Jacob heard Esau was threatening to kill him. So, Jacob fled to his mother's people (Genesis 27:41-43). Years later, Jacob returned, but he was fearful of what would happen when he met his brother Esau. Jacob went alone to a place of prayer, and Genesis 32:24 tells us he "wrestled" with "a man." That is a typical picture of old-fashioned conviction. The "man" asked Jacob, "What is thy name?" (verse 27). Confession with the mouth needed to be made. After confession, we see a typical portrayal of conversion. Verse 28 reads, "And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob [or trickster], but Israel: for as a prince hast thou . . . prevailed." The word "Israel" means "prince," or "power with God." Who has power with God today? It is the "new creatures."

A transition was made with Jesus. It is necessary to understand this in order to understand the **"four living creatures."** Romans 2:28-29 reads: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." It is now a spiritual measurement. Matthew, Chapter 1, goes through all the various genealogies, and then verse 17 says, "So all the generations [plural] from Abraham to David are fourteen generations [plural]; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations [plural]; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations [plural]."

All the way through this Old Testament genealogy, it is "generations" [plural], but Matthew 1:1 begins, "The book of the generation [singular] of Jesus Christ" All the way from the beginning, it was measured in literal generations, literal lineage, literal birth, but once Jesus Christ came, it is just all *one* generation. We read in Isaiah 53:8, "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation [singular]?" This entire Gospel Day has been spiritually all part of one "generation"—"the generation of Jesus Christ." It is no longer a physical measurement.

Second Corinthians 5:16-17 tells us: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh [the Old Testament was all after the flesh—a literal lineage, literal birth, literal circumcision, literal external performances]: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more [we are not even following a literal Christ]. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." I know people use verse 17 to speak about their personal salvation experience, but read it in its context. He was talking about old things under the old covenant (the old economy, the Old Testament) are passed away; they are done away with. We are in a new economy, a New Testament, a new covenant, with a new generation and a new measurement that is a spiritual, not a literal, measurement.

Verse 10 of our text sets forth the likenesses of these **"four living creatures"** (**"the face of a man," "the face of a lion," "the face of an ox," and "the face of an eagle"**). Those likenesses were readily known to Ezekiel. He realized they represented the four divisions by which Israel camped (all of God's people under the old economy). Yet, because he was not seeing them under the old economy, Pentecost (a result of what the Spirit of God produced) revealed that there was a complete and full transition from an old Israel to a new Israel, from an old way to "a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20).

That is the prophetic aspect. There is a practical aspect portrayed as well. We will consider

that more in our next segment. These four descriptive pictures here in **Ezekiel 1:10** and in Revelation 4:7 describe and reveal the nature (or the characteristics) the redeemed have had to manifest throughout the various portions of this New Testament dispensation. Through this Gospel Day, conditions have altered periodically. These representations reveal the attributes and characteristics the redeemed have had to manifest in the various portions that comprise this Gospel Day.

I trust we can see that this text is a prophetic portrayal of the Day of Pentecost. It depicts what the Spirit of God produced: a people. It still takes the Spirit of God to produce a people. A preacher cannot produce a people; a system cannot produce a people. If they are going to be in this "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20), they must come through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit produced new life on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit produced the church. When you rightly divide the Word of Truth, you learn that the church is not an *organization* but a living, breathing *organism*. Paul called it the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27). This "new and living way" is occupied by the "**four living creatures**" (the redeemed of all ages).

The working of the Holy Spirit produced the "**living creatures**," and that is the same way men are redeemed yet today. Their natures are changed (2 Peter 1:4), and they become new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). The redemptive work that Christ wrought on Calvary is implemented by the Holy Spirit. It takes the Holy Spirit to produce new life, to make a person a new creature, to give you a new song. To truly become one of the "**living creatures**" takes more than signing a card, shaking a preacher's hand, joining some organization that calls itself a church, or being dipped, sprinkled, or even baptized. It takes redemption through Jesus Christ and a working of His Spirit in your life.

NOTES:

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REDEEMED

Ezekiel 1:4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

5 Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

In this chapter, we will look more closely at the "four living creatures" (Ezekiel 1:5), as the descriptions of them depict the characteristics of the redeemed. There are many parallels between the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation. In Ezekiel 1:1 Ezekiel said, "I was among the captives," and in Revelation 1:9 John wrote, "I . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos." In essence, they were both captives. Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 1:1 that "the heavens were opened," and John wrote in Revelation 4:1 that "a door was opened in heaven." In Ezekiel 1:1 Ezekiel proclaimed, "I saw visions of God [or one rendering says 'visions *from* God']," and in Revelation 9:17 John penned, "I saw the horses in the vision." Both told the purpose of the visions: Ezekiel 1:3 says, "The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel," and in Revelation 1:9 John said that he "was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God." When receiving the vision, Ezekiel said that he "fell upon my face, and I heard a voice" (Ezekiel 1:28), and John said that he "fell at his feet as dead" (Revelation 1:17) and that he "heard behind me a great voice" (Revelation 1:10).

The vision John received on the isle of Patmos is denoted in Isaiah 29:11 as "the vision of all." It was a vision of this entire Gospel Day, or the Christian dispensation. In 2 Corinthians 6:2 the Apostle Paul wrote, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)" This entire Christian dispensation is denoted as "the day of salvation." Sometimes it is referred to as the Gospel Day. Romans 1:16 tells us what enables people to enjoy this "salvation"

is "the gospel of Christ." The vision John was given was a picture taking in all the Gospel Day. Many of the prophets received a portion of the vision, and in their portion, many times, they received more detail. Although the prophets received visions that normally did not include the entire Gospel Day, as we study Ezekiel, we find his writings do. John wrote in Revelation, Chapters 4 and 5, of the "four beasts [living creatures]," but he did not give near the explicit detail found in Ezekiel. That is why we are told in Isaiah 28:13 to go "here a little, and there a little," to lay "line upon line" and "precept upon precept," to let the Spirit of God mate the Scriptures up (Isaiah 34:16) so that we can get a clear picture of the truths being conveyed to us.

As we study, we must ever be mindful of at least two of the distinct rules of a prophetic study. One is we must always recognize the nature of prophetic language is symbolic. Sadly, this is where much confusion is generated, but God does not desire people to be confused (1 Corinthians 14:33). He never sent His Word to be a source of confusion. The reason it has become a source of confusion is because people are not rightly dividing it. That takes the Spirit of God, and many who are attempting to teach the Scriptures do not possess the Spirit of God. The Apostle Paul wrote expressly in Romans 8:6-7: "For to be carnally minded is death; . . . Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." It is not "subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man [the unregenerate man] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The Spirit of God is the One who inspired the writers to set the Scriptures down, and to understand that which God intended to convey, in order to get the truth the writers incorporated within the passages, we must have the same Spirit the writers were moved by. Natural man, unregenerate man, cannot rightly divide the Scriptures because they do not have a spiritual mind. They do not possess the Holy Spirit. But thank God for those who do. We read in 1 Corinthians 2:10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The Spirit of God desires to give us the understanding and a revelation of precious truth.

Another rule of prophetic study to also keep in mind is the prophetic time setting of each passage. This portion of Ezekiel's vision is a prophetic portrayal of Pentecost. (The previous chapter covers this in greater detail.)

The "Four Living Creatures" Correlate With the Four Epochs of the Gospel Day

FOUR MAIN EPOCHS OF THE GOSPEL DAY

- The Morning Time
- The Dark Ages
- The Cloudy Day
- The Evening Time

As we examine the description provided in **verse 10** of our text, we find that these expressions have an epochal correlation to the four main epochs of the Gospel Day: the morning time (which is what we are studying in particular now), the Dark Ages (the time when the sun went down at noon for a period of about twelve hundred and sixty years), the cloudy day (a time when there was a mixture of light and darkness, of truth and error), and the evening time. These "**four living creatures**" correlate with these four epochs, or segments, of the Gospel Day. They reveal the character of the redeemed during these

various portions of the Gospel Day. God's people have had to manifest different characteristics and different attributes according to the predominant condition of the day. Every part of the Gospel Day has not been the same. There have been various challenges throughout various portions, and God's people have had to manifest different characteristics. It is important to understand that there is some overlap in these "**living creatures**" and the necessary characteris-

tics they manifested in the various portions of the Gospel Day.



The description in **Ezekiel 1:10** gives no particular order in the sense of first, second, third, and fourth. Therefore, we must go "here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:13). Although Ezekiel does not give a specific order in this chapter, we find the revelator gave a greater insight as to their placement in the Gospel Day. Revelation 4:7 reads, "And the first beast [the Greek says 'living creature'] was like a lion, and the second beast ['living creature'] like a calf, and the third beast ['living creature'] had a face as a man, and the fourth beast ['living creature'] was like a flying eagle." John designated them as: "first," "second," "third," and "fourth." Again, this reveals the characteristics and the order in which those characteristics were displayed through the Gospel Day. The first "was like a lion." This was the nature, or the characteristic, that predominated at the commencement of this Gospel Day.

Somewhere in the proximity of 397 B.C., the Prophet Malachi picked up the prophetic glass, looked down through the telescope of time, and said in Malachi 4:1-2: "For, behold, the day cometh, [That was future tense. It was not for Malachi's day. He was not speaking of his present day or time. He was envisioning another day, the New Testament dispensation.] that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise."

Malachi described "the day that cometh" as the day when "the Sun of righteousness" would appear on the stage of action. Notice the word "Sun." Science tells us that the literal sun is nothing more than a brilliant star. Look at the words of Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:19. They read, "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, [Between Malachi the prophet and John the Baptizer was 434 years. During that time, man did not hear a public message from God. It was 'a dark place' spiritually. When Christ came on the scene, beginning His public ministry, it was 'a dark place.'] until the day dawn, and the day star arise [Jesus is 'the bright and morning star'; Revelation 22:16]."

The First Characteristic: "Like a Lion"

When Jesus graced the shores of time through His Incarnation, a new day dawned. Matthew 4:16 says, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them . . . light is sprung up." When does the "light" (the sun) rise? In the morning. When the sun arises, it begins a new day. When Christ came on the scene, a new day commenced: the day of salvation, this Gospel Day. This day dawned because of Jesus Christ. Revelation 5:5 styles Him as "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." When Christ ushered in this new day, He came as a "Lion." When He began to shine, Romans 8:29 tells us, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed [*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says 'to be copies'] to the image of his Son."

God's people are "to be copies" of Jesus Christ. In John 14:8 Phillip said to Jesus, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus said in verse 9, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In John 10:30, Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." A true child of God who is walking in the light God has given him can say about himself (in essence, the same thing Jesus said): "If you have seen me, you have seen Christ." A true saint is conformed to His image (is made a copy). Many people think you cannot live that way, saying, "That is too high." In reality, everything else is too low.

Christ was "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." Thus, the morning-time saints were conformed to that image of Christ. It was a people who were made righteous through the New Testament experience brought to them by the Holy Ghost. First John 3:7 tells us, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he [Christ] is righteous." Second Corinthians 5:21 reads, "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us." That is why on Calvary's tree, when the earth was darkened, Jesus uttered those words, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? . . . My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). God will not fellowship sin. He would not fellowship it in His own Son, and He certainly will not have fellowship with those living sinful lives today. When Christ assumed the sin of the world, God had to turn His back on Him because God will not fellowship sin.

Do not listen to preachers who say you can live in sin and be right with God. You cannot! Salvation *eliminates* sin. That is the point of being saved. Matthew 1:21 says that "he shall save his people *from* [not in] their sins." Look again at 2 Corinthians 5:21, which reads, "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Why is that important? We are identifying the characteristics of the redeemed, and the very first one that the revelator enumerated was "like a lion." Proverbs 28:1 reads, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." So righteousness is required before an individual can be "bold as a lion." Real salvation can give you a boldness. In the first epoch of this Gospel Day, God's people were bold. When they received a real experience of salvation, were conformed to His image, and became "righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7), they were bold.

We read in Acts 4:31, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." Let us look at Revelation, Chapter 6. (Bear in mind as we step into the Revelation, the word "signifies" in Revelation 1:1 reveals the nature of the language of the Revelation. That word in the Greek is *semaino*, which means "revealed by signs." *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a *sign* as "a symbol." Also, Revelation 9:17 tells us John was receiving a "vision." Thus, it was in symbolic language.) In Revelation 6:2, when the first seal was opened, we read, "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

Let us look at a few symbols to bring understanding. What did the horses in this vision represent? We read in Zechariah 10:3, "Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle." A horse represents militancy, letting us know that this is picturing something militant. That is why they "went forth conquering, and to conquer." They were militant.

What does the color "white" denote? Zechariah 6:1-5 states: "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, [He was receiving a vision. He saw four different types of horses. Both Revelation, Chapter 6, and Zechariah, Chapter 6, describe four types of horses.] . . . In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot grised and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens." These are religious spirits. The color denotes what *type* of spirit it is. What does white represent? Revelation 19:8 reads, "And to her [the Lamb's wife; verse 7] was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." White denotes righteousness, purity, holiness. The white horse in Revelation 6:2 denotes the Holy Spirit, which in the morning time of this Gospel Day was a militant spirit. The morning-time church was out for the conquest of the souls of men, and they were suc-

cessful because they were very militant; they were very bold.

Look at when the Apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin (the supreme court of the Jews of that day). The Sanhedrin said to them in Acts 5:28, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." God's people were militant. They were out to conquer every soul they could with the precious truth of God's Word. That is still a characteristic we, as the saints of God, need to have today. We need to be more militant, working to win the souls of people lost in sin and those out in the confusion of false religion. The leading of the Holy Ghost made them bold as a lion. We need to be more bold. The devil is bold.

Acts 17:6 reads, "And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." The world was already "upside down." They were just turning it right side up. They affected the entire world. In fact, Acts 19:10 tells us that "this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

The morning-time church was out for conquest! They were "bold as a lion," but they did not naturally have that boldness. They prayed for it. After being commanded not to teach any longer in the name of Christ, we read of them praying in Acts 4:29, saying, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Verse 31 tells us, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." Boldness did not come naturally. They had to pray for it, and we need to pray for it today as well. James 4:2 tells us that "ye have not, because ye ask not." Jesus said in Matthew 6:8, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." But then He said in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Although God knows what we have need of, we are still instructed to "ask."

The first beast, or living creature (delineated by the revelator as "a lion"; Revelation 4:7), represents the nature, or the characteristics, of the saints in that first epoch: the morning-time portion of the Gospel Day. Although Ezekiel did not give any enumeration as far as the first, second, third, and fourth in Chapter 1, he described them in Ezekiel 10:14, saying, "And every one had four faces: the first face was [like] the face of a cherub, and the second face was [like] the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle."

Some may wonder why that does not correlate with what Ezekiel said in Chapter 1 and with what John said in Revelation, Chapter 4. There is a very simple explanation. In Chapter 1, Ezekiel was describing what he saw as a prophetic portrayal of the outgrowth of Pentecost. Notice in **Ezekiel 1:4**, he said that he saw them coming "**out of the north.**" When you look at **verse 9** (and we will cover this in a future study), it says, "**Their wings were joined one to another.**" They were not joined end to end, but they were joined in a cube, in a four-square. On different sides of that cube were the different faces. **Ezekiel 1:4** is looking at it from "**the north.**" In Ezekiel, Chapter 10, he was looking at it from a different direction; therefore, he described them in a different order because of the different position he was in when he was viewing them. It is not contradictory at all. When the revelator envisioned them as portrayed in the throne scene, depicting eternity past, prior to the inception of the Gospel Day, he was giving a prophetic sequence of the epochs and the nature the saints would have to take on during those epochs.

The Second Characteristic: "Like a Calf"

Revelation 4:7 tells us that "the second beast [the Greek word is *zoon*, which means 'living creature'] like a calf." Our text in **Ezekiel 1:10** describes it as "**an ox.**" That is not contradictory,

for oxen have calves. What characteristic is being depicted? "A calf," or "**an ox**," was an animal offered under the Levitical law as a sacrifice (Leviticus 9:2-3; Hebrews 9:12; Exodus 20:24). Whether it is referred to as a "calf" or "**an ox**," it was a sacrificial animal. This feature represents the nature that the saints had to take on during the second epoch of this Gospel Day. It portrays the nature the redeemed manifested during the era of martyrdom. Look at the words of Jesus in John 16:2, where He said, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." During the periods of paganism and papalism, the saints took on a calf-like nature. A true saint in that period had to be willing to be a sacrifice. During those time periods, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* says that somewhere between fifty and sixty million people were martyred. They gave their lives as a sacrifice for the cause of Christ. A true saint realizes that part of a holiness experience is sacrifice.

God's people have a holiness experience. **Ezekiel 1:7** says that "**their feet were straight feet.**" "**Feet**" denotes a walk. This is a picture describing that right in their initial experience, God's people have "**straight feet.**" It begins with holiness. Jesus, "who knew no sin," became sin for us so that we could become righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21). When we trade sin for the experience of salvation, we receive a holiness experience. When we gain a genuine experience of salvation, our walk is a walk of holiness. Hebrews 12:12 reads, "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down." The hands are hanging down, but 1 Timothy 2:8 tells us the hands are supposed to be lifted up. The Hebrew writer was not merely telling them to "lift up the hands which hang down," but he was letting them know that their hands and their lives were supposed to be holy. They were supposed to live in a manner that they could approach God. In Hebrews 12:13-14 we read: "And make straight paths for your feet [there is the '**straight feet**'], lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness [this straight path for your feet represents holiness], without which no man shall see the Lord."

These verses are not talking about Christ's Second Advent, for on that day, "*every* eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7). The only way people are going to see the Lord while time is yet standing is through God's people living a life of holiness. The way we live is what reveals Christ to people. Only as we live a holy life will people get a vision of Christ. Again, Hebrews 12:13 makes this plain, stating, "And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." Some people are spiritually lame. They have trouble walking "**straight**," walking the way God's Word tells them to walk. They have trouble being faithful, being consistent. People need to see the saints have "**straight**" paths. They need to see the saints exhibiting holiness, faithfulness, and consistency, which will then (hopefully) heal them. They will see it can be done when they see God's people doing it. However, if they see one who is supposed to be a mature saint not being consistent, not walking a life of holiness, the enemy will say to them, "If they have been around for years and they cannot live straight, there is no use of you even trying." Then, those having trouble living right, the "lame," will "be turned out of the way." God's people walking with "**straight**" paths, living a life of holiness, can have a healing effect. Others can see that it can be done.

These "straight paths for your feet" are the way of holiness. Holiness must begin with holiness of the heart, but it does not end with holiness of heart. In Matthew 23:26, Jesus said to "cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter." It starts on the inside, with the heart. Ezekiel 36:26 reads, "A new heart also will I give you." It starts internally, but it does not stay internal because men cannot see your heart. When the Prophet Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint a new king for Israel, all those big, strapping sons of Jesse came by, and Samuel said, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him" (1 Samuel 16:6), but God said, "I have refused him" (verse 7). He was not the one. In verse 7, God told Samuel that "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

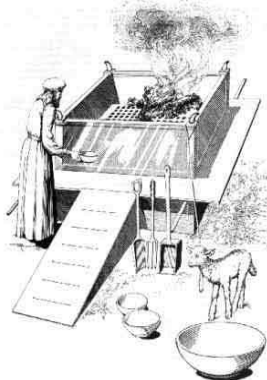
There is a truth set forth in verse 7 we need to understand. Many attempt to use that verse as an excuse to say that God is not interested in the outward. That is not what the verse is saying. God looks on the heart, but God also said that "man looketh on the outward appearance." Men cannot see our hearts. They can only see "the outward appearance." That is why Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." What comes out reveals what is inside. The external reveals what is internal. Again, Jesus said in Matthew 23:26, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." This holiness experience works from the inside to the outside. It not only begins in the heart, but it goes out, making "straight paths for your feet." When we live straight, we will walk straight. We take what is in, and we work it out.

The "Living Creatures" Had "Straight Feet"

In 2 Corinthians 7:1 we read, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting [or completing] holiness." Holiness has to be completed. It starts inside, in the heart, in the spirit, but it works out to the flesh. When one is saved, they are born again and have experienced the new birth, but there may also be some filth that needs to be cleansed. Isaiah 4:4 tells us, "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion . . ." I want you to see that these morning-time brethren had "straight paths for [their] feet." They had "**straight feet.**" They lived holy lives. That is why they were so convincing, turning the world upside down. That is how they were conquering souls. They were "bold as a lion" because they were "righteous."

Psalm 24:3-4 says: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD [Mount Zion]? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands [outward holiness], and a pure heart [inward holiness]." When our text talks about how their feet were "**straight feet**" (verse 7), it is talking about living a life of holiness. They had both facets of holiness: internal and external. There is an external part of holiness. Look at the words of the Apostle Paul to the young minister Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:9, which reads, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel."

According to *Webster's Twenty-First Century Dictionary*, the word *modest* means "avoiding self-exposure." The previous verse says, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands." The Apostle Paul was writing about holiness and that of which holiness consists. In 1 Timothy 2:10, he talked about "women professing godliness." He was letting Timothy know that part of this "godliness" is "modest apparel." The world cannot see your heart, but they can see how you dress. To be modest, your clothes need to be high enough in the neckline and low enough in the hemline to where you are not exposing yourself. They need to be long enough in the sleeves, and they need to be thick enough.



In Exodus, Chapter 28, when the priests worked at the altar, it required a lot of bending. God had them put "breeches" (several renderings say "trousers") on underneath the robes so that when they bent over, they were modest. He told them exactly how long to make those britches: "from the loins even unto the thighs [the original language says 'knees']" (Exodus 28:42). Anything above the bottom of the knee, God considers "nakedness." Remember, modesty is avoiding self-exposure. God wants us to avoid self-exposure. These "**living creatures**" had "**straight feet.**" They lived in accordance with the teachings of holiness. Salvation produces a holiness people, and holiness people do not want to put their body or themselves on display.

They practiced modesty. They display Jesus. God wants His people to be modest men and women, but especially women. I am not saying it is not important for a man to be modest, but there is another truth we must be conscious of as well. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about the danger of a man looking on a woman to lust (Matthew 5:28). Why did He not say a woman looking on a man? It is because men are much more enticed by sight than women are. God made man that way. He made man to be the aggressor, to be the progenitor of the race. That is why God put it in his nature. That is why, for the woman's safety, as well as to be a good example, God wants His people to be modest, covered.

We read in Deuteronomy 22:5, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." Some people say, "That is the Old Testament; that is just old Levitical law." No, that is a moral principle. There is a difference between what is part of the Levitical law (that which was nailed to the Cross) and that which is moral law. When the Scripture speaks of a Levitical law, it will say that it is an abomination *unto you*, but when it is speaking of a moral law, it will say that it is an abomination *unto God*. A moral principle, or moral law, does not change, because Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the LORD, I change not."

The things that were an abomination to God in bygone days are still an abomination to Him today, because His nature is not a changing nature. When Deuteronomy 22:5 says, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment," it is because God wants a definite distinction between the genders. He does not want women wearing men's apparel. Pants belong to men. I know the argument that they say they are women's pants, but they all come from women dressing like a man.

Our society did not have this problem until World War 2. Most of the men were overseas, fighting in the war, and women put on pants to work in the mills. However, that type of dressing was not in accordance with God's Word. God wants a man to dress like a man and a woman to dress like a woman. He wants a definite distinction. Some may say that their employer requires it, but an employer cannot require it if it is contrary to your religious beliefs. You just have to stand up for it and say, "I cannot dress that way." That is where some of that boldness comes into focus. I am talking about straight paths, "**straight feet**." There are many more aspects to the standard of holiness that I do not have the space to mention specifically. Although God looks on the heart, we are not trying to convince God of anything. We are trying to convince a lost-and-dying world that salvation makes a change, that you become "a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17), that the "old man is crucified" (Romans 6:6) "with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9) and resurrected a new creature in Christ Jesus living a holy life.

Notice that Ezekiel talked about these "**straight feet**" in direct succession to entering into a life of holiness. **Verse 5** says, "**Also out of the midst thereof [Pentecost] came the . . . four living creatures** ['newness of life'; Romans 6:4]." Ezekiel described these "**living creatures**" in **verse 7**, saying that "**the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot**." This is a picture of sacrifice. (Remember, a calf was a sacrificial animal.) This is shown to be the "**feet**" of all of "**the living creatures**," but it was a prominent characteristic in that epoch, represented by the second "**living creature**." When our feet are "**straight feet**," when we live a holy life, holding the holiness standard, it is going to cause some suffering and some sacrifice. It says that "**the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot**." The "**sole**" is the most tender part of the foot. If you step on a stone barefooted with "**the sole**" of your foot, it will take you down. This is a picture of suffering and sacrifice. To live a life of holiness requires some suffering and sacrifice on our part.

Each of these four characteristics has a predominant prophetic placement, but they also portray practical characteristics or attributes necessary in the life of the saints. The predominant

characteristic in that era of martyrdom was a calf-like nature, but it also is a characteristic necessary in the life of a saint today. We are to live sacrificial lives yet today. Luke 9:23 says, "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." That is where it starts. Selfishness is the root of all sin. Why do people go into sin? We read in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray." When we come to the age of accountability, "all we" (every one) go "astray." Why? Isaiah 53:6 tells us that "we have turned everyone to his own way."

Selfishness carried us into sin initially, and if we give vent to selfishness, it will carry us right back into sin. When Paul told Timothy that perilous times would come, what was the first earmark? Second Timothy 3:2 says, "For men shall be lovers of *their own selves*." When we come to Christ, the first thing we must do (and we must continually do) is to deny ourselves. Luke 9:23-24 states: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily [sacrifice], and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." If you dress differently, wear your hair differently, and lay aside worldly things, you may get some ridicule. You may get mocked and scorned. You can remove all that scorn and ridicule by giving in and going back to the worldly ways. That is what Jesus meant when He said that anyone who saves his life will lose it.

One paradox of the Gospel is that to save it, you have to lose it, and if you try to save it, you will lose it. To take up our cross daily is to lose our life. Romans 12:1 tells us, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, [The Greek word for 'bodies' is *soma*, which means 'the complete person.' To truly be what God wants, we have to surrender *all*.] holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Just as the calf was a sacrificial animal (Hebrews 9:12), we are to be "a living sacrifice." We must be willing to live a sacrificial life.

What God asks is not unreasonable. He does not ask you to give up anything that is good for you. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: [You cannot be holy and acceptable while conforming to the world. They are diametrically opposed.] but be ye transformed [real salvation will change your mind, your heart, and your life] by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove [when you get from conformation to transformation, it will 'prove' to people] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." When you "present" your body (the complete person), live in a holy manner ("not conformed" but "transformed"), you will "prove" some things. Many times my wife and I have been at the store or somewhere, and somebody walks up to us and asks, "Where do you go to church?" How did they know we go to church? It was because of the way my wife was dressed.

Let us take it a step further. Some people will dress one way to come to services, but another way at home or out in public. The church is not a building; it is a people, and God's people should dress the same way *away* from the church building as they do *at* the church building. To dress one way for the worship service and another way elsewhere is hypocritical. Paul said, "Be not conformed." We must be willing to sacrifice. I can imagine people at the judgment bar of God, and someone says, "Paul, what can you tell me?" Paul might answer: "Well, I was beaten, and I was shipwrecked. I suffered; I sacrificed. I had my head chopped off." Another might say, "Peter, how about you?" and he might answer, "I was crucified upside down." "What about you, Stephen?" and he could say, "I was stoned to death." "How about you, Sister Cucumber?" imagine her answer being, "Well, I had to wear a skirt." I think you will hang your head in shame if you tried that on the Judgment Day. Most people today do not know what sacrifice is.

The "Feet" of the "Living Creatures" Are Like Christ's Feet

In the days of paganism and papalism, God's people literally became sacrifices. Revelation 12:11, talking about the dragon (paganism), 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." They were willing to die. Revelation 13:7, speaking of the papal beast, states, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints." This beast did just that! Martyrdom was rife during that dark age. During the days of both paganism and papalism, there was extreme martyrdom, extreme suffering and sacrifice. Yet, **verse 7** of our text tells us that **"their feet . . . sparkled like the colour of burnished brass,"** or the Hebrew word means "brightly brass."

Who else do we see with **"feet"** of that type? We read in Revelation 1:15, "And his [The antecedent of that pronoun reverts you back to verse 11: 'Alpha and Omega.' Revelation 22:13 uses the same expression: 'I am Alpha and Omega,' and Revelation 22:16 tells us it is 'I Jesus.']. feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." When **verse 7** says that the **"feet"** of these **"four living creatures"** **"sparkled like the colour of burnished brass,"** it is telling us they (the redeemed) walked as Christ walked. Their **"feet"** were like His feet. We read in 1 John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

Prophetically, these various descriptions and attributes of the redeemed have epochal applications. However, Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Prophetically, these four descriptions align with the epochs of the Gospel Day. But practically, there will be times and seasons when we, as God's people, will need to manifest each of these different characteristics. There are times we will need to be "bold as a lion." I was born and raised in eastern Kentucky, and one thing they always taught us was that plain language is not misunderstood. Sometimes you have to use plain language with people. I am not speaking of being contrary and getting in the flesh, but there are times you need to pray and ask God to give you holy boldness. There are times, there are seasons, when we need to be "bold as a lion."

There are other times when we will need to be sacrificial, willing to, as Jesus said, lose our life. Christ is our example in both of these things. In John 2:15, we read where He went into the temple. "And when he had made a scourge of small cords [a whip], he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables." That was a time when Jesus was "bold as a lion." Likewise, there will be times you need to manifest this characteristic of the redeemed and be bold, when you need to stand up and speak out. I am talking about under the anointing of the Spirit in a rightful way. Then there will be times when you need to be sacrificial. John 15:13 says, "Greater love [that word in the Greek is *agape*, which means 'a commitment to the highest good of the object'] hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Put it in the language of Hebrew 9:26. It says, ". . . by the sacrifice of himself." Christ became a sacrifice, and He is our example.

First Peter 2:21 states, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." He is our example. There were seasons when He was bold, and there were seasons when He was sacrificial. "To every thing there is a season." This is where we need the Holy Ghost to reveal to us what "season" it is in our lives. Sometimes Jesus was bold and did not mince any words. There were other times when He "opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). Ecclesiastes 3:7 tells us that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." You cannot do both at the same time. So, how do you know when to do which? That is where the Holy Spirit comes in.

The Third Characteristic: "The Face of a Man"

The third characteristic of the redeemed is found in **verse 10: "the face of a man."** Revelation 4:7 gives more of a sequence, telling us that "the third beast had a face as a man." This corresponds with the portion of the Gospel Day when the saints suffered during the time of man-rule, which took place in the periods of time when papalism and Protestantism were the dominant systems. As mentioned previously, there is some overlap to these characteristics. Sometimes they had to contend with both the conditions of a calf and man-rule.

These periods of time, these epochs, are known as the Dark Ages and the dark and cloudy day. They were periods when men ruled over God's people. The Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 5:2-3: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." There have been periods of time in this Gospel Day when those in leadership roles were "lords over God's heritage." During the Dark Ages, the cry was, "Be Catholic or die," and that was enforced. The church was forced to go underground into the catacombs and caves, out of public view.

Revelation 12:6 tells us, "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." Using the delineation (measurement) of prophetic time ("each day for a year"; Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6), twelve hundred and sixty days equals twelve hundred and sixty years. Wickersham wrote the decline and division of the Roman Empire had fully occurred by A.D. 270, and the first Protestant creed was devised in A.D. 1530. If you subtract 270 from 1530, the sum is 1260 years. This was the time the woman (the church) had to go into seclusion, going underground in the catacombs and caves, because the predominant condition of the religious landscape was a dark age, a terrible time of persecution and martyrdom. Therefore, the second epoch is portrayed by the second **"living creature"**—"an ox," or calf (a sacrificial animal).

We read in Amos 8:9, "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of this Gospel Day], saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, [That should be the brightest part of the day, but Amos prophesied of a spiritual eclipse. Right in this Gospel Day, 'the day of salvation' (2 Corinthians 6:2), right when the sun should be at its zenith, when it should shine at its brightest, the sun would go down at noon.] and I will darken the earth in the clear day."

Right amid what should have been a clear day, when the Sun (Christ and the light of His Word) should have been shining its brightest, a dark age came in. This happened because men became "lords over God's heritage." Men presumed to sit in the place of God, and they still do in those systems yet today. As we study, please keep in mind that we are not against anyone, anywhere. We love *all* people, but if people are ever going to get any help, if we are going to be protected from the moves of the enemy, then we have to come to "the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). The only way for this to happen is if someone speaks the truth, and that is the role and responsibility of the pastor. Jeremiah 3:15 tells us, "And I will give you pastors . . . which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

Concerning the sun going down at noon, the prophet continued in Amos 8:11, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." That "famine" still exists yet today. If you travel around to the many religious institutions of men, you will find when it comes to declaring the whole counsel of God, there is still "a famine in the land." You can hear short stories, jokes, and political commentaries. You hear almost everything, except the Word of God. The Word of God is what God wants declared!

However, Amos' prophecy does indeed have a prophetic placement in time. We need to understand that a religious system came up during this time. Revelation 13:1 states, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up." (Remember, these are word vehicles. Both Revelation 9:17 and Ezekiel 1:1 state these were "visions of God." We must never lose sight of the fact that the language of visions is a symbolic language. Revelation 1:1 says He "sent and signified [the Greek word is *semaino*, meaning 'revealed by signs']." These portrayals are symbolic. They do not lend themselves to a literal rendition.) The words of the Apostle Paul (he spoke prophetically many times as well) give understanding concerning this "beast."

Rebellion Against Constituted Authority Gave Rise to Apostasy

Acts 20:28-30 reads: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God [this is the predominant role of the pastor], which he purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock [the church]. Also of your own selves shall men arise [Revelation 13:1 speaks of 'a beast rise up' and this verse says 'men arise,' revealing that the 'beast' was 'men'], speaking perverse things [several renderings say 'distort the truth,' and another rendering says 'deviant doctrines'], to draw away disciples after them."

When people read the word "beast" in the Scripture, many are prone to thoughts of literalism, but let us prove they are "men." Paul, when defending the doctrine of the Resurrection against its naysayers, said in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If after the manner of *men* I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" The beasts were carnal men acting on the natural, brute beast level. Romans 8:7 says that "the carnal mind . . . is not subject to the law of God." The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:1 and 10: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies . . . But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [not civil government, but God-ordained government; *The New Analytical Lexicon* says 'constituted authority']."

There are people who miss in their attendance of the services, and they rebel against the thought that they should tell the pastor where they are. The pastor is the constituted authority. He is the one who has to answer to God for his congregation. (Read Hebrews 13:17.) Some even leave congregations and never even discuss it or counsel with the pastor. They get hold of a rebellious spirit and go out. A spirit got loose back in the morning time. It was a rebellion against constituted authority. That is what gave rise to this "beast," which came up out of the sea of apostasy.

The second part of 2 Peter 2:10 says, "Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." They do not have the least compunction about going out and talking about the pastor. Second Peter 2:12 tells us, "But these [these who walk after the flesh, the false teachers and false prophets verse 1 speaks of], as natural brute beasts . . ." Peter called those who walk after the flesh, those who are presumptuous, those who despise God-ordained government, "brute beasts." False prophets and false teachers are who those "beasts" are.

Jude 4 states, "For there are certain men [ungodly men] crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, [These are men who say, 'We are all sinners; no one can live right; just do the best you can and God understands.' That is not God's Word; that is 'lasciviousness,' making an excuse for loose living.] and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

They do not deny Christ's existence, but they deny His lordship over their lives. Paul wrote

of this in Titus 1:16, stating, "They profess that they know God; [Religious deception is not effective if ones do not have a profession. If they told the truth, saying, 'I am here to lie to you and to damn your never-dying soul and deceive you,' they could deceive nobody. So, they profess they know God.] but in works they deny him [the *Amplified Bible* says 'deny and disown and renounce Him by what they do']." They deny His lordship by how they live. We read in Jude 10, "But these [these certain men; verse 4] speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts . . ." These "beasts" in the Revelation are systems of men, systems that men gave rise to. They are hideous; they are monstrosities. That is how God sees false religion because it dupes, deceives, and damns multiplied souls.

Revelation 13:1 says, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw [John was receiving what Isaiah 29:11 called 'the vision of all.' God used the panorama of the skies to give him the vision of the entire Gospel Day, or Christian dispensation.] a beast [men] rise up out of the sea." Revelation 8:8 says, "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain [the bride, the Lamb's wife, the church; Revelation 21:9-10] burning with fire [on fire with the Holy Ghost], cast into the sea." The sea represents wicked people (Isaiah 57:20). God considers the zenith of wickedness to be people who profess but will not take the truth (Psalm 50:16-17).

The sea represents people who will not take the Word. Yet, they still profess, practice, and preach a form of religion. It was out of the minds of those wicked men that this "beast" arose. Again, Revelation 8:8 says that "a great mountain [the morning-time church] burning with fire [the anointing of the Holy Ghost] was cast into the sea [it fell out of the hands of God and into the hands of wicked men, men who still professed and practiced religion]."

When a mountain burning with fire goes into the sea, two things happen: (1) the fire is extinguished; and (2) as it sinks beneath the level of the sea, it is no longer in visible view. That happened to much of what had been the morning-time church. That was the predominant condition. (Certainly, God had a people who were in the catacombs and caves.) Up out of that same sea rose this beast (Revelation 13:1), which is a system of men. What exactly is this beast that has seven heads and ten horns? What do horns represent? Daniel 8:20 tells us that Daniel saw some visions as well, stating, "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings [one rendering says 'kingdoms'] of Media and Persia."

**The ten minor kingdoms
Rome dissolved into:**

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Anglo-Saxons | 6. Lombards |
| 2. Burgundians | 7. Ostrogoths |
| 3. Franks | 8. Sueves |
| 4. Huns | 9. Vandals |
| 5. Heruli | 10. Visigoths |

Thus, horns represent kingdoms. According to the famous historian, Machiardi, Rome was comprised of ten minor kingdoms. On this beast (Revelation 13:1), the "ten horns" represent the ten minor kingdoms that comprised the Roman empire. They are historically verifiable (see box). Notice this beast also has "seven heads." Isaiah 9:6, speaking of Christ, says that "the government shall be upon his shoulder." What is on the shoulder? The head. Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18).

The head denotes government. Rome, in its pagan form, had seven distinct heads of government (see box). The same seven heads and ten horns are seen on the great red dragon in Revelation 12:3. These serve as an identifying factor, letting us know what they are representing. This dragon is a picture of the first opposing force to face the church: the pagan Roman empire. Revelation 12:11 tells us they cast that dragon down. The enemy, working through

**The seven distinct forms, or
heads, of Roman government:**

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Regal power | 5. Triumvirate |
| 2. Consular | 6. Imperial |
| 3. Decemvirate | 7. Patrician |
| 4. Military tribunes | |

the powers of paganism, was unsuccessful, but another system came up in its place that also had seven heads and ten horns, letting us know it was something Roman. We can define this even more clearly.

We read in Revelation 13:18: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." For years, whenever Rome would install of a new pope, a miter was placed on his head, declaring his supposed authority. On that miter was this Latin inscription: Vicarius Filii Dei, which



A Papal Miter

V.	5	F.	0
I.	1	I.	1
C.	100	L.	50
A.	0	I.	1
R.	0	I.	1
I.	1	D.	500
U.	5	E.	0
S.	0	I.	1
Total	112	Total	554
Grand Total (112 + 554)		666	

means "vicar of the Son of God." By giving Roman numerical expression to that Latin expression, the total is six hundred and sixty-six (see the box). That is the number of a man who bears that inscription. That is the office of the popes of Rome. One man best exemplifies, or represents, the system, Roman Catholicism.

Let us look a little further at this "man." The Apostle Paul, speaking prophetically, said in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; verse 1] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, [The Greek word is *apostasia*, the word from which our English word *apostasy* comes. Apostasy is defined as 'a defection from the truth.' That is why Paul said there would be men who would rise up of your own selves, men who were once Church of God men, men who sat under the truth.] and that man [singular] 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, shewing himself that he is God." Do the popes of Rome do that? In one ancient Roman document, the popes were revered with the Latin expression, "Dominus Deus Noster Papa." The English translation of that is "Our Lord God the Pope." As we proceed through Ezekiel, we will study some claims Roman Catholicism has made throughout history.

What produced such a system? We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work [the *Amplified Bible* says 'rebellion against constituted authority']." It was just as Peter said. This system rose up, and there was a dark age. Its zenith was one thousand years (A.D. 530-1530), and its totality was a thousand two hundred and sixty years (A.D. 270-1530). Again, during this dark age, people were subject to the popes of Rome being "lords over God's heritage." The cry was, "Be Catholic or die." Study the Spanish inquisition and other murderous occasions where the people of God were put to death. John Dowling's *History of Romanism*, page 540, says fifty million were martyred in this period. God's people had to suffer man-rule being the predominant condition in the Dark Ages.

As we progress historically, we find that another system developed. Revelation 13:11 describes it as "another beast coming up out of the earth [the minds of men; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 5:1; and Ecclesiastes 12:7]." This system was not as massive as the previous system. That is why the differentiation between sea and earth. Two-thirds of the earth is covered by water, the seas. Likewise, the move in the Dark Ages was a massive move. Revelation 13:8 tells us, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain."

Everyone, except the true saints whose names were in the Book of Life, worshiped the papal beast during that dark age. Revelation 9:7 tells us the Protestant system was also militant. It reads, "And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold [not crowns *of* gold, not real victory, but imitation: *like* gold], and their faces were as the faces of men." Who headed up those organizations in the religious system of Protestantism? Men. That was a cloudy day, a mixture of light and darkness, of truth and error. Ezekiel, Chapter 34, speaks of that period from A.D. 1530 to 1880.

Understanding of these "**four living creatures**" and why they took on different characteristics during different periods of the Gospel Day is necessary because the different attributes became the predominant attribute. During the Dark Ages, it was a fierce and cruel time of persecution and martyrdom, thus the representation of "**the face of an ox**" (**verse 10**), or "like a calf" (Revelation 4:3), as the dominant characteristic exhibits. Also, during the Dark Ages and the dark and cloudy day, another attribute became dominant: "**the face of a man.**" They were under the systems of man-rule. Ezekiel 34:12 says, "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." During the Dark Ages (a time when the sun went down at noon), there was a famine in the land of the Word of God. The Word of God was chained to the pulpit as it were; the Book was shut. There was no angel, or public ministry, depicted. No public message was sounded during that dark age. Why? The saints were underground in the catacombs and caves.

In the cloudy day, the Lord had broke forth with the light of some truth, but people failed to walk in the light of it, thus creating organizations of men. Those organizations were a mixture of light and darkness, truth and error. The system of Protestantism is still full of that today. This was a sad portion of time. Jeremiah 5:26-27 reads: "For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men [every one of these religious systems is after men]. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit [that is how they catch men—with deceptive, false doctrines, with truth mixed with error, light mixed with darkness]: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich." To see what Jeremiah was talking about, go to Revelation 18:2, which reads, "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon [or confusion] the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

The cage full of birds is Babylon, or false religion. Too many people do not want to pay the price of truth. So, they go out shopping, much as they would for cereal in a grocery store, looking until they find one that suits them. Yet, all the time not realizing they are being duped and deceived. Babylon is religious confusion. Through this part of the Gospel Day, it was the predominant condition. Thank God, that part of the Gospel Day (the Protestant Era; A.D. 1530-1880), that predominant condition, is over, but God still has a people who are in Babylon and need to hear the message of Revelation 18:4, which says, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

The Fourth Characteristic: "Like a Flying Eagle"

The fourth "**creature**," found in Revelation 4:7 and in **verse 10** of our text, is like a flying "**eagle**." This correlates with the evening time, which began in A.D. 1880. The prophet told us in Zechariah 14:7, "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Psalm 119:130 tells us light is "understanding." This evening time of the Gospel Day is a time of unprecedented understanding. It is likened to the "**eagle**" because the "**eagle**" is the only creature that can fly directly into the

face of the sun. This is a vital characteristic of those who are truly redeemed in this "evening time." They are constantly desirous of and moving toward more light. Thank God, in this "evening time," light is coming at an unprecedented pace! Look at the words of the wise man in Proverbs 4:18. He wrote, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect [a better rendering is 'complete'] day."

We are living in that complete day, the day when the sun is shining in its full strength. Where the King James Version says "the perfect day," the Septuagint says "the day be fully come [speaking about the fullness of time]." Revelation 10:7 lets us know we are in that fullness of time, reading, "But in the days [Notice that word is plural. It is not talking about something out in eternity, for there will be no 'days,' or time, in eternity. This is something taking place while time is still standing.] of the voice of the seventh angel [the ministry; Revelation 22:8-9], when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished ['completed'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*]." We are in that seventh period today, and God is finishing the mystery. Things that have been kept secret since the world began are being "completed" and made known (Matthew 13:35). We are in a day of unprecedented, brilliant light, or understanding of God's Word. We need to be desirous of and embracing more and more light. As saints of God, we should be desirous of greater understanding.

"Straight Feet" Is a Portrayal of Holiness

We have found that these "**four living creatures**" had "**straight feet**" (portraying holiness; Hebrews 12:13-14). The only way the world is going to see the Lord is through our holiness, both internal and external (Matthew 23:26). Previously, we dealt with the thought of modesty (which means "avoiding self-exposure"). Let us go a little further. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:4-6: "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."

First Corinthians 11:15 reads, "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." The covering God gave is not a bonnet, a scarf, or a hat, but it is the hair. A woman's hair is meant to be long. First Corinthians 11:14 tells us it is "a shame" for "a man [to] have long hair." Men are to cut their hair short, keeping it up off the ears and off the neck. Men are to have short hair, and women are to have long hair. God wants a definite distinction between the genders. That is why Deuteronomy 22:5 says a woman is not to wear a man's apparel and a man is not to wear a woman's apparel.

Let us look at what kind of woman wears all kinds of hair ornaments to beautify her hair and wears makeup. Second Kings 9:30 reads, "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel [not too many parents name their daughters 'Jezebel' because the name has a bad connotation to it] heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head [the *Amplified Bible* says 'beautified her head']." Jezebel came to a sorrowful end. We read in 2 Kings 9:32-33: "And he [Jehu] lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down."

According to the Bible, Jezebel (representing heathen or pagan women) is the type of woman who paints her face. There is an underlying reason. (It has even got to the place where in this perverted society in which we are in, men are doing some of the same things.) Why do people paint their faces? Why do many people color their hair? It is because they are not content with the way God made them. It shows discontent with themselves. They think they can improve on the way God made them.

First Timothy 6:6 says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Salvation brings contentment. You do not need to change how you look. There should be a contentment with how God made you. I used to have black hair. Now, I have gray, and it is working toward becoming white. That is the way God made it. Sure, I could dye it black, but the face is showing that I am not a young man anymore. We read in Jeremiah 4:30: "And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee." The Scriptures depict immoral women as those who paint their face.

Keep in mind, we are talking about "**straight feet**," or walking in a holy manner. Ezekiel 23:40-43 states: "And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabians from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, [Who does these kinds of things? Who paints their face, paints their eyes? Who wears ornaments of gold? This plainly states that it is adulteresses.] Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them?"

First Thessalonians 5:22 tells us to "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Do you want someone to mistake you for a whore? That might sound pretty plain, but that is what the Bible says. Do you want someone to take you for a lewd woman? The Word tells us it is lewd women who paint their eyes and their face and wear ornaments. We read in 1 Timothy 2:9-10: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness [Modesty is more than just dress. It includes the behavior that goes along with the dress. I have seen women with dresses that were long enough, but they did not know how to sit; they were still immodest. 'Shamefacedness' means you have enough modesty about you that you want to keep yourself covered. It is a meek, humble, and not unduly forward attitude and spirit.] and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness with good works)."

Godly women do not wear gold, pearls, or jewelry. I am giving it to you right out of God's Word. First Peter 3:1-3 states: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation [that word in the Greek is 'conduct'] of the wives [although they might not hear the Gospel preached, they see the Gospel lived in their wives]. While they behold your chaste conversation [again, 'conduct'] coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, [This is not speaking of wearing one's hair in a braid. They were interweaving gold and silver strands in their hair for the purpose of adornment.] and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel."

How are people out in the world going to be won without hearing the Word? It is by our conduct, by what they see. We read in Hebrews 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." They are going to see the Lord in our holiness. First Peter 3:4 reads, "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, [You can have Jesus in the heart, but only God sees the heart. Man looks on the outward. We have to have outward holiness so people can see Jesus; so they can see the message.] in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament [here are the ornaments God wants His people to wear] of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." It is of a great price because it is such a rarity. The "hidden man of the heart" is revealed through your "conversation" (your conduct), through taking the message, putting it on, and living it out to where people can see it. That is how we win the world.

Isaiah 3:18-23 tells us: "In that day [Isaiah employed this prophetic expression thirty-nine

times in his writing, a prophetic phrase that Biblically is speaking of the Gospel Day] the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet [the *Amplified Bible* says 'anklets'], and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon [the *Amplified Bible* says 'crescent head ornaments'], The chains, and the bracelets . . . the earrings. The rings, and nose jewels . . . The glasses [the original says 'mirrors']." These are things God said He would take away.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). God's saints do not need the world's adornments. Please do not misunderstand me. I know there are things that people do when they are in sin, and when they get saved, they cannot change it, but it is needful to understand the truth of the matter. Leviticus 19:28 reads, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD." God does not want His people to get their body tattooed. If you got tattooed while in sin, I realize it is very difficult to remove, but I want you to know what the Bible says. If the tattoo is in a place where you can cover it up (and I realize that some cannot be), I think it would be discrete to cover it up. We are talking about not letting your good being evil spoken of, about being a good representation, about not having an appearance of evil, and about revealing the hidden man of the heart to the world. To do that, there are some things we need to do.

When you get saved, you receive real contentment. You do not need all these things of the world. Psalm 149:4 says, "He will beautify the meek with salvation." You do not need all these other things to be beautiful. Why do God's people need "**straight feet**" (**Ezekiel 1:7**)? We read in Isaiah 35:8, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." We have to have "**straight feet**" to walk in the way of holiness. **Ezekiel 1:7** says, "**And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot.**" We studied that and found they were sacrificial.

Unity and Holy Ghost Leadership

Ezekiel 1:9 reads, "**Their wings were joined one to another,**" and **verse 11** says, "**Two wings of every one were joined one to another.**" This portrays unity. God wants a unity among his people. Ephesians 4:13 tells us, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [or a complete] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:15 tells us how we are going to do that. It says, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him . . ." God wants people who are born again to be brought into a unity ("into him," or into His body). Once that happens, Ephesians 4:16 says, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

He desires His people to have a unity. Ephesians 2:21-22 tells us: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." God's church is "builded together." They are a people who are "fitly framed together." God does not want His people divided up, scattered in sectarian organizations and systems of men. Romans 12:5 says, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Therefore, Ezekiel mentioned true holiness first. True holiness yearns for unity.

How did they (and how do we) stay in unity? **Verse 9** of our text says, "**They turned not when they went.**" Isaiah 30:20-21 reads: "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers [several renderings say 'teacher' in the singular, which is the Holy Ghost; John 14:26] be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall

see thy teachers [again, singular in many renderings]: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

When you are tempted to veer to either extreme (either to the right hand or to the left) off of this highway of holiness, you will hear a voice. That is why seven times we read in the Revelation, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." The Spirit is the Teacher; He is the One who tells you, "This is the way, walk ye in it." They did not go to the left or to the right, but **Ezekiel 1:9** says, "**They turned not when they went.**" Divine Holy Ghost direction produces and maintains unity. If we will listen to Him, we will not turn to the left hand or to the right hand but, as **verse 9** says, go "**every one straight forward.**" Only by listening to the Holy Spirit were they able to maintain their holiness experience and go "**straight forward.**" Thus, they stayed in unity with everyone else who had the same experience.

The expressions we have been studying in Ezekiel, Chapter 1, are depicting attributes of our experience of salvation. We read in Ezekiel 1:13, "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps ['salvation'; Isaiah 62:1]." **Ezekiel 1:11** says, "**Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward.**" They were always stretching, reaching, endeavoring to go higher, always focused on the heavenly vision. Paul testified to King Agrippa in Acts 26:19, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." In Revelation 4:1, the revelator was told, "Come up hither." He said that "a door was opened in heaven [speaking of 'heavenly places in Christ Jesus'; Ephesians 2:6]." Second Corinthians 12:1-2 tells of "the third heaven," a position where you "come to visions and revelations of the Lord." It is a spiritual position, an ecclesiastical heaven. The desire of truly spiritual people is to reach higher heights in the truth and a higher spirituality.

Last, but certainly not by any means least, the key to the success they enjoyed, the position they occupied, is found in **Ezekiel 1:12**, which says, "**And they went every one straight forward** [they maintained holiness and unity]: **whither the spirit was to go, they went.**" They followed the leadership of the Holy Ghost. This is absolutely crucial, and it also shows us how they had a continual manner of operation. Ezekiel 1:20 tells us the same things, saying, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went." In this lesson, we have a precious, prophetic picture, a symbolic representation of some characteristics of the redeemed. Prophetically, they portray the characteristics manifested throughout the four major epochs of the Gospel Day: the morning time ("**the face of a lion**"—boldness); the Dark Ages ("**face of an ox**"—sacrifice); the dark and cloudy day ("**the face of a man**"—being sustained during a period of man-rule); the evening time ("**the face of an eagle**"—soaring into the light). Again, remember, there is some substantial overlapping in the manifesting of these attributes.

Practically, we see mentioned these divine characteristics: "**straight feet**" (holiness); "**a calf's foot**" (sacrifice); "**wings were joined one to another**" (unity); and "**whither the spirit was to go**" (divine direction and Holy Ghost leadership). May God help us, as His people, to exemplify these characteristics in our experience. The only way the world is going to get a vision of Christ is through the "**living creatures**" walking with "**straight feet,**" "**like . . . a calf's foot,**" a people who can fly right into the face of the sun, and who "walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7), putting the truth on so that men can see.

"Their Wings Were Joined One to Another"

God's people comprise the redeemed of all ages. Though it may be throughout the centuries, it is still "one body" (Ephesians 4:4), or just one church. Christ said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church [singular]." This babel of confusion around us is not of God. It came from man,

and the devil is behind it. When **verse 9** speaks of "**Their wings were joined one to another,**" it is showing that the members are one of another. They compose and comprise one body. It also shows that God's order for His church is unity; it is not separation; it is not division. What kind of physical body would you be if your arm was in one place, your leg was in another place, and your ear was in yet another location? You would have trouble functioning! God's church is not functional as it ought to be when God's people are all divided up. God desires unity.

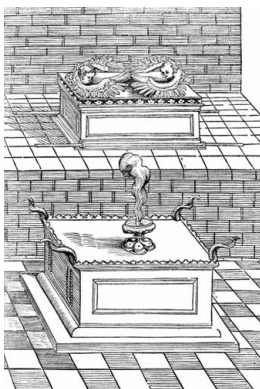
It is easy to assume **verse 9** is describing a picture of "**the four living creatures**" with "**their wings**" end to end, but that is not the case. *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* says, "The living creatures formed a square." Albert Barnes in *Barnes' Notes* wrote: "The four together formed a square. Their wings were not end to end in that sense, linear; they formed a square; they formed a cube." In these "**four living creatures**" forming a square, we actually see the institution of the New Testament church (the church is comprised of "**living creatures.**") Jesus said in Matthew 5:14: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill [or the Greek word *oros*, meaning mountain] cannot be hid."

To understand whom Jesus was calling the "city," go to Matthew 5:1-2, which reads: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them [His disciples]." The light is those who comprised the city, the disciples. Jesus used an analogy of "a city" to portray "the light of the world." How is this "city" spoken of in the Hebrew letter? The Hebrew writer, writing in the proximity of A.D. 63-69, said in Hebrews 12:22-23: "But ye are come [Not going to come, but it is present tense. I remember as a young boy out in sectarian religion, we used to sing the song, 'We are marching, marching to Zion,' but the Hebrew writer said, 'ye are *come*.'] unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly [what are all these expressions denoting different aspects of?] and church of the firstborn."

Speaking of Abraham, we read in Hebrews 11:10, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." What city is it that was built by God? Look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:18. He said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [that word in the Greek is *petros*; it means 'a piece of rock'], and upon this rock [that is a different Greek word: *petra*, which in the Greek means 'a massive rock,' like Gibraltar] I will build my church." The city "whose builder and maker is God" is the church that Jesus built. It is referred to as a city. How does the Revelation refer to it? Revelation 21:9-10 reads: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels [The Greek word is *aggelos*, and it means messenger, symbolic of a ministry; Revelation 22:8-9. He was not a celestial being, but he was one of the brethren, part of the ministry.] . . . saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife [the church]. And he carried me away in the spirit [the only way you will ever get a vision of the church] to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city." When he said, "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," he showed him a city (Revelation 21:10). That reveals the city is the same as the bride, the Lamb's wife. It represents the church.

Revelation 21:16 gives a description of the city: "And the city lieth foursquare." In our text, the "**wings**" of the "**four living creatures**" were "**joined one to another,**" and they formed a square (a cube). It is a picture of the church, or "the city [that] lieth foursquare." The city is comprised of these "**living creatures.**" Revelation 21:16 lets us know this city is a perfect cube.

"Thou art Peter"
 Petros means "**a piece of rock.**"
"Upon this rock"
 Petra means "**a massive rock.**"

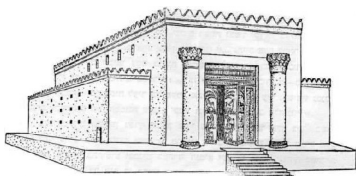


In the ancient world, the cube was a symbol of perfection. Plato and Aristotle referred to the fact that in Greece, the good man was called "foursquare." To the Greek, the perfect cube was the perfect shape. It was the same with the Jews. In the Old Testament tabernacle, the brazen altar, the golden altar, and the high priest's breastplate were all in the form of a cube. Moses was given instructions concerning how to build the various articles of furnishings for the Old Testament tabernacle in the wilderness. Concerning the brazen altar (the brass altar that was in the outer court), Exodus 27:1 says, "And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare."



That is the place where the offering was made, and it is a type (1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us those Old Testament items serve as "ensamples"; the Greek word is *typos*, which means "a type"). *Webster's Dictionary* defines a *type* as "a person, thing, or an event that represents or symbolizes another, especially another that is to come." The brazen altar was foursquare (representing perfection) because it was a type of our perfect sacrifice: Jesus Christ. Speaking about the golden altar, Exodus 30:1-2 tells us: "And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be." The golden altar is also known as the altar of incense. That is where the incense was burnt, and it wafted up into the second room where the presence of God was. God could smell that sweet incense, which represents the prayers of the saints. (There is nothing sweeter in God's nostrils than the prayers of the saints.) There is a reason that it was foursquare. You cannot live a life of Christian perfection without prayer. Prayer is essential to living in the rightful manner before God.

Exodus 28:15-16 describes the high priest's breastplate, stating: "And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet [there are truths in all those descriptions], and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled." On that breastplate were twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel (all God's people under the Old Testament dispensation). This is a perfect picture of God's people.



Solomon's Temple

Foursquare held great significance. When Solomon built his temple, the holy of holies was a perfect cube. First Kings 6:20 reads, "And the oracle [the *Amplified Bible* says 'holy of holies'] in the forepart was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold; and so covered the altar which was of cedar."

It was foursquare: "twenty cubits in breadth," "twenty cubits in the height," and "twenty cubits in length." That is where the presence of God was. Years later, when Ezekiel, in his writings and visions, described New Testament realities, he repeatedly spoke of the dimensions of the cube. Ezekiel 41:21 says, "The posts of the temple were squared, and the face of the sanctuary; the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other." Why? Because it was foursquare. We read in Ezekiel 43:16, "And the altar [the brazen altar] shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof." Again, it was foursquare. Ezekiel 45:2 tells us, "Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about."

We Are God's Workmanship

We read in Ezekiel 48:20, "All the oblation [the *Amplified Bible* says 'set apart as an offering to God'] shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare." What does this represent? Deuteronomy 32:4 states, "He is the Rock [that Rock was Christ; 1 Corinthians 10:4], his work is perfect." I could digress and tell you this world is thousands of years old. It has never slipped a gear, has never had to have an oil change, has never had to be jacked up to change a filter or put a new timing chain on it. No! It just continues to rotate on its axis. You do not hear the motor running. Why? "His work is perfect." *The Farmer's Almanac* can tell you exactly what time the sun is going to come up and go down. He is a God of precision.

Let us look at this in the vein of our study. What is "his work"? Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." We are His workmanship, and all His work is perfect. These "**four living creatures**" form a foursquare, or a cube, because they are perfect. Everyone who has a new life in Christ Jesus and possesses the Holy Spirit has Christian perfection. Many people in the religious world say that no one can live perfect. If that is so, why did Jesus say in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? He would not have said that if it was impossible, but it is possible in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is "the spirit of holiness" (Romans 1:4). He can empower us to live in a holy manner before Him.

How is God perfect? First John 1:5 says, "God is light." What is light? Psalm 119:130 reads, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Psalm 147:5 tells us, "His understanding is infinite." He is light, and when we walk in the light, or in all the understanding God has given us, we are just as perfect as He is. That is a far cry from what is being taught in the religious realm: "You sin, I sin; we are all sinners" is the common mantra. If you are still a sinner, what did you get saved *from*? If someone was drowning and I saved him, would I leave him *in* the water? No, I would get him *out* of the water. When Jesus saves someone from sin, He gets them *out* of sin. The point of being saved is getting *out* of sin.

The lesson here is that "we are his workmanship" (Ephesians 2:10). Where is this workmanship found? Psalm 50:2 says, "Out of Zion [one expression representing the church; Hebrews 12:22-23], the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." How does God shine? How does the world get a vision of God? Hebrews 12:14 tells us, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." People see the Lord (God shining) out of the perfections shown in the lives of the saints in Zion, or His church.

What kind of beauty does God give to those who are in Zion? Psalm 149:4 tells us, "For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." There is the beauty. Everyone who has this beauty of salvation has spiritual perfection. I am not speaking of human perfection. Some people's ears may stick out too far; some people's nose may be too big; and some people may stutter. There are many *human* imperfections. You will never get past those. However, Christian perfection is when God looks down on the heart and men look on the life, then they can see the image of Christ. That is Christian spiritual perfection.

The Apostle Paul, writing in 2 Corinthians 13:11, said: "Finally, brethren, farewell. *Be* perfect." This perfection is to be a constant and continual state of being. **Verse 9** of our text speaks of "**their wings**," and **verse 11** says "**two wings of every one were joined one to another.**" As they "**were joined**," they formed a connecting box, or square. That is a picture of Christian perfection. **Verse 6** says each creature "**had four faces.**" **Verse 10** tells us they are represented by different "**faces**" because those are characteristics the church has had to take on through the four major epochs of the Gospel Day.

Notice the "**faces**" were looking in different directions. This square-shaped formation allowed them to move in any direction with a forward-looking sight. Since there were "**faces**" on all four sides of this cube, regardless of the direction they were going, they were going "**straight**" because they had a face that faced each direction. Every time they moved, they were forward looking. We need to be forward looking yet today. Too many people look back, talking about the "good old days." The wise man wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:10, "Say not . . . that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." They had a forward-looking sight. That is what Jesus was talking about in Luke 9:62, when He said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." If you were to plow while looking back, what would happen to the row? As the plow turns, the row becomes crooked. When your eyes are looking back, you cannot walk straight. You cannot make straight paths for your feet.

According to **verse 9**, everyone was looking with "**forward**" sight: "**they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.**" Ezekiel employed the expression "**straight**" four times in Chapter 1. In every instance but one, the Hebrew word is *yashar*. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* lets us know that means to "go straight, right, righteously." Righteously denotes the righteous. It is a picture of a righteous people, a people with a "common salvation" (Jude 3), who are in unity and shining out Christian perfection.

How do they stay "**straight**"? How is it possible that "**they turned not**"? We read in Ezekiel 10:11, "When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went." They never got off track because they followed "the head." Who is "the head"? Ephesians 5:23 tells us that "Christ is the head of the church," and Colossians 1:18 says that "he is the head of the body, the church." What kept them from turning aside? What kept them from going astray? What kept those with "**straight feet**" able to live a holy life? It was because they followed "the head." If everyone who makes a profession of salvation would get a real experience of salvation and truly follow "the head," there would not be some forty-five thousand of supposed-Christian denominations. That came about from not following "the head." Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). He built only one. People not following "the head" built all the rest of them.

How did "the head" guide them? It was the same way He guided us. **Ezekiel 1:13** reads, "**As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps** [salvation'; Isaiah 62:1]." We are to keep our "**lamps**," or our lights, burning (Luke 12:35). How does that occur? **Verse 13** says, "**Their appearance was like burning coals of fire.**" According to Deuteronomy 4:36 and Revelation 4:5, the "**fire**" and the "**lamps**" of fire represent the Spirit of God. How do we truly gain an understanding of the Word? You can hear the Word preached, and it can be just words, but an understanding of the Word comes through the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit does not enlighten you, it is just a dead letter; it is of no benefit. It is the Spirit of God that reveals the Word of God to us so we can see the truth and incorporate it into our living.

Prior to going to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said in John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth [thy word is truth'; John 17:17]." Who is going to guide you into the Word? Who is going to give you an understanding of the Word? It is the Spirit of God. John 14:26 tells us, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." He is the One who is going to bring the Word to you. We read in Ephesians 1:17-18 that "the spirit" is the One who enlightens "the eyes of your understanding." If we are going to receive enlightenment, it is going to come through the avenue of the

Holy Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:6 tells us that the Word without the Spirit "killeth." I know people who know the Bible forward and backward. They can quote large portions of it, but they do not have the faintest idea what it truly means. It is "the spirit [that] giveth life." It is the Spirit that makes it a living Word that can minister to us, give insight and understanding.

True Holiness Yearns for Fellowship and Unity

When the Spirit of God enlightens us to the Word of God and we walk in it, this is a portrayal of our text: unity with every other saint who follows "the head." True holiness yearns for fellowship and unity. Something is wrong with someone's spirit when they do not have a desire for fellowship with God's people. Something is wrong with someone's spirit when they take an independent attitude, such as, "I do not need you; I can get along just fine without you."

The first attribute we saw in these "**living creatures**" was holiness; then we saw sacrifice (willing to be sacrificial) and then the need to have unity. Sometimes you have to be sacrificial. Sometimes you have to prefer your brother to have unity. Sometimes you have to deny yourself. True holiness yearns for fellowship. That is one reason I travel to all the fellowship meetings and camp meetings that I possibly can. I want to be with God's people. We should have a heart that desires fellowship. I am mystified by how often pastors have to encourage supposed saints to come to church services. When I got saved, I could not wait until the church doors opened.

First John 1:3 states, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." In the truest sense of the word, our fellowship is not with each other. Fellowship is divine. If I am in fellowship with the Father and with His Son and you are in fellowship with the Father and with the Son, then our fellowship meets in Heaven, and we are in fellowship with each other. That is how you can go to a revival or a camp meeting and see someone you have never met before and, in a very short time, feel you have known them all your life. You have rich fellowship because your fellowship is in Heaven and their fellowship is in Heaven, and there is where it meets.

The word "fellowship" in the Greek is the word *koinonia*. It means "sharing in common." What is it we share in common? First John 1:1-3 says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of *life*; (For the *life* was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal *life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship [or share in common with us]." That *God life* is what we share in common. When you get saved, you receive that new life and you are in fellowship, you are in unity with everyone everywhere who has that life.

There are conditions to continuing in that life. First John 1:7 tells us, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship." Our fellowship is contingent on our continuing to share that God life and walking in the understanding that God has given us. When you get saved, that is the loosest you can ever live. As you "grow in grace, and in the knowledge" (2 Peter 3:18), you are going to find that there are more things that you have to add and there are things you have to take away. There are things you have to cleanse yourself of and things you have to pick up. It is only as you walk in that understanding, or that light, that your God life and your fellowship continue.

True holiness yearns for fellowship and unity. Revelation 6:9 says, "And when he had opened the fifth seal [A.D. 1730-1880], I saw under the altar [Christ; Hebrews 13:8, 10] the souls of them." This is not speaking of the eternal portion of man. Throughout the Scriptures, people are

referred to as souls (Genesis 12:5; 46:15, 18, 22, 26). When Revelation speaks of souls under the altar, it is speaking of a people who were in subjection to Christ and who were crying out, "Avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth" (Revelation 6:10). They wanted judgment put on the Protestant beast that came "up out of the earth" (Revelation 13:11). They wanted judgment put on that system. Revelation 6:11 tells us why, stating, "And white robes [the righteousness of saints'; Revelation 19:8] were given unto every one of them." The "white robes" let us know these were a holiness people. God's people were divided by sectarian walls in that period of time. They were crying for judgment to be put on that false system of religion, which was dividing God's people up, because true holiness yearns for fellowship and unity with every other brother and sister in Christ.

When the "**four living creatures**" allowed the Spirit of God (and this is certainly a picture of those in the morning time) to enlighten them concerning the Word of God and they walked in it, there was unity. They followed the head. How did they follow the head? **Verse 12** of our text says, "**Whither the spirit was to go, they went.**" **Verse 14** tells us, "**The living creatures ran.**" First Corinthians 9:24 says to "run, that ye may obtain." We are running "the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). As we run this race, allowing the Spirit of God to enlighten our understanding concerning the Word of God and we take hold of it, it produces "**lightning.**" We read in **Ezekiel 1:14**, "**And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.**" This fulfills the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:14, where He said, "Ye are the light of the world."

Philippians 2:15-16 states: "That ye may be blameless [back to that Christian perfection] and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life." As we take hold of the Word, God gives us an understanding of the Word through the Spirit of God. As we take hold of it and walk in the light and maintain the light, showing a victorious life of holiness and being in unity with all God's people, it flashes some light out to the lost world. The Word will bring "**a flash of lightning**" to a sin-darkened world.

This "**flash of lightning**" portrays how the morning-time church, as the light of the world, was successful in their evangelization of the world. We read in Acts 8:4, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." What did that do? Acts 12:24 says, "But the word of God grew and multiplied," and Acts 17:6 says that the cry was, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." They had an impact! Acts 19:10 says, "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." They went forth, as Revelation 6:2 says, "conquering, and to conquer," and they turned the world upside down. In two years, they evangelized all of Asia. They were successful in their evangelization.

This portrayal of the "**four living creatures**" (**verse 5**), representing the redeemed of all ages, lets us know that they have shed "**lightning**" in every period of this Gospel Day. Even when the predominant condition was spiritual darkness, Bibles were chained to the pulpit, and God's people were hiding in catacombs and caves during the Dark Ages, one of the most frequent inscriptions and Scripture found written on the walls of those catacombs was, "The word of God is not bound" (2 Timothy 2:9). Although they had to go underground for a season, there was still some light. Our text is a beautiful portrayal of the institution of the church, composed of "**four living creatures**," a people who have been beautified with salvation, and because they followed the headship of Christ through the Word and the Spirit, they exemplified Christian perfection. They are foursquare, and through that perfection they "**flash . . . lightning**" that gives the world a clear vision of Christ.

When we put on the light and honest hearts see the light, they will come to the light. Jesus

said in John 3:21, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light." Honest hearts are looking for light. God's people are the light of the world. Thank God, they were the light in the morning time; they were imminently successful. Though these "**four living creatures**" have had to manifest different attributes throughout the various portions of the Gospel Day, they still were able to "**flash . . . lightning.**" If we will take hold and be the light in this evening time, I am convinced God will enable us to be successful in working with the souls of men right in this very day and time.

God's Standard Is Perfection

It is through these "**living creatures**" that the presence of Christ is conveyed. The only way the world will ever get a vision of Christ is through Christian perfection. Perfection has been God's lowest acceptable standard in any age. We realize the Old Testament brethren did not have the same experience we are privileged to enjoy today. Regeneration was not a possibility in that dispensation, but perfection was still God's requirement. How were they judged perfect? The same way we are judged perfect: by walking in the light that was available to them. Genesis 6:9 says, "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."

Noah would not have been perfect in our generations. We read in Genesis 9:20-22: "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father." Noah was immodest. He was drunk, and his nakedness was revealed. In our generations, we could not live in that manner and be perfect because we have greater light, greater understanding. However, by the light that was available to Noah in his day, God said he was "perfect." God measures perfection on light and understanding. Genesis 17:1 reads, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." It was the lowest acceptable standard of acceptance by God in any given age. Abram followed that injunction, and in his generations, he was perfect. God does not measure perfection as we human creatures measure perfection. We might look at an individual and say, "They are not perfect; they are not right." Yet, Romans 14:4 lets us know, "To his own master he [a man] standeth or falleth." We do not know the understanding that an individual may have or the opportunities that have been revealed to him. If he is walking in all the understanding he has been provided, God measures that as perfection.

Job 1:1 says, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." In Job 1:8 God testified for him to Satan, saying, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man?" Chronologically, Job is the oldest Book of the Bible (written in 2058 B.C.). Job was "perfect" in his generations, in his time. Psalm 37:37 reads, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." There must have been some perfect men. You could not "mark" them if not.

In all ages, God has had a standard of perfection. Speaking to the king of Tyrus, Ezekiel 28:15 reads, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." His state prior to "iniquity" was "perfect" (in the proximity of 588 B.C.). Let us look at the words of Jesus in Matthew, Chapter 5, when He set down the basic tenets of the new economy, the foundational truths of this New Testament dispensation, the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:48, we read, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" Perfection is to be an ongoing, perpetual state of being. Paul, writing to the "church of God" ("the saints"; 2 Corinthians 1:1), said in 2 Corinthians 13:11: "Finally, brethren, farewell.

Be perfect." He wrote to the Philippians in Philippians 3:15, "Let us therefore, as many as *be* perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Christian perfection is necessary. It was only as these "**living creatures**" were four-square that they "**ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning**" (Ezekiel 1:14). It is only as we have Christian perfection on display that the world receives light.

We read in Philippians 2:12-13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you." God works it in, and we are responsible for working it out. He puts it in, and we are responsible to put it on. That word "worketh" is a present, continual tense verb. It means "works and keeps on working." That word in the Greek is *energeo*. Our English word "energy" is derived from it, and it means "to be active, operative, energetic."

God works it in, and we work it out. How do we work it out? Philippians 2:14-16 reads: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless [Christian perfection, holiness], the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights [This is how the world is going to get '**a flash of lightning.**' When you and I are 'blameless and harmless,' we will 'shine as lights.'] in the world; Holding forth the word of life." When you put on what God puts in, you are being "blameless and harmless," and you are "holding forth the word of life" through holiness and Christian perfection.

The "**Living Creatures**" and the Cherubims Are the People of God

Ezekiel 1:14 says, "**And the living creatures ran** [we are running a race] **and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.**" Contrary to common thinking, these "**living creatures**" are not angelic beings, although that is the common assumption and teaching. Ezekiel used the Hebrew word *chayyah*, which means "animated, living beings." It is not the traditional Hebrew word used for heavenly beings. These "**living creatures**" represent a people. Ezekiel 1:6 reads, "**And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.**" They had "**the likeness of a man**" (verse 5) and "**the hands of a man**" (verse 8)—characteristics of a people—letting us know they are human creatures. Yet, these "**living creatures**" have a special quality to them.

Ezekiel 10:15 reads: "And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar." Here, the "**living creatures**" are referred to as "cherubims." Ezekiel 10:20 says, "This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims." The Hebrew word here for "cherubims" (*chaych*) means "the living ones." These cherubims are the "**living creatures**," new creatures in Christ Jesus, the redeemed, the saints, or the people of God. We need to keep this in mind.

What was the role of the cherubims throughout the Scriptures? Simply put, wherever you read of the cherubims in the Scripture, they are connected to where the presence of God is made manifest. They are portrayed as guardians of His presence. Prior to sin entering the equation, man enjoyed fellowship with the presence of God. We read in Genesis 3:8, "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Prior to sin entering in, they could enjoy the daily presence of God; but when sin entered, that fellowship was broken. They could no longer enjoy that presence. Genesis 3:8 tells us they "hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God."

Sin breaks fellowship. It removes one from being able to enjoy the presence of God. Because sin entered in, Genesis 3:24 reads, "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Here again, we find the Hebrew word *chaych* ("living ones"), which comes from the

root word meaning "brilliant appearance." They were placed "at the east." East is the source from which light comes. Man was removed from the presence of God as a consequence of his own sin, but Romans 15:13 lets us know God is "the God of hope." Before He ever expelled man from the Garden, He said that the seed of a woman would come forth and bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). He would crush the powers of the enemy under His feet and bring about the redemptive plan where man could once again enjoy fellowship and God's presence.

When God placed these "living ones" there "at the east of the garden of Eden," it caused those who were separated from God to look toward the source of light ("God is light"; 1 John 1:5). Also, Genesis 3:24 speaks of "a flaming sword." This "flaming sword" was not in the cherubim's hand. We read that it "turned every way." What is this "flaming sword"? Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword." Ephesians 6:17 tells us that "the sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God." The cherubim worked in unity with the Word of God to show man the way of light. Concerning the "flaming sword which turned every way," Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way." The Word of God leads men and women to Christ; it leads them to the light, to an experience where they can have fellowship and enjoy God's presence once again.

Who is "the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24)? Proverbs 3:18 says, "She is a tree of life." This is referring to Proverbs 3:13, which reads, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom." Thus, wisdom is "the tree of life." Who is wisdom personified? First Corinthians 1:24 reads, "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The wisdom of God is Christ. Therefore, Christ is "the tree of life." Back in Genesis 3:24, when God drove out the man (because sin brings a separation), man could no longer enjoy the presence of God. God will not fellowship sin. Yet, before He expelled the man, He gave him a messianic prophecy. God stepped on the stage of action and became the first prophet, giving Adam and Eve a messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15. He told them Jesus would come forth of the seed of a woman and bruise the serpent's head. After that, God "placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims," these "**living creatures**" who had a brilliant appearance. They were creatures of light, and they were in the east (the source of light); with them was "a flaming sword" (the Word of God) and "the way" (Jesus Christ) that enables ones to receive the Word of God and enjoy "the tree of life." This made a way for people to become "**living creatures**" and to enjoy the fellowship and presence of God once again. This passage does not say these "Cherubims" and the "sword" were to keep man *out*. It says they were "to keep the way." It was to let man know there was only one way back into fellowship with God, and that is Jesus Christ. They were guardians of the presence of God.

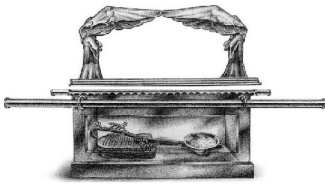
The Garden of Eden

The "Cherubims" and the "sword" were not to keep man out. Genesis 3:25 says they were "to KEEP THE WAY of the tree of life."

In Exodus, God gave Moses the instructions concerning the construction of the Old Testament tabernacle in the wilderness. Notice the specific instruction given in Exodus 25:17, which reads, "And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold." To understand what that represents, go to Romans 3:22, which reads, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Believe what? Romans 3:23-25 tells us: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says 'mercy seat']." The mercy seat is a type of Christ Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 10:11, we read, "Now all these things happened unto them [speaking of Old Testament men] for ensamples." The Greek word for "ensamples" is *tupos*, which means "a type." A type is a representation or symbol, using something present to reveal something that is to come. So it was with

much of the Old Testament.

The "mercy seat" in Exodus 25:17 was made of "pure gold." Christ, who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), had ultimate purity. Then, Exodus 25:18 says, "And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat." There is an important truth here. The same pure gold used to construct the mercy seat was also used to construct the two cherubim at each end of the mercy seat. They were all in one piece. What a picture! It is exactly as Jesus prayed in that high priestly prayer in the garden before He went to Calvary. We read in John 17:22-23, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me." There, again, is Christian perfection being brought to mind. The words "in one" reveal the unity that Christian perfection brings.



**The Cherubim
& the Mercy Seat**

The "two cherubims of gold" were "of beaten work" (Exodus 25:18). Likewise, just as Christ was beaten, just as He suffered, 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." First Peter 4:1 tells us, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." We are to be the same "beaten work" of pure "gold" as Christ. We are one with Christ. Exodus 25:20 reads, "And the cherubims [the Hebrew word means 'the living ones'] shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings." Many portraits of these cherubim at the end of the mercy seat show them kneeling. However, we find in 2 Chronicles 3:13, "The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet [they were standing, not kneeling], and their faces were inward." They were looking toward the mercy seat; they were "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2).

The Wings of the "Living Creatures" Were Joined Together and "Stretched Upward"

Exodus 25:20-22 reads: "And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another [another portrayal of unity, harmony]; toward the mercy seat [looking unto Jesus] shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony [or the tablets of stone] that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony." The presence of God was "between the two cherubims," or between the "**living creatures.**" God was manifested amongst His people.

When God said, "And there I will meet with thee" (verse 22), the Hebrew word is *shekinah*. God came in through that *shekinah* glory cloud; that cloud denoted His presence. Exodus 40:34 tells us after Moses built everything according to the pattern, as he was commanded, "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." We read in Exodus 40:37-38: "But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night." God's presence was in that cloud. When God said in Exodus 25:22, "And there will I meet with thee," where did He meet with the people? Where was the presence of God manifested? It was right "between the two cherubims." The cherubim are the guardians of God's presence. Remember, these cherubim represent the "**living creatures,**" the redeemed of all ages. It is a portrayal of the people. God never



**The
cherubim
are the
guardians
of God's
presence.**

ordained He would meet people through His angels or for His presence to be manifested through celestial beings. His desire has always been to fellowship with His people and to have His presence manifested through the lives of His people.

Ezekiel 1:15 says, "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures." The *Septuagint* (the Old Testament Scriptures in use at the First Advent of Christ) makes it a little clearer. It says that the four had each one wheel on the ground near the living creatures. We see this same truth in Ezekiel 10:9, which reads, "And when I looked [remember, he was getting a vision; this vision is symbolic], behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub ['cherub' is the singular form for cherubim]: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone." There were four cherubs (or "**living creatures**"), and each of them had a wheel on the ground. The "**living creatures**" stand upon these wheels, and with their wings joined together on the top, they actually form a foursquare canopy.

These "**four living creatures**" (a picture of the redeemed) "**were joined one to another**" (**Ezekiel 1:9**). They were not end to end but were foursquare. Each one of these "**living creatures**" had a wheel: four creatures, four wheels. **Verse 11** lets us know "**their wings were stretched upward,**" thus forming a canopy. I want you to get the picture. The foursquare forms a box: wheels on the bottom and a canopy on the top. They comprise a chariot on top of which is the presence of Christ. Ezekiel 1:22 reads, "And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal." Ezekiel was getting a clear vision of the church. When John received a vision of the church, he said it was "clear as crystal" (Revelation 21:11). Ezekiel and John the Revelator both received a crystal-clear vision of the church. I wish people had that crystal-clear vision of the church today. Through the church, the presence of God is manifested. It is through the church where we enjoy fellowship. It is through the church and the holiness and unity (Christian perfection) that the saints possess which forms a chariot to convey Christ's presence.

Notice what was being conveyed or upheld. We read in Ezekiel 1:26-28: "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake." We will cover that in greater depth in a future study, but let us get the overview. What man had that "likeness," or "appearance," of which verses 26 and 28 speak? Hebrews 1:2-3 reads, "Hath in these last days [or New Testament dispensation] spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory." His Son (Christ) is the brightness of his glory. Hebrews 1:8 states, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God"

God the Son occupies the throne, and He is the glory. When Ezekiel received a picture of "the likeness of a throne," and on that "throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man" (Ezekiel 1:26) and "of a man" that verse 28 says has "the appearance of the brightness" and "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD," it is a portrayal of Jesus Christ. He said at the end of verse 28, "And when I saw it, I fell upon my face." We also see this when John received a vision of Christ. He said in Revelation 1:17, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." He fell right on his face. Much could be said about the imagery here, but we want to glean one dominant truth. This is a prophetic portrayal of Christ. Christ is the One occupying this

particular throne. The saints, or the church, are the ones conveying the presence of Christ. They were foursquare; there were four wheels, and their wings stretched upward, forming a canopy. We read in Ezekiel 1:25, "And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads." Over their head was this "throne" (verse 26); on this throne was "a man" (God the Man, or Christ Jesus). In this manner of conveyance (wheels plus the canopy forming a chariot), they conveyed the presence of Christ.

A Vision of Christ Comes Only Through the Lives of the "Living Creatures"

If the world is ever going to get a vision of Christ, it is only going to come through the church. It is only going to come through the lives of the living ones. It is only going to be seen through us flashing lightning by conveying the presence of Christ. Christ is only seen in the Christian perfection and unity of the saints. There are several Scriptures that substantiate this. Let us go "here a little, and there a little" and "lay line upon line" and "precept upon precept" (Isaiah 28:13). First Chronicles 28:18 tells us, "And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings."

The cherubim form a chariot. The Psalmist David said in 2 Samuel 22:11, "And he [the LORD'; 2 Samuel 22:4] rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind." It is the "cherub" (the saints or the **"living creatures"**) who conveys, or transports, the presence of God. Only they can reveal Christ and His presence to the world. Second Samuel 22:13 tells us, "Through the brightness [the **'four living creatures'**; the root word means 'the brilliant ones, or brilliant appearance'] before him were coals of fire kindled." Then, we read in **Ezekiel 1:13, "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire."**

The saints revealing the presence of Christ to the world and having an experience likened to **"burning coals of fire,"** cause others to have the **"coals of fire,"** or the fire of the Holy Ghost, "kindled" in their lives. If we want the world to get the fire of the Holy Ghost "kindled" in their lives, it is going to take our spiritual brilliance, our walking in the light, our living in Christian perfection, and being joined in true unity. That is how we transport the presence of Christ in a manner that the world can see so that they might have the **"coals of fire" "kindled"** in their hearts and lives.

This is such a beautiful picture! These **"four living creatures"** (the redeemed, the saints, the church) form a foursquare (on four wheels) and have four wings (that form a canopy), which actually form a chariot to lift up Christ. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). It is through their lifting up the presence of Christ that Christ is shown to a lost world. We read in Psalm 18:10 and 12: "And he rode upon a cherub [How is He going to get there? Too often we pray, 'Lord, visit so and so; Lord, talk to so and so.' If He is going to get there to see them, God needs a cherub, a **'living creature,'** a saint to ride upon. God will visit the sick when you visit them; He will talk to them when you talk to them.] At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones [the sounding of His Word] and coals of fire [the Holy Spirit]."

These things occur when He rides "upon a cherub" (or when the saints convey the presence of Christ). The Scriptures speak of His chariots. Isaiah 66:15 says, "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind [chariots of the cherubim], to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." What are the flames of fire? How does His rebuke come? Hebrews 1:7 reads, "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." His ministry is His flames of fire. He rebukes people through His ministry. We are living in a time when people will not hardly take reproof, much less rebuke, but

it is still God's plan to rebuke the people through the ministry. In Revelation 1:14, when John received a vision of Christ (symbolic), he said, "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire."

The "flame of fire" is His ministers. The "eyes" of the church are His ministers. That is why they are called the "watchmen upon thy walls" (Isaiah 62:6). They are the eyes of the church. They see what others do not see. His ministers are in a position others are not in. God reveals to His ministry what is not revealed to others. Read Paul's admonition to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2. He said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke." Who does the rebuking? Those who "preach." The *Living Bible* makes that just a little clearer, saying, "Correct and rebuke your people when they need it." Again, Isaiah 66:15 tells us, "The LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind."

The "**four living creatures**" of **Ezekiel 1:4** came right out of the "whirlwind" produced by the Holy Spirit. Who are the chariots? How does He fly? Through the "**living creatures**" (the saints, the church). Jeremiah 4:13 reads, "Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles." Again, these "**living creatures**" came from "a whirlwind" (Ezekiel 1:4). When Ezekiel 1:26 says, "And above the firmament that was over their heads," that is where the throne was portrayed. This is a portrayal of what Isaiah saw and what Jesus said. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 6:1-2: "In the year that king Uzziah died [758 B.C.] I saw also the Lord [that word is *adonay*' meaning 'Lord, master, owner'] sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up . . . Above it stood the seraphims."

In conjunction with the presence of Christ, we find "the seraphims" (a picture of the redeemed of all ages). Isaiah saw a picture of the saints high and lifted up. Our lesson text is a beautiful portrayal of the institution of the church in A.D. 33 on the Day of Pentecost. Composed of "**four living creatures**," it is a people who have been beautified with salvation, and because they followed the headship of Christ through the Word and the Spirit, they exemplify Christian perfection: they are foursquare. It is through that perfection, as **verse 14** says, they "**flash . . . lightning**" that gives the world a clear vision of Christ. They are, as 1 Chronicles 28:18 says, "the chariot of the cherubims." I trust we can see this beautiful picture.

The questions we must ask are: Am I conveying the presence of Christ as I should? Is the world getting a clear vision of Christ through my life? Hebrews 12:14 tells us, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The only way the world is going to see the Lord is through the brightness of the truths that we have put on and the life we live out as the living ones, the "**living creatures**." The devil will tell you that you are not having any impact, you are not making any impression, but John 8:44 says that "he is a liar" and "there is no truth in him." Jesus said in Matthew 5:14, "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Wherever the chariot of the cherubim are, there is brightness, there is brilliance, there is light, and there is the enabling of a people to get a vision of Christ.

CHAPTER FIVE

A WHEEL IN THE MIDDLE OF A WHEEL

Ezekiel 1:15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.

18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

In this portion of the first vision, the Prophet Ezekiel introduced both a new scene and a new symbol. By the help of God, we want predominantly examine the expression "**a wheel in the middle of a wheel**" (verse 16). In reality, this is conveying the role of the message in the life of the saints. As we consider this text, we must never lose sight of some basic truths necessary to rightly divide this portion of Scripture text: (1) the venue that the Lord used to speak to Ezekiel (and to us by extension) was "visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1), and (2) the nature of the language of "visions" is a symbolic language.

The Book of Revelation, which has a substantial correlation to Ezekiel's prophecies, tells us that John the Revelator was receiving a "vision" (Revelation 9:17), and the nature of the language of visions (particularly this vision that John was receiving) is described in Revelation 1:1 as being "signified" (the Greek word is *semaino*, which means "revealed by signs"). *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a "sign" as "a symbol," confirming the nature of the language of visions is a symbolic language. It is needful to be constantly reminded of that because our human minds are so prone to literalism.

Many places in the Scriptures use literal objects symbolically as word vehicles to convey precious truth. Some examples are: Joseph's dream, Pharaoh's dream, Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and Daniel's visions. Another example is Peter's vision a vision in Acts 10:9-20 of unclean beasts being lowered in a sheet three times. In reality, this was symbolic of the three Gentile men who had come to see Peter, men who under Jewish law would have been considered unclean, men with whom a Jew was not to associate. God was letting Peter know he was to go with those men. Again, the nature of the language of visions is symbolic.

Previously, this chapter introduced us to "four living creatures" (Ezekiel 1:5), representative of that which comprises the church throughout the Gospel Day, the redeemed of all the ages. Ezekiel spoke of them again in verse 15, stating, "**Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.**" In this chapter, these "**living creatures**" appeared to the Prophet Ezekiel as being produced by the Spirit of God on

the Day of Pentecost (Ezekiel 1:4; Acts 2:2-4). In other words, the redeemed were produced by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost when redemption became fully available. Concerning these four **"living creatures,"** Ezekiel 10:10 tells us, "And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness," showing a singularity, a cohesiveness, a unity, and a harmony throughout the ages. Although the circumstances and the predominate conditions may have been different, the message of truth is ever the same. We find in **verse 15,** associated with each of these **"living creatures"** is a **"wheel."** We read in Ezekiel 10:9, "And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub." Each "cherub," or each of the **"living creatures,"** had a **"wheel."**

"The Appearance of the Wheels"

We must first identify what the **"wheels"** are. Notice what they do. **Ezekiel 1:15** says, **"Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth . . ."** These **"wheels"** have been brought down to where man resides (**"upon the earth"**), letting us know that there is a harmony and a connection between **"the living creatures"** and the **"wheels."** **Verse 20** tells us, **"Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go."** We read the same thing in Romans 8:16, which says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." When our text shows a harmony between **"their spirit"** and the Spirit of God, it reveals that "the Spirit . . . beareth witness." The children of God followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. Again, Ezekiel 10:16-17 reads: "And when the cherubims [the living creatures'; Ezekiel 10:15] went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them."

Again, we see a harmony, or a connection, between **"the living creatures"** and **"the wheels."** What do these **"wheels"** represent? Where else do we see the expression **"wheels"** employed? We read in Daniel 7:1, "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head." Daniel was relating what he saw. Remember, the language of visions is symbolic. Daniel 7:9 states, "I beheld [he was seeing a vision] till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." In this context, who is "the Ancient of days"?

To understand whom Daniel was describing, go to Mark 9:3. Speaking of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, it says, "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." The One whom Daniel said whose garment was "white as snow" is Christ. When John received a vision of Christ on the isle of Patmos, we read in Revelation 1:13-14: "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man [Jesus; Matthew 16:13], clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire." When we read about "white like wool" and "as white as snow," it is speaking of the Son of man: Jesus Christ. These prophetic portrayals in Daniel 7:9 were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

What is Daniel 7:9 talking about when it says that "the Ancient of days *did sit*"? Hebrews 10:12 tells us, "But this man [Jesus Christ; verse 10], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." It is talking about what Christ did after His Ascension. He "sat down on the right hand of God." Ephesians 1:20 teaches us the same thing, saying, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right

hand in the heavenly places." Ephesians 4:8 states, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Christ "ascended up on high," and when He did that, He "sat down on the right hand of God."



When He sat down, Daniel 7:9-10 reads: "His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him." The "fiery stream" is a symbolic picture of the Day of Pentecost. That "fiery stream issued" from the throne. We read in John 16:7, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." When Jesus

said "go away," John 16:28 tells us where He was going to go, saying, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." When Jesus returned to the Father, when He sat down at the right hand of the Father, then He sent the Comforter, or the "fiery stream." (Read Acts 2:1-4.) The "fiery stream" that issued forth is a picture of the Holy Spirit making His advent on the Day of Pentecost.

Daniel 7:9 says that "his wheels as burning fire." What is this a portrayal of? We already found in verse 10, the "fiery stream" represents the Holy Spirit, but what else came on that day with the Holy Spirit? Jeremiah 23:29 reads, "Is not my word like as a fire?" Acts 2:14-18 reads: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day [it was only 9 a.m.; they had not had time to get drunk yet]. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [Joel 2:28]; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

Peter said, "This is the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy." God's Word came forth as a burning fire. Not only was it prophesied in Daniel but also in Malachi 4:1-2, which reads: "For, behold, the day cometh, [This was about 397 B.C. Malachi was not speaking of his day but of a day to come: 'the day of salvation'; 2 Corinthians 6:2.] that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh [speaking of this Gospel Day, this 'day of salvation'] shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." The literal sun arises to bring a new day, and it was "the Sun of righteousness," Jesus Christ, who arose to usher in this new day, the day of salvation. Peter spoke of it in 2 Peter 1:19, saying, "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."

Revelation 22:16 tells us who the day star is, reading, "I Jesus . . . am . . . the bright and morning star." When Jesus made His Advent, a new day dawned. It was a day that would "burn as an oven" with the fire of God's Word. On the Day of Pentecost, the fire of His Word "pricked" their hearts (Acts 2:37). That was what the prophet spoke of in Daniel 7:9, when he wrote of "his wheels as burning fire." That represents the Word, the message (Jeremiah 23:29). Sadly, there is much confusion on what these "**wheels**" represent. First Corinthians 3:12-13 states: "Now if any man build upon this foundation [verse 11 tells you that is 'Jesus Christ,' and John 1:1 lets us know Christ is the Word personified; our foundation is based on the Word] gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day [the Gospel Day, this day of salvation] shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall

try every man's work of what sort it is."

As the Word goes forth in this Gospel Day, if you are building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, if you are building gold, silver, and precious stones, they will stand the fire. Gold and silver are refined by fire. They will stand the fire, but when the Word goes forth, wood, hay, and stubble (worthless things of the earth) will burn up. I had little understanding of the truth when I was first saved. I thought I needed to join an organization and get my name on man's roll book. So, I joined what they supposedly call the church, and my name was written on their roll book.

Then, when truth came along, I learned that when one is saved, the Lord writes his name in the Lamb's Book of Life (Psalm 87:5-6). When I came to an understanding of that truth, suddenly, my name on that roll book just burned up in my mind like wood, hay, and stubble. The Word consumed it. There was no truth or reality to it. When honest hearts come into contact with the truth, things in their lives that are not based on Biblical truth will be burned up. Things that are based on truth will be refined; the Word makes them purer and better, like gold, silver, and precious stones. But if it is worthless, without a Bible base, it is like wood, hay, and stubble; the fire will consume it.

If people who have just a profession and not a real possession say that they are a supposed Christian but have had no change in their life, when they get under the sound of the true Gospel, the fire will burn that wood up and leave them with nothing. It shows them where they truly are and what they need to do. That is why "Every man's work shall be revealed by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13). First Corinthians 3:15 says, "If any man's work . . . shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." When I learned my name did not need to be on a man's roll book, all the work that went into having my name placed on the book burned up with that truth, enabling me to continue my salvation. I was "saved . . . by fire," or the Word.

Jeremiah 18:1-2 tells us: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear *my words*. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on *the wheels*." The "wheels" represent "my words." In verse 3, God said He would do "a work on the wheels." The "**wheels**" are the Word, or the message. Why is it likened to a wheel? The wheel is circular and complete; it represents a whole. According to Acts 20:27, we adhere to "*all* the counsel of God." The message is a complete message. Also, these "**wheels**" convey the cherubim ("**the living creatures**"), enabling them to go forth. It is the message that enables God's people to go forth. The first two letters of the Gospel are "G" and "O"—GO! The Great Commission is to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). It is the Gospel (the Word, or "**the wheels**") that conveys us, that causes us to go.

These verses in Jeremiah in the literal Hebrew say "the two wheels," representing the message of the Old Testament and the New Testament. We read in Jeremiah 19:1-2, and 10-11: "Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee [again, Jeremiah correlated this with the Word] . . . Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people." Jeremiah used these various expressions as a representation of the Word of God. The "potter's earthen bottle" illustrates the message: "the words that I shall tell thee."

The Prophetic Description of the "Wheels"

Ezekiel 1:16 says, "**The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness.**" There were four "**wheels**," but they had "**one**

likeness"—unity, harmony, a singleness, a conveyance of the same message: the truth, the faith. Ezekiel related the same thing in Ezekiel 10:9, saying, "And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone." The **"beryl"** stone is a member of the silicate class, which is noted for its many variations of stones.

- | THE BERYL FAMILY | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Golden Beryl |
| 2. | Aquamarine Beryl |
| 3. | Bixbite Beryl |
| 4. | Emerald Beryl |
| 5. | Heliodor Beryl |
| 6. | Morganite Beryl |
| 7. | Goshenite Beryl |

The **"beryl"** family includes seven different, colorful, precious stones: (1) the golden beryl is a pure yellow; (2) the aquamarine beryl is a blue to green stone; (3) the bixbite beryl is an intense red beryl; (4) the emerald beryl is green; (5) the heliodor beryl is a light yellow to green; (6) the morganite beryl is also called "pink beryl" or "rose beryl"; and (7) the goshenite beryl is a translucent white. These seven **"beryl"** stones correspond with the seven periods that comprise this Gospel Day, or Christian dispensation. Isaiah 30:26 says, "Moreover the light of the moon [the lesser light ruled the night (Genesis 1:16; Psalm 136:9), and that lesser light is the Old Testament] shall be as

the light of the sun [the light that rules the day (Genesis 1:16; Psalm 136:8), the light that Jesus ushered in is the light of the Gospel Day, representing the New Testament], and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day."

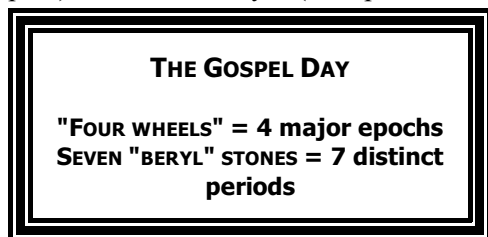
How could there be "seven days, in the day"? It is as old as the Book of Beginnings. Genesis, Chapter 1, describes the first six days of Creation. Then, Genesis 2:1-4 states: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day [singular] that the LORD God made the earth."

There were seven days, but verse 4 refers to it as "the day," one day. This was seven days "in the day." So it is prophetically. When Isaiah 30:26 says there are "seven days, in the day," it is speaking of "the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). When Christ ("the Sun of righteousness"; Malachi 4:2) came, He was the day star (2 Peter 1:19). A new day dawned, a Gospel Day, the day of salvation, and that day was broken into seven distinct periods. Just as there are seven days in a week, there are seven distinct days in this Gospel dispensation. The reason for this is because of the different, predominant conditions that occurred in each of these seven periods.

We read in Revelation 5:6, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts [or '**living creatures,**' the redeemed of all ages], and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb [Christ; John 1:29] as it had been slain [depicting His sacrificial work for the souls of mankind], having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." What do "horns" represent? Zacharias, John the Baptizer's father, prophesied in Luke 1:68-69: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed [talking about redemption] his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us." A horn represents power, just as an animal's power is in its horn. The "seven horns" represent the power of salvation.

How many salvations are there? According to Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [Jesus'; verse 10] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is only *one* horn, *one* power of salvation, and only *one* Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:4). What does Revelation 5:6 mean when it says there were "seven horns" on this Lamb (Christ) and "seven Spirits of God"? Verse 6 says the "Lamb . . . having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God [was] sent forth into all the earth." This is the redemptive plan of salvation being sent forth unto all mankind. The only way it could be sent forth to "all the earth" would be to send it forth to all the balance of human history, which at the

time the Revelation was received (A.D. 96) consisted of seven portions, or seven periods. In each of those portions, the seven horns (the power of salvation Jesus ushered in through the redemptive plan) and the seven eyes (the Spirit of God administering that plan) were working.



Ezekiel 10:9 says there are "four wheels," representing the four major epochs of the Gospel Day: the morning time, the Dark Ages, the dark and cloudy day, and the evening time. The "beryl" breaks it down further and reveals the seven distinct periods by employing a symbol that has seven distinct stones. These reveal the predominant message and conditions of the seven distinct periods

that comprise this Gospel Day. These stones depict the various attributes of the message and the characteristics manifested by the saints during the seven distinct periods of the Gospel Day. Certainly, types and symbolism can have more than one representation. For example, we can talk about the bondage of Egypt being a type of sin, and certainly, it is. We can also talk about it being a type of Babylonian bondage, and so it is. Types can have more than one representation, more than one symbolism.

Let us consider these "beryl" stones in correlation to the Gospel Day.

- (1) The golden yellow beryl corresponds to the brilliant sunlight of the morning time of the Gospel Day. "The Sun of righteousness arose" (Malachi 4:2), and "The people which sat in darkness saw great light" (Matthew 4:16). It was a brilliant day! The darkness men had been sealed in for 434 years (between Malachi and John the Baptizer) was dispelled by the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4).
- (2) The aquamarine beryl is a blue to green color, showing a transitional period. It was an uncertain color. When the church was instituted on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 33), Revelation 12:1 tells us she was "clothed with the sun." She had put on Christ (Galatians 3:27); she had put on the New Testament message. That was from A.D. 33 to A.D. 270. The second period (A.D. 270–530) was a transitional period. A decline, a spiritual darkness, was setting in. The message became unclear; there was a change.
- (3) The bixbite stone is an intense red, representing the blood of the martyrs in the Dark Ages. Some fifty million people were martyred in that time period (A.D. 530-1530). It was the zenith of the Dark Ages.
- (4) The emerald green beryl portrays the gentle mercies of God. A public message was being restored in the period known as the Lutheran era (A.D. 1530-1730), the time when there was "a great star" (Revelation 8:10). Truth began to be sounded again, the book began to be opened, and the mercies of God became a public message once again.
- (5) The heliodor beryl (a yellow to green color) shows a brighter light. This represents the Wesleyan era that began to herald the holiness message. Light became more precious during that time (A.D. 1730-1880).
- (6) The morganite stone was originally called "pink beryl." It is a translucent, transparent stone with a soft color that is not quite clear but has a pinkish hue. This portrays the first segment of the evening-time portion of the Gospel Day (A.D. 1880-1930) when the message of Revelation 18:4 was heralded: "Come out of her, my people." The message was getting clearer (translucent) in the minds of people.
- (7) The goshenite beryl (a translucent, transparent white stone) represents the seventh seal, the day and time in which we live. According to Revelation 21:11, the message now is "clear as crystal." This beryl stone was also in the high priest's breastplate, and it represented the tribe of Dan (Genesis 49:16), which was the seventh son. When Moses

received the instruction concerning the construction of the high priest's breastplate, Exodus 28:20 tells us, "And the fourth row a beryl" That corresponds with Dan, whose name means "he that judges."

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1. **THE GOLDEN BERYL — the morning time (A.D. 33-270)**
 2. **THE AQUAMARINE BERYL — a transitional period (A.D. 270-530)**
 3. **THE BIXBITE BERYL — the Dark Ages (A.D. 530-1530)**
 4. **THE EMERALD BERYL — the Lutheran era (A.D. 1530-1730)**
 5. **THE HELIODOR BERYL — the Wesleyan era (A.D. 1730-1880)**
 6. **THE MORGANITE BERYL — the 1st segment of the evening time (A.D. 1880-1930)**
 7. **THE GOSHENITE BERYL — the 2nd portion of the evening time (A.D. 1930-the End)**
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The seven beryl stones corresponding with the seven periods of the Gospel Day convey the truth of 1 Corinthians 6:2, which reads, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" How do we judge the world? I realize many people say we are not to judge, referring to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:1, which reads, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Some people think that if you just recognize fruit for what it is, that it is judging. However, Paul wrote that "the saints shall judge the world." How do we do that? What judgment do we use? What measure do we mete with? Look at the words of Jesus in John 12:48, which reads, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." What are we to judge with? "The word." The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:2, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men." What is one avenue in which we judge the world? We are living epistles. We have put the truth on, and we live the truth out. In so doing, we are judging the world, or bringing judgment to them. That is what measure we mete. The same measure we are going to be judged with is what we use to judge others—the Word of God.

The "**wheels**" (correlated with "**the living creatures**") are a picture of the message, of the Word. **Ezekiel 1:19** reads, "**And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.**" The message is what conveys us. Jesus' final words (prior to His Ascension, recorded in Matthew 28:19) read, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." Mark rendered it in Mark 16:15 as, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

The Gospel is "**the wheels.**" It propels us, compels us, and causes us to go, taking the message to a lost world. It is what causes us to have evangelistic fervor, a burden for the souls of men. It all comes back to "**the wheels,**" or the message. Without "**the wheels,**" the "**living creatures**" could go nowhere. We found in a prior study, their wings being joined one to another and being lifted up, they formed a canopy, and with "**the wheels**" on the bottom, actually forming a chariot. Above that was the presence of Christ. The church (the saints) convey the presence of Christ in this world, but without "**wheels,**" you are not going anywhere. They are vitally necessary. Again, "**the wheels**" represent the Word of God, the message we are to convey (transport) to lost mankind and to those who are confused in sectarian religion.

"**The wheels**" enable us to help people to come to a "knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Without "**wheels,**" we would be stagnated, just as the Egyptian army was in the midst of the Red Sea when their chariot wheels came off (Exodus 14:25). They were stuck. There was no further progress, and it was to their destruction. "**The wheels**" represent the Word of God. They represent the importance of the message, making sure that the message is in its rightful place so we can be conveyed by the message, so that the message transports us. It is somewhat of a paradox. The "**wheels**" convey the "**living creatures,**" and the "**living creatures**" convey the

"wheels," the message. It is the Gospel that contains that Great Commission to go, and it is that message with which we go.

"A Wheel in the Middle of a Wheel"

As we look at our text, we must remember contextually we previously found these **"living creatures"** came "out of the midst of the fire" (verse 4), which is a prophetic portrayal of Pentecost. They were produced by the Spirit of God on the Day of Pentecost. The prophet gave a description of their characteristics and attributes. In this passage, he gave a picture of the role the message plays in the life of the saints. **Ezekiel 1:15** reads, **"Now as I beheld [remember, he was receiving a vision; the language is figurative] the living creatures [the redeemed of all ages], behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces."** Ezekiel 10:9 clarifies this, stating, "The four wheels [were] by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub." Concerning these cherubs, Ezekiel 10:15 lets us know the "cherubims" are just another expression for **"the living creatures."** **Ezekiel 1:16** reads, **"The appearance of the wheels [there were four 'wheels,' just as there were four 'living creatures'] and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness [a portrayal of unity and harmony amongst the redeemed throughout the ages]: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."**

These **"wheels"** are circular, denoting completeness, denoting the whole counsel of God. They represent the Word of God, the message. Also, it is **"the wheels"** that convey or compel us to go forth. **Verse 16** says that **"as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."** This guarantees the success of the message, making the Word of God effective in every age. When people embrace the message and then put their lives right **"in the middle of,"** it makes the message effective. The message is not effective because a man preaches it. Jesus came, and He was the Word personified (John 1:1). However, John 1:11-12 states: "He came unto his own [the Jewish people], and his own received him not [the Word did not have the effect on them that God intended]. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."



How do you "believe on his name"? We read in Romans 10:13-16: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet [quoting Isaiah 52:7] of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel."

The Gospel is what is necessary for people to believe and to gain a real experience of salvation. We must understand what makes the message effective in every age and in every locality is not the minister's preaching, but the people living it. When the message is put on and lived out, that is where the effectiveness of the message lies. When people watch your life and you become the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13), men become thirsty. That is what salt does. When you make men thirsty, then they desire the water of life, and they ask questions, such as: "Why do you do what you do? Why do you live that way? Why do you dress that way?" Then you can present the water of life.

I realize there is much confusion in the realms of religion concerning these prophetic passages, but God did not send His Word to be confusing. He is not "the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). He wants us to understand these truths. We read in Philippians 2:12-16:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God [God works it in, and we work it out. The **'wheel'** is the message, the Word, and the **'wheel in the middle of the wheel'** is you and me working out what the message works in.] which worketh [That is a present and continual tense. As long as we are here on the shores of time, God is going to continue to work His Word in. Our experience is progressive and continual. The Greek word for 'worketh' is the word *energeo*, the word from which our English word *energy* is derived. God works this energy in. That word *energeo* actually means 'to be active or operative.' God is to be active and operative in our lives.] in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; [How do you shine? What is the light?] Holding forth the word of life."

What God works in is what we work out. As we work it out, we shine as lights by holding forth the Word. That is the **"wheel in the middle of a wheel."** Again, the **"wheel"** is the Word, or the message, and the **"wheel in the middle of the wheel"** is the life of the saint who has put on the message. Romans 13:12 says, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Romans 13:14 tells us we are to put "on the Lord Jesus Christ," and John 1:14 lets us know Jesus Christ "is the Word." How do we put on Christ? By His Word. Romans 13:12 calls it "the armour of light," and John 1:4 tells us what the light is, saying, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." As we put the Word on in our lives, that is how we become the light of the world. The only way the world sees Christ, the only way the world sees any light or gets any understanding at all, is through the light of God's people shining out through how they live. True pastors are particular about how the people should live because we are representatives.

Second Corinthians 5:20 says that "we are ambassadors"; we are representing our King and His kingdom. Therefore, we need to be very particular about how we represent Him. Galatians 3:27 tells us, "For as many of you as have been baptized [not talking about water baptism but of what water baptism represents: the spiritual work] into Christ have put on Christ." The morning-time church did just that, and that is why they were so eminently successful; that is how they turned the world upside down. Revelation 12:1 states, "And there appeared a great wonder [the Greek says 'sign,' which is defined as 'a symbol'] in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun." Ephesians 2:6 tells us this is "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We know this is not God's Heaven because verse 2 says that this woman was "with child."

Luke 20:35 says there is no marrying or giving in marriage in God's Heaven. If you are with child, without the benefit of marriage, you are a fornicator, and there will be no fornicators in God's Heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9). This is a symbolic portrayal of the parental phase of the church. It is showing the church as a mother being with child. Galatians 4:26 says, "But Jerusalem which is above [the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the 'church'; Hebrews 12:22-23] is free." The "Jerusalem which is above" is the mother. Revelation 12:1 is talking about the church and her parental aspect when she came forth on the Day of Pentecost. On that day, Peter preached and there were three thousand converts (Acts 2:41). He preached again, and there were five thousand more converts (Acts 4:4). A nation was born in a day (Isaiah 66:8). This "woman" was bringing forth new converts.

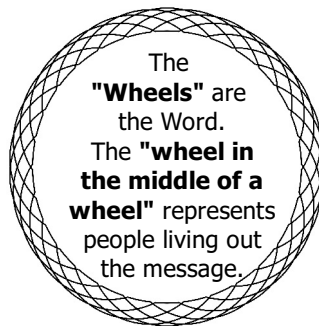
Revelation 12:1 says this woman was "clothed with the sun." Christ is "the Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2). She had "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27) by putting on the message, or the Word. By God putting it in and you putting it on, by reflecting in your life the light of God, you shine as a light. Holding forth the Word is how we shine. Revelation 12:1 continues, saying that the "woman" had "the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Every

one of God's luminary agents is found in the church. She is "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14), the **"wheel in the middle of a wheel."** The **"wheels"** represent the message, or the Word, and the **"wheel in the middle of a wheel"** is a picture of a people who have put the message right in the midst of their lives and everything revolves around it.

These people were just like Elijah. They made God's Word their word. First Kings 17:1 reads, "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor

rain these years [three years and six months'; James 5:17], but according to *my word.*" Where did Elijah get such authority? Go back to the writings of Moses, in the second giving of the law. He told the people in Deuteronomy 11:16-17: "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain."

God warned old, literal Israel what would happen if they turned to other gods. When King Ahab caused the people to turn to other gods, Elijah took faith in God's Word. He made God's Word his word. God worked it in, and Elijah worked it out. He said, in essence, "There will not be any rain until my word." He had a **"wheel in the middle of a wheel."** We can see what Ezekiel was talking about when he spoke of the **"wheel in the middle of a wheel."** It is the life of the saints (**"the living creatures"**) taking hold of the message and putting the message right in the middle of their lives to where everything revolves around it. This is what Jesus admonished in Matthew 6:33, saying, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." First Thessalonians 2:13 says, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." When you believe it is the Word of God and you receive it as such, it does an effective work in your life.



"Their Rings Were Full of Eyes"

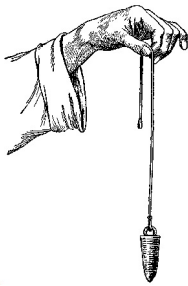
Ezekiel 1:18 says, **"As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four."** The Hebrew actually offers the word **"rings"** as their "rims." The root word is *mala*. It means "to fill, to fulfill, to overflow." Another rendering says, "The four wheels had rims, and they had spokes." Remember, the **"wheels"** represent the message, that which compels and propels the saints to go forth (Mark 16:15). Yet, **"wheels"** could not function without rims and spokes. The purpose of a rim is to hold the wheel in place, to make it functional and operational. The rim provides a form and an order. What does that do to the message? What does that mean to the lives of the saints? **Verse 18** of our text tells us, **"Their rings [or their rims] were full of eyes round about them four."** One rendering says, "Their rims were full of eyes round about." What does this represent? What are these **"eyes"**?

Zechariah 3:9 reads, "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." We are dealing with prophetic language. Who is this "one stone" (unique, singular)? Peter was preaching to the Sanhedrin (the supreme court of the Jews of that day), after he had healed the man at the gate Beautiful. He said in Acts 4:10-11: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone [quoting Psalm 118:22] which was set at nought of you build-

ers, which is become the head of the corner."

First Peter 2:3-7 states: "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming [the Lord], as unto a living stone [the stone is the Lord], disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture [Isaiah 28:16], Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone [quoting Psalm 118:22] which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner [Jesus Christ; verse 5]."

When we come back to Zechariah's prophecy (and there are many other Scriptures that certainly relate to Christ being that stone), Zechariah 3:9 says that "upon one stone [speaking of Jesus Christ] shall be seven eyes." What is the time frame of operation of this "stone"? The end of verse 9 says it will all be "in one day." That prophetic day he was talking about is described in 2 Corinthians 6:2 as "the day [singular] of salvation." That is the day that the stone, Jesus Christ, came to usher in. Again, Zechariah 3:9 tells us that "upon one stone [Jesus Christ operating in the one day, the day of salvation, this Gospel Day], shall be seven eyes." The stone (Christ) has seven eyes. We read in Zechariah 4:10: "For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth." This was something prophetically that would impact the whole of humanity, "the whole earth."



A Plumb Line

The seven eyes are the eyes of the Lord and are described to be working with "the plummet" (Zechariah 4:10). We also see this "plummet" mentioned in Amos 7:7-8, which states: "Thus he shewed me; and, behold, the LORD stood upon a wall made by a plumbline [or a plummet], with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel." What does the "wall" that was "made by a plumbline" represent? Isaiah 26:1 reads, "In that day [an expression Isaiah employed at least forty-three times in his writings, referring to this Gospel Day, the New Testament dispensation] shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city [the bride, the Lamb's wife, the church; Revelation 21:9-10]; salvation will God appoint for walls [its wall; the *Septuagint*] and bulwarks." Salvation is the wall.

Isaiah 28:17 tells us, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." To understand what he was talking about, go to Psalm 119:160, which reads, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." The "righteous judgments" are the Word. Amos talked about "a wall" (or salvation) "made by a plumbline" (or the plummet), or made by His righteous judgment (the Word of God). These "eyes" work with the Word (the plummet; Zechariah 4:10) to bring salvation to mankind, and they are what motivates and conveys **"the living creatures."**

To further understand what these "eyes" are, go to John's vision in Revelation 5:6, which states, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts [the Greek word is *zoon*, meaning living creatures], and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb [Christ; John 1:29] as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes [here is the Lamb having seven eyes, just as Zechariah saw in Zechariah 3:9], which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The Word of God is not contradictory; it is not confusing when rightly divided. There is only "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4), so what does Revelation 5:6 mean when it speaks of "the seven Spirits of God"? This Lamb had seven eyes and also seven horns. What do the horns represent? When Zacharias, the father of John the Baptizer, received his voice back, he

prophesied in Luke 1:69, "And hath raised up an horn of salvation [singular] for us in the house of his servant David." Why? Verse 71 reads, "That we should be saved."

If the "horn of salvation" is singular, why is the Lamb (Christ) portrayed with "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Revelation 5:6)? The balance of that verse says, "which are . . . sent forth into all the earth." The same thing is found in Zechariah 4:10, which states that "the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven . . . eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth [it was going to affect the whole of humanity]." John's vision of the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes is a portrayal of the Spirit of God bringing salvation to the hearts of man. They are denoted as seven (the Biblical number of completeness).

There are seven days in a week, making a complete week. When Revelation 5:6 tells us it was "sent forth into all the earth," it is revealing at that juncture in time, the balance of human history was going to be comprised of seven distinct time periods (the day of salvation). Isaiah 30:26 reads, "Moreover the light of the moon [speaking of the Old Testament] shall be as the light of the sun [the New Testament], and the light of the sun [New Testament light] shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day." We are in "the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2), but in that "day," there are "seven days." That does not differ from what took place in the Creation account. Genesis 2:2-4 reads: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens."

Creation took God a week, but the Scripture says "in the day." There were seven days "in the day." Prophetically, there are seven days in this "day of salvation," or seven periods. That is why there are seven horns. The power of salvation is working in each of the seven periods that comprise this Christian dispensation. The seven eyes represent the Spirit of God working to bring salvation to mankind throughout the seven periods that comprise this Gospel dispensation ("through the whole earth"; Zechariah 4:10 and "sent forth into all the earth"; Revelation 5:6). This would impact the whole of humanity, or the balance of human history.

These "eyes" (the Spirit) work in conjunction with the Word. Psalm 32:8 reads, "I will instruct thee and teach thee." According to John 14:26, the "Holy Ghost" will "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The Holy Spirit reveals and uses the Word to instruct us. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction." What does the Spirit of God use to enlighten us concerning the Scripture? Again, Psalm 32:8 reads, "I will instruct thee and teach thee [the Spirit of God using the Word of God] in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with *mine eye*." Jesus said He would guide us that way in John 16:7, when He said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

We read a symbolic portrayal of when the Holy Spirit was sent on the Day of Pentecost in Revelation, Chapter 8. When He comes, what will He do? John 16:13 says, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come [come to you; verse 7], he will guide you [He guides with the 'eye' through 'the Spirit of truth'] into all truth [Thy word is truth; John 17:17]." The Spirit of God is guiding us in an understanding of the Word.

In the Christian's Life, Everything Revolves Around "the Wheel" (the Word)

"**The wheel**" portrayed in our text (**Ezekiel 1:16**), or rather the four "wheels" is more proper, represents the message (the Word of God) that the saints have had throughout the four

different epochs of this Gospel dispensation. **"The wheel in the middle of a wheel"** is a picture of the saints putting on what God has put in and working out what God has worked in. It is God's people taking that message and making it, under the enlightenment of the Spirit, their Word, by putting it right in the midst of their lives and letting everything else revolve around the message. I have heard people say, "Living for God is a big part of my life." They have it all wrong. Living for God IS OUR LIFE. Everything else revolves around that. The job we work at should revolve around serving God. The decision of where we live should revolve around the message as well. We should ask: "Can I attend the services? Will it help me spiritually or hinder me?"



A picture of the living creatures (the saints) putting their lives right in the midst of the message.

One time when I lived in Kentucky, I was an assistant manager in the consumer finance business, and they wanted to transfer me (a seventy-five-mile drive on a two-lane, curvy mountain road). We lived close to the congregation. It was about a five to ten-minute drive. My company said, "We will buy your house and pay for professional movers." However, I said no. It was necessary that I worked and provided for my family (if a man does not provide for his own, he is worse than an infidel; 1 Timothy 5:8), but I said: "If I have to drive, I'll drive. If I have to work over and miss service, then I will have to miss, but my wife and my children are going to be close enough to where they can get into the services."

I drove that seventy-five-mile trip every day until I was transferred to another location, but I refused to move. Why? It was not in the best interest spiritually for my family. Our decisions need to be made with spiritual truths and realities in view. One reason I moved to Newark, Ohio, after stepping down from a pastorate in 1983, was to enable my family to attend the camp meetings. We raised our children in camp meetings. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go." The only way you can do that is to have them where they should be. When it is service time, they need to be in service; when it is camp meeting time, they need to be in camp meeting; when it is Bible school time, they need to be in Bible school. That is the way you train them. You train them to do it. If you train a dog or a horse, you do not just stand there and tell it to do something; you do it *with* them. That is how you train them. That is how you train children. You do it with them.

I prayed much about that decision, saying: "Lord, what should I do? Where should I go?" God made it clear, and we moved to Newark, Ohio. Although, because of work, I could not always attend the morning camp meeting services, I had the satisfaction of knowing my wife and my children were there. When I got off work, I could attend the evening services. I made that decision for the spiritual betterment of my family, and because of that, my children were raised in the truth. Because of that decision, today my grandchildren are being raised in the truth. All because of the decisions I made. The decisions you make concerning where you live and where you work are vital to your spirituality!

In our lesson text, we see the saints have been able to do a work for God in every period of time, even when conditions were unfavorable because of the guidance of the Holy Ghost. We need to be guided by the Holy Ghost, not guided by our own desires and ambitions. Jesus, when talking to Martha because she was stirred with Mary, said in Luke 10:42, "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Everything Martha was cumbered about with is long gone. What Mary enjoyed then, she is still enjoying now. "One thing is needful." Keep your priorities straight. Keep your perspective correct. We are living in a day when the cares of life (the thorns) try to choke out the seed (Matthew 13:22).

The **"living creatures"** in all ages have been successful because the saints did a work for God, regardless of the conditions with which they had to contend throughout the Gospel Day. There have been many unfavorable conditions. There was the age when God's people were martyrs. (This took place during the opposition by pagan Rome and during the Dark Ages under papalism.) God's people had to take on the nature of a calf. There was the dark and cloudy day under Protestantism, when the saints had to take on the face of a man and endure man rule. Yet in every age, God had a people because of **"the wheels"** and because of the **"wheel in the middle of a wheel."** In every age, the predominant conditions may have been unfavorable, but God has had a people who took the message that was available to them, put it on, and placed it right in the midst of their lives. Everything else revolved around that message. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the guidance, direction, and understanding on how to apply that.

When we survey the Gospel Day, God gave the morning-time brethren boldness. Revelation 4:7, talking about **"the living creatures,"** says that the first "was like a lion." Proverbs 28:1 says, "The righteous are bold as a lion." You can read in Acts 4:29-31 how amid persecution and "threatenings," the morning-time church "with all boldness" spoke the Word and "were all filled with the Holy Ghost." They were bold as a lion. God enabled the saints in the time of martyrdom to have grace and victory in the face of severe opposition and to be sacrificed as martyrs. It was the same with the age of man-rule. Revelation 4:7 says that they could endure the "face as a man." Yet, right while they endured that, Revelation 6:9 says there were "souls" who were "under the altar." They were a sold-out people in submission to Christ, praying for God to bring a unity of God's people.

Matthew Henry said, "Sometimes one spoke of the wheel is uppermost, sometimes another." This was certainly true in the seven prophetic periods, and it is also true in personal practice. There are changes, and these changes are progressive. We have to be willing to progress, advance, let the Spirit of God lead us to greater understanding. In the song *Prophetic Truth*, Daniel S. Warner wrote, "*The mists of confusion are passing away.*" As God brings greater and greater light in this seventh-seal period of time, He will reveal precious truths that Paul said have been "kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). God will even, no doubt, reveal some things that have been carried over (unbeknownst to us), things that are more sectarian than scriptural.

In the beautiful, prophetic picture of the **"wheel in the middle of a wheel,"** the whole of the message and its administration by the Holy Spirit in the lives of the saints is portrayed. Chapter 1 speaks of **"likeness"** ten times because it is using these descriptions as word vehicles. It talks about **"the appearance"** and how there was a **"likeness"** throughout the text. **Verses 18-21** reveal a perfect harmony between the Word, the Spirit, and the saints. **"When the living creature went, the wheels went" (verse 19),** revealing a unity and harmony between the saints and the message. **"When the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up,"** again showing the harmony between the saints and the message. **Verse 20** says, **"Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go."** Romans 8:16 says His Spirit bears witness with our spirit. There is a unity between the Spirit, the Word, and the saints.

In this text, we see **"wheels" (verse 16),** representing the message of the various epochs of this Christian dispensation. Those **"wheels"** were **"beryl,"** representing the seven beryl stones or the seven attributes of the message that was manifested and conveyed by the saints during the seven different periods of the Gospel Day. The **"wheel in the middle of a wheel"** reveals the life of the saint and that their life revolves right around the message. The message is right in the midst of their lives. The saint and the message are one. It is no wonder Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

CHAPTER SIX

THE NOISE OF THEIR WINGS

Ezekiel 1:22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

23 And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.

24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

25 And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

In this prophetic passage, the Prophet Ezekiel continued to describe the various scenes of what he termed as the "visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1). We must recognize that Ezekiel was a Hebrew prophet who was recording in Hebrew terms that which he saw, and they were incorporated into the Hebrew Scriptures. Much of what he received and related is conveyed in a Hebrew teaching style known as *parallelism*. Although we are often somewhat familiar with this teaching style, in this prophetic book, that style goes further than is many times commonly considered. According to the Jewish encyclopedia, the expression *parallelism* is described as this: "It is now generally conceded that parallelism is the fundamental law not only of the poetical but even of the rhetorical and therefore of higher style in general in the Old Testament. The symmetry is carried out in the substance as well as in form. The same idea is expressed in its full import that is in its aspects and terms not in a continuance, uninterrupted sentence, but in several corresponding phrases, or clauses, or members with which it deals."

A good example of this extended manner of parallelism is the Book of Revelation, where seven distinct series take us through the entire Gospel Day. Each series presents a different aspect or perspective concerning the various time periods that comprise this Christian dispensation. To a Hebrew, the Scriptures were much like a kaleidoscope. The more you turn a kaleidoscope, the more you see additional pictures and colorations. So the Scriptures were for the Hebrews. They looked at them from different aspects, or perspectives, and as they put those all together, they had a composite, or complete picture.

It is important to understand this extended type of parallelism, this pronounced Hebrew teaching style, lends itself to much repetition by its very nature. There is a great benefit to repetition. Sometimes, we grow a little weary when things are repeated, but we must remember the words of the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter. Philippians 3:1 says: "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." There is a benefit and safety in truths being repeated. Paul wrote it was "not grievous" for him to repeat them, but "it is safe." It provides an element of safety. This verse in the *Amplified Bible* says, "It is [a precaution] for your safety."

The Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 1:13, "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says, "Think it right." Another rendering says, "I deem it proper to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." In 2 Peter 3:1 we read, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." Repetition is an effective teaching style. If you will muse back in your mind, repetition was how we learned the alphabet, the

multiplication tables, memory verses as a child in Sunday school, and many other valuable, necessary things. These things were learned over the years through repetition.

When we look at our text closely, we have a scene before us with some of the same truths that we have previously considered, but divine inspiration dictates that it bears repeating. There are those who teach for something truly to register, it has to be heard at least three times. That is why many times young ministers are taught concerning preaching to, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them, and then tell them what you told them." We have to hear things repeatedly. We do not always grasp them the first time through. That is one benefit of having the preached messages recorded. There are messages I have heard many times over the years, and every time I listen to them, I hear something different; I receive new benefits from them. The Lord in His omniscient wisdom knows that, so in the Revelation and in prophecy, there is much repetitiveness. God knows we are forgetful creatures and that we need to hear things repeatedly for them to register as they ought.

In the scene before us, some truths are being reiterated. In **verse 24**, the prophet proclaimed, **"I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters."** As we consider this text, we ultimately want to consider **"the noise of their wings."** Ever keep in mind, Ezekiel was receiving "visions" (Ezekiel 1:1), and the language of visions is symbolic. Ezekiel was using things we can humanly relate to as word vehicles to convey spiritual truths to us. The descriptive setting for our text is found in **Ezekiel 1:22**, which says, **"And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature."** We found previously, according to Revelation 5:8-9, the living creatures ("the four beasts") are a symbolic expression of the redeemed of all ages, a picture of what comprises the church. The church is not a building, an edifice, or a literal structure. It is a people who are new creatures in Christ Jesus. We are seeing here a picture of what comprises and represents the church. Notice the prophet used the word **"likeness" (verse 22)**. This expression is employed ten times in Chapter 1. By using terms with which we can comprehend and relate, Ezekiel was trying to convey truths with which we may be unfamiliar. He was using these things as a **"likeness,"** trying to draw an association or a comparison by using the limited human vocabulary to describe spiritual realities.

"The Likeness of the Firmament"

In **verse 22**, Ezekiel introduced a new expression: **"the likeness of the firmament."** The Hebrew word for **"firmament"** is *raqia*, and it means "an expanse." According to *Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words With Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*, that word is defined as "that which is fixed and steadfast." Other renderings offer this phrase as "an expanse that is the international standard." Another says, "Spread out over the heads of the living beings what looked like a canopy." Another says, "There appeared a heaven." Let us put these expressions together and see the spiritual picture being drawn before us.

We found in a prior study, "Their wings were joined one to another" (Ezekiel 1:9). They were joined in a square, or in a cube, and they formed a canopy. **Verse 22** of our text tells us this was seen **"upon the heads of the living creature."** In other words, that which was held up, or elevated, by their **"heads,"** letting us know here was something which was ever lifted up in their minds. The purpose of the head is to contain the mind. Remember, their wings were joined one to another, not end to end but forming a square or a canopy, and there were wheels below the canopy. This formed a chariot to convey the presence of Christ.

Who is our text speaking of when it talks about being held up, elevated, or always on the mind of **"the living creature,"** the saints? What is it revealing to us? **Verse 22** says, **"And the likeness of the firmament [a heaven or a canopy] upon the heads of the living creature."** Who

was upheld and conveyed by this canopy? Who is upheld upon **"the heads"**? We read in Ezekiel 1:26, "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." Who is on this "throne"? It says it "was the likeness . . . of a man." God the man is Jesus Christ. The **"living creature,"** or the saints, are the ones who are elevating this throne and the One who occupies it. They are exalting Him, lifting Him up. He is ever on their minds.

To understand what **"the firmament" (verse 22)** is, or this "heaven," as one rendering gives, look at 2 Corinthians 12:1-2, which reads: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven." Biblically, there are three heavens. (For there to be a third heaven, there must be a first and a second.) The first heaven is found in Genesis 1:1, which says, "In the beginning God created the *heaven* and the earth." This passage is not speaking of God's Heaven, for Genesis 1:7-8 states: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven." Thus, the first heaven mentioned in the Scriptures is the firmamental heaven, or the aerial heaven, in which the literal sun, moon, and stars reside.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 says: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth [in other words, 'keep thy foot' out of 'thy mouth'; give consideration to what you say before you speak], and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven." This is the second Heaven, the celestial Heaven in which God dwells. When Jesus gave the model for prayer, He said in Matthew 6:8-9: "Be not ye therefore like unto them [speaking of the heathen]: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven . . ." This is speaking of the celestial Heaven in which God dwells.

THERE ARE THREE HEAVENS	Firmamental (Genesis 1:1, 7-8)
Celestial (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2; Matthew 6:8-9)	Ecclesiastical (2 Corinthians 12:2; Ephesians 2:6)

The third heaven is the one the Revelation takes place in, the one of which the prophet was speaking. To understand what it is, go back to 2 Corinthians 12:2 where Paul said, "Such an one caught up to the third heaven." What was Paul talking about? Verse 1 says that it is a place where we "come to visions and revelations of the Lord." It is a spiritual position, an ecclesiastical heaven. It is what Ephesians 2:6 calls "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is a place where we come as a collective body and worship. It is "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Is this the picture in

this prophecy? In **verse 22**, the word **"firmament"** also means "fixed and steadfast." Truths that are "fixed and steadfast" are found in this heavenly position: "heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Psalms 119:89 tells us, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." His Word is settled and truth is settled in this heaven, the place where truths are "fixed and steadfast" It is an exalted spiritual position that the church occupies. Where is there an expanse that starts in time and reaches beyond the shores of time? It is the heavenly places that the church occupies. You can see it when the morning-time church is represented in figurative expressions in Revelation 12:1, which reads, "And there appeared a great wonder [the Greek says 'a sign,' and *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a sign as 'a symbol'] in heaven." This was not God's Heaven because this woman (verse 2) is "with child."

Jesus let us know there is no marrying or giving in marriage over there. If there is no marry-

ing or giving in marriage in God's Heaven (Matthew 22:30), a woman with child without the benefits of marriage would be fornication, and no fornicators are going to enter there (1 Corinthians 6:9). Therefore, this cannot be God's Heaven. Also, Revelation 12:2 talks about her pain "to be delivered." There will be no pain in God's Heaven. Again, this is speaking symbolically, portraying heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that spiritual position the church occupies.

In Ezekiel 1:26, we find that there was a man on the throne. Who is this man? Let us substantiate it. Ephesians 1:19-23 reads: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Verse 20 says He "set him at his own right hand," which is described as "heavenly places." Hebrews 8:1 tells us that Christ is seated on the throne at "the right hand," but it also lets us know there is a unity between the celestial Heaven and the heavenly places. Here it talks about Him sitting at "the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the [celestial] heavens," and Ephesians speaks of him sitting at the "right hand in the heavenly places." This reveals that, in reality, the celestial heaven and the ecclesiastical heaven are two facets of one divine entity.

The church is a heaven. It is Heaven on earth, and the Kingdom of God is called the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:12-13: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven [the celestial Heaven], even the Son of man which is *in heaven*." Jesus was talking to Nicodemus while they were on the earth; yet Jesus said He was "in heaven." Which heaven was He occupying? It was "heavenly places," letting us know there is a unity and a cohesion between the celestial heaven and the ecclesiastical heaven.

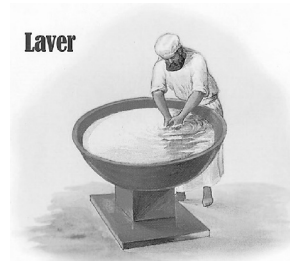
"The Colour of the Terrible Crystal"

We need to understand Christ is the One we are seeing in Ezekiel, Chapter 1, the One who is above the "**firmament**." Ezekiel 1:26 tells us, "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man [speaking of Jesus Christ]." **Verse 22** says, "**And the likeness of the firmament** [other renderings say 'the canopy,' or 'heaven,' which is 'heavenly places in Christ Jesus'; Ephesians 2:6], **upon the heads** [If people are ever going to get a vision of Christ, God's people must have heavenly places elevated in their minds. It must ever be before our minds. Wherever we go, we need to be talking about the things of God. We also need to go to the worship services to hear these precious truths and gain an understanding of God's eternal Word. We ever need to be elevating, exalting, lifting up the heavenly places because that is where Christ dwells. That is where people get a vision of Christ.] **of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal.**" Notice that the prophet described "**the likeness of the firmament**" (or the heavenly places) as "**the colour of the terrible crystal.**" Let me give you some other expressions: the *New International Version* says, "sparkling like crystal"; the *New Living Word* says, "glittering like a crystal"; the *New American Standard* says, "awesome gleam of crystal"; the *Christian Standard* says, "gleaned like an inspiring crystal"; and the *Good News* says, "dazzling crystal."

What does this dazzling, glittering, awesome crystal represent? Revelation 4:6 says, "And before the throne [or the presence of God] there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." When John

was told to come hither, Revelation 21:9 says, "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife [speaking of the church]." Revelation 21:10-11 reads, "And he carried me away in the spirit [that is the only way you will ever get a vision of her] to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

Her light was "clear as crystal." What is this light? Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." The light is the Word. What is this "sea of glass" that is "clear as crystal"? James 1:22-23 tells us: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass." That "sea of glass" is the Word. The Greek word for "glass" is "mirror." The "sea of glass" is an Hebrew allusion back to the Old Testament laver that



was outside the Old Testament tabernacle. The highly polished, brazen looking glasses of the women, used as mirrors, were used to create the laver (Exodus 38:8). When that brass was polished, it acted as a mirror. When the priest approached the laver, the first thing he saw was his own reflection. That is a typical expression of the Word. When we come in to worship God, when we come into the presence of God, God has ordained what we see through His Word is a reflection of ourselves. We see ourselves as God sees us.

What is the picture in this portion of Ezekiel's prophecy? "**The living creature**" is a portrait of the redeemed, and it is the redeemed who comprise the church, who uphold and support Christ and His Word (or His truth). That truth only goes forth in "heavenly places," and it is the saints who uphold that truth. Therefore, many times, the pastor encourages the saints to be responsive to the message, to say "amen," to witness to it, to raise their hands, and rejoice when the message is going forth. That is one way the message is elevated. It is not elevated merely because it is preached, but it is elevated when a people embrace that message, and having experienced that message in their lives, then witness to it by their expression of support in the worship service.

When visitors come to a church service and they hear things preached that they have never heard, yet there is no support from the people in the congregation, it causes doubt about what is being preached. They leave, shaking their heads, thinking, "Poor preacher, he must be the only one who believes that." The truth is to be received, Paul told Timothy, among "many witnesses" (2 Timothy 2:2). If what is being preached is what you have experienced, then you need to witness to it while it is being preached. You need to back the message. One thing that makes preaching a lot easier is if you are more of a *participant* than you are a *spectator*. It will help new people because if they are questioning in their minds what is being said, but if there are several saints bringing some healthy "amens," it is just like driving a nail home in the message.

Ezekiel 1:22 tells us, "**And the likeness of the firmament** [the canopy, or heavenly places] **upon the heads of the living creature** [This is on the minds of the saints. It is what they exalt, elevate, support, and hold up. Paul, talking about 'the church of the Living God' (1 Timothy 3:15) described it as 'the pillar and ground of the truth.' The saints are the pillars who uphold the truth. Likewise, this canopy is upholding the truth.] **was as the colour of the terrible crystal.**" Truth only becomes clear to people when the saints are upholding it, not just in a public worship service (although that is a part), but when they put the message on, go out in the community, and live the message. Then it becomes clear to people. When you change your lifestyle (how you dress, how you conduct yourself, and where you go), it will not be long until somebody will ask, "Where do you go to church?" Why did they ask that? Things are becoming clear; they are beginning to see something. They see that Word (that sea of glass), clear as crystal, radiating out through you.

"Their Wings [Were] Straight" Portrays Personal Holiness

The picture in this portion of the prophecy is, it is the redeemed (that which comprises the church) who uphold and support Christ and the Word of Truth, and that truth only goes forth from these heavenly places. Look what position and condition they are in and how this happens. **Ezekiel 1:23** states, "**And under the firmament were their wings straight.**" Their wings were "**straight.**" Personal holiness is one reason the message becomes clear to people. Is that a major factor? We read in Hebrews 12:13, "And make straight paths [here is the straightness spoken of in our text] for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; [In other words, someone who is struggling to live right or walk straight. If they cannot see one who has supposedly been living for the Lord awhile walking straight, they will get discouraged and completely fall out of the way.] but let it rather be healed." Let others see it can be done, that the message can be lived, and let it be an inspiration to them so that they can be healed of their struggle, their lameness, and begin walking straight. "Let them be healed." Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness [the straight paths are holiness], without which no man shall see the Lord." He was not talking about the Second Advent because on that day every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7). He was talking about while time yet stands. The only way anyone is going to see the Lord is through the holy lives of the saints. The saints have straight feet, straight paths for their feet. That is the only way the world is going to get a vision of Christ.

Our text tells us, "**Their wings [were] straight,**" a portrayal of personal holiness. There is no way to hold up the crystal-clear truths of God's Word or of heavenly places without personal holiness. People in false religion often tell others they need to get saved, go to church, and start living right, but when something does not go their way, they throw a fit or curse or go outside for a smoke break. That causes confusion. But when they encounter a real saint, one who has made "straight paths" for their feet, living a holy life, putting the truth on and living it out, elevating and upholding the message and Christ, things become clear to them. It will only become crystal clear to them through personal holiness. In this study, we have dealt with this thought repeatedly. Ezekiel dealt with it repeatedly. God gave him the vision, dealing with it repeatedly. Why is that? One of the biggest struggles people have today comes about because false religion is saturated with anti-holiness. They teach: "You sin; I sin; we all sin; everybody sins. Nobody can live right." That is the mantra in false religion. God, in His wisdom, knew that. He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Thus, He emphasizes holiness, holiness, holiness! Ezekiel 43:12 reads: "This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house."

Holiness is the law of the house. In Luke we read about Zacharias, the father of John the Baptizer, prophesying and talking about what Christ would bring to mankind is holiness. Luke 1:74-75 says: "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." *When* does God want us to live holy? "All the days of our life." Titus 2:11-12 tells us: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Not in some future utopian society, not in some supposed millennial reign, but "in this present world." Only personal holiness makes the truth clearly visible to mankind.

"Their Wings Straight, the One Toward Another" Portrays Interpersonal Holiness

We read in **Ezekiel 1:23**, "**And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other.**" What does that tell us? Verse 9 says, "Their wings were joined one to another."

er." This reveals at least a couple of truths. Not only does *personal* holiness help make the message clear, but *interpersonal* holiness does as well. When the world sees a people in unity and in harmony, a people who are one people, without division, schism, sects, or cliques, it serves as a convincing agent. It causes the message of truth to become clear to them. Interpersonal holiness is vital! First John 4:20 tells us, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Jesus said in John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love [That word in the Greek is *agapao*. It is the verb form of the noun *agape*. It is a commitment.] one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this [by this commitment to one another] shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love [there is *agape* the noun] one to another." That word *agape* means, "Commitment to action for the object's highest good." That is why Jesus said in Matthew 25:34-40: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It is when we have this commitment to action and put the truth into action that the world knows we are His disciples.

Ezekiel 1:9 tells us the "wings" of "the living creature" were joined "one to another," and **verse 23** says they were "**straight, the one toward the other.**" Romans 12:5 tells us, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ [their '**wings**' were all joined together because they were all one: all one body and all members], and every one members one of another." That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:26, when one member suffers, we all suffer. If I hit my toe with a hammer, it affects the whole of my body. If I hit my thumb with a hammer, as soon as it starts hurting, the mouth says, "I will open," the tongue says, "I will lick," and the lips say, "I will close." It all works in unity to help that one hurting member. That is the way the church functions. We all get in place to help one hurting member. It is not only the pastor's responsibility to visit the hurting members; it is everyone's responsibility. In Matthew, Chapter 25, Jesus was not talking to the pastors. He was talking to the individual saints.

We read in 1 Corinthians 12:25, "That there should be no schism [the Greek says 'division'] in the body." Just as a physical body is designed to be together, and we certainly do not want to lose any of our physical members, so it should be spiritually. There are some times when a congregation loses a member, but you do not want to. You would like to keep that member, but if a person cannot get a healthy experience and keep a healthy experience, you will not keep them. That is why a pastor works so hard to get people to have a healthy experience. The body is only going to stay together if it stays healthy. If things do not stay healthy, then things are going to start happening.

God does not want any divisions; He does not want any schisms. He wants us to be one healthy, vibrant, wholesome body. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:25, "The members should have the same care one for another." You should care about that little toe just as you care about the rest of your body. He is kind of down there and out of the way and does not make much noise, but stub him, and he will let you know he is there. We need to have the same care whether someone is quiet, boisterous, tall, or short. All the members are different. I have fingers of all different sizes, but I give the same care to all ten fingers. One is fat; it is called a thumb. Another one is little; it is called a pinky. I give the same care to both of them. I am attached to both of them.

They are both part of me. I give them the same care.

First Corinthians 12:26 reads, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." If you have a problem, I have a problem; if you hurt, I hurt; if you have a financial need, I have a financial need; if you get sick, I feel sickness. When one member suffers, we all suffer. This is how the message becomes crystal clear. This is how the world begins to get a vision of it. When they see you and me, in our interpersonal holiness, it gets their attention. There are places where a person sitting on one side will not talk to the person sitting on the other side. Yet, they both say they love God and are going to Heaven. Mark it down, someone is going to miss it, maybe two someones. How can you say you "love God whom [you] hath not seen," yet not "loveth [your] brother whom [you] hath seen" (1 John 4:20)?

First Corinthians 12:26 tells us, "And whether . . . one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." If you get a new car, I am not jealous; I am happy you got a new car. I might not be able to do that, but I will not get the least bit jealous. If people honor you, I am happy for you. If you get a raise or a promotion, I am happy for you! When people see that godly attitude, when the message shines out through your life, the message becomes crystal clear. Unity and fellowship reveal the truth of the message to mankind. When they see "**upon the heads of the living creature,**" or the saints, that canopy forming for heavenly places to convey the presence of Christ (keeping the message and Christ uppermost on their minds to elevate it, uphold it, and support it), that is when the people see the straightness in their "**wings.**"

Have you ever heard that old expression, "Straighten up and fly right"? In other words, have some "**wings straight**" (have personal holiness), and then have "**wings straight the one toward another**" (have interpersonal holiness). You do not love God any better than you love your brother or your sister. We read in John 13:35 to "have love one *to* another." You have to get it across to one another. It does not do you any good to go to the funeral home, look in the casket, and say, "I really loved him," or "I really loved her." No, the time to get your love across to them is now! Tell them you appreciate them, text them, or send them a card. What a ministry that is! When someone is going through a difficult place, what an encouragement to get a card in the mail that says: "We are thinking of you. We are praying for you. Be encouraged!" It does not matter how infirm or feeble you are, there is something you can do.

When I had a severe physical condition, the saints came to be with us. We had worship services right there, crowded in one room. One time, we had about nineteen people in that room, singing, raising their hands, reading Scriptures, and praying. I preached a little; they preached a little. Now, they did not get paid anything to drive and take their time to come and be with me. Again, John 13:35 says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." We need to do a better job of letting each other know we love each other. We need to tell one another that we love and appreciate each other. There are some who are going to be stepping off the stage of action. It might not be the oldest. We do not know. We need to get our love across to one another.

Ezekiel was showing how important it is that the saints, who comprise the church, lift up, elevate, and support Christ by upholding the message. That helps Him make it clear as crystal so the world can get a vision. Again, that can only be done by personal holiness, interpersonal holiness, and unity that are borne of love. Those things are essential if we are going to do that which God desires of His people. Our "**wings**" play an important role. One purpose of "**wings**" is to elevate, to lift you up to heavenly places above the weak and beggarly elements of this world. That is what the message does. We need to elevate the message. The "**wings**" are on "**the living creature.**" We are the ones who are to lift the message up.

Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). We are to be the ones who elevate Him, who support Him; we are to be the ones who enable the

world to get a vision of Christ. The world may never read the Bible bound in leather, but they will read it bound in flesh. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:2 that we are living epistles, "known and read of all men." If you do not think the world knows anything about the Bible, step out of the way and see who is the fastest to correct you. They will put it on you quickly, and you will think, "I did not know they knew that." They know more than you think they know. They just do not want to admit to it because they do not want to live to it.

We need to recognize the "**wings**" of "**the living creature**" are very crucial! They need to be "**straight**" ("**one toward the other**"), and they need to elevate the message (Christ), making the message "**crystal**" clear. Only the saints can do that. Religion brings confusion to people. James 3:10-11 talks about a fountain bringing forth "sweet water and bitter" water "out of the same mouth," or out of the same fountain. That is exactly what religion does. One minute they are praising, and the next minute they are raring and damning. One minute someone is saying he is a Sunday school teacher, and the next minute he is cursing and throwing tools. That brings confusion. May God help us! God's people are the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). We are to be showing forth this light that is to be clear as "**crystal**." The only way we do that is by elevating the message in our lives.

"I Heard the Noise of Their Wings"

Verse 24 of our text says, "**I heard the noise of their wings.**" The primary purpose of "**wings**" is to elevate and to transport. "**Wings**" are to lift one up from the position they are in and elevate them to a higher position. Psalm 18:10 reads, "And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." God's presence is transported by the cherubs, which Ezekiel 10:15 tells us are "the living creature." It is the saints, the redeemed, who convey the presence of God. What enables the world to receive a vision of Christ is the life of the saints ("Christ in you"; Colossians 1:27).

We found in a prior study, when the "**wings**" of the living creatures were joined together, they formed a cube, and at the bottom of that cube were four wheels. Their "**wings**" being brought together in a cube formed a canopy, and over that was this "**firmament**" (or "heavenly places in Christ Jesus"; Ephesians 2:6). Above the "**firmament**," there was a throne, and Christ occupies that throne. It is the four living creatures who convey the presence of Christ. If the purpose of "**their wings**" is to elevate and to transport, what do they elevate and transport? **Verse 24** says, "**I heard the noise of their wings.**" That word "**their**" implies a joint, unified effort of the saints. This is why unity is so vital! The enemy fiercely fights against the unity of God's people because there is power in numbers. The enemy knows that there is great power in unity. Thus, he is ever working to foster division.

Ezekiel let us know these living creatures are in unity; they are in harmony; they are working in concert with one another. **Ezekiel 1:24** tells us "**the noise of their wings**" was "**like the noise of great waters.**" What does this denote? Let us mate up the Scriptures to see what they reveal. Ezekiel 1:28 states: "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD." Ezekiel 43:2 reads, "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory." This speaks of personal pronouns: "*his* voice," "*his* glory." It reveals that "the glory of God" is a *He*. This "voice . . . of many waters" is the voice of a person. What person? We read in Hebrews 1:2-3: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory . . ." Who is the glory of God? It is a *He*, "his Son," Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the glory of God.

Look again at Ezekiel 43:2, which reads, "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east [east is the source of light, and when Jesus made His commencement into this time world, He came as 'the light of the world'; John 8:12]: and his voice [the glory of God, Jesus Christ] was like a noise of many waters."

To be certain of that, read Revelation 1:10-11. John said he heard "a great voice . . . Saying, I am Alpha and Omega." He used that same expression to close out the Revelation in Revelation 22:13, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega." Revelation 22:16 tells us who that is: "I Jesus." We read in Revelation 1:15, "And his ['his' is a pronoun, referring to verse 11—'Alpha and Omega,' which are capitalized] feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters." It is the voice of Jesus Christ. When we come back to our text, **Ezekiel 1:24** states, "**And when they went**, [If anyone is ever going to hear the voice of Christ, we cannot stay at home, being isolated. The first two letters of the Gospel are G and O; the commission is still 'go ye into all the world.' This voice was heard when '**they went.**'] **I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters.**"

Through what they elevated and by what they transported, people heard the voice of Christ. The voice of Christ is heard through the "**wings**" of the saints, the church. What we elevate is what causes people to hear "**the voice.**" What do we elevate? Look at the words of Jesus in John 12:32, which tell us, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The next verse says, "This he said, signifying what death he should die." It was on the Cross where Christ purchased redemption's plan and made salvation available to mankind, where He purchased the church. We need to lift those truths up by elevating those truths in our lives.

"The Noise of Their Wings"

- What we elevate, exalt, and transport
- How we convey the presence of Christ through our lives
- What enables the world to hear the voice of Christ

Jesus said, "If I be lifted up [elevated or exalted] from the earth, [I] will draw all men." There is a drawing power to the elevation of Jesus Christ. How do we elevate Him? Through taking hold of His Word and rising above what Galatians 4:9 calls "the weak and beggarly elements" of this world. Notice, when Christ speaks, **verse 24** says, "**I heard the noise of their wings.**" Our "**wings**" need to make some noise. This passage does not say a thing about our tongues, but it lets us know our "**wings**" (what we elevate, exalt, and transport, how we convey the presence of Christ through our lives, through our activities) is what enables

the world to hear "**the noise of great waters**" (the voice of Christ).

Our text tells us when we hear the voice of Christ, it is "**as the voice of the Almighty.**" When Christ speaks, when His Word speaks, in reality, it is God speaking. In John 10:30, Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." We read in John 14:8-9: "Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." When you hear the voice of Christ, you are hearing the voice of God.

John 8:28-29 reads: "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." The lesson is that Christ's words are God's words, but the only way the world is going to hear them is through our "**wings.**" Remember, we are dealing in symbolism. These "**wings**" are designed to elevate, to lift up above the low level of this world. That is exactly what salvation does. There are two different things portrayed in Ephesians, Chapter 2. There is the resurrection, and there is ascension (just as there was in Jesus Christ). Verse 1 says, "And you hath he quickened [or made alive]." That is portraying your spiritual

resurrection. Colossians 2:12 says, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God," and Colossians 3:1 states, "If ye then be risen with Christ," talking about a spiritual resurrection.

Ephesians 2:6 reads, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Just as Christ ascended to Heaven, there is an ascension we have. We read in 1 Timothy 2:4, "Who will have all men to be saved [that spiritual resurrection], and [a conjunction] to come unto the knowledge of the truth." That is an ascension up to heavenly places in Christ Jesus where you can be fed the truth and come to, as 2 Corinthians 12:1 says, "visions and revelations of the Lord." It is through our "**wings**," through what we elevate and exalt in our lives, that Christ is revealed. If we do not exalt the right thing, people will get the wrong message. When it is service time, yet God's people would rather be at a ballgame, it sends a message that people are not seeking "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Through our "**wings**," through what we elevate and exalt in our lives, through what we transport (which should be the presence of Christ), a revelation of truth is brought forth. A revelation of truth is not conveyed solely by the preached message. Matthew 28:18-20 reads: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power [*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says 'authority'] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The Great Commission is "Go ye." In other words, *you* go. Every one of us has a personal responsibility to convey the Gospel. It is not only the pastor's responsibility, but it is everyone's responsibility. Our text does not say the pastors or the ministry went, but it says, "**the living creature**" (the redeemed) "**went**." Mark 16:15 tells us, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." You may say, "But I cannot teach; I am not a preacher or a minister," but you can. Everyone is to be a minister. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17-18: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us [Paul did not say, given to *me*—singular—but he said 'given to *us*'—plural] the ministry of reconciliation."

The "us" Paul penned this Corinthian Epistle to was "the church of God" (2 Corinthians 1:1). "The ministry of reconciliation" has been given to the Church of God. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20: "And hath given to us [in the plural, the church] the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us [not unto *me*, singular, but 'unto *us*,' the Church of God] the word of reconciliation. Now then we [plural] are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us [not *me*, but '*us*']: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We are "ambassadors." We are representing a monarch and a kingdom. We are representatives of our King, and we are to go and represent that King.

How can this be accomplished? We found that this "**the terrible crystal**" (verse 22) is a picture of God's Word. What enables "**the crystal**" to be seen? What enables "**the voice**" to be heard? Notice this is not just individual activity. **Verse 24** describes it as "**the voice of speech, as the noise of an host**." This is a picture of the saints working together in unison, in harmony. In John 14:9, Jesus told Phillip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," because Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." He was saying, "If God were here in person, He would do the same thing I am doing because I am God in the flesh." Christ was the Incarnation. Hebrews 1:3 says the "express image of his person." Romans 8:29 tells us when we gain a genuine experience of salvation, we are "conformed to the image of his Son." First John 4:17 tells us, "As

he is, so are we in this world." Someone said, "That is too high." No, anything else is too low. Just as Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," a true saint ought to be able to say, "He that has seen me, has seen Christ."

All the Saints of the Ages Are in Harmony With the Truth

The prophet gave a portrayal of how the world gets a vision of Christ. They hear Christ's voice through His Word, but not just the preached Word. The preached Word makes little impact unless there are people who put that Word on, live it out, and show it forth in an example. The convincing agent is when God's people put the Word on and live it out. When **verse 24** speaks of "**the noise of an host,**" it lets us know that all the saints of the ages are in harmony with the truth. John received a vision of this in Revelation 7:9. He said, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, [The Church of God is that 'great multitude,' not just a few. God told Abraham his seed would be as the sand of the sea, as the stars of the sky; Genesis 22:17. Can you number those? No. Paul said in Galatians 3:29, 'And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed.' It is 'a great multitude, which no man could number.'] of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

One way you can tell if you are around where God's people are is that you will see white robes ("the righteousness of saints"; Revelation 19:8). You will see a people with "palms in their hands," praising God. We see in our text that the saints are in harmony; the great multitude ("**an host**") is in unison, in unity. We read in Revelation 5:11, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." There is not a Greek word for millions. "The ancient Greeks had no name for a number greater than ten thousand" (*Etymology Dictionary*). If we want to talk about a large, innumerable number, we talk about "millions and millions and millions." The actual Greek says "myriads of myriads," an insurmountable, incalculable number. All are in unity and harmony.

Our lesson is portraying the harmony of the saints of the ages as conveyors of the message, as examples of the truth, as those who elevate Christ by elevating His truth. How does this occur? How do people hear "**the voice**" of Christ, which is "**the voice**" of God? How is this message actually being conveyed? It is not just verbally, although that is a portion of it, but look at **Ezekiel 1:24**, which states, "**And when they went . . .**" When Jesus taught in Luke 14:16-23, He said: "A certain man made a great supper, [We enjoy that supper today. Revelation 19:7 says that 'the marriage of the Lamb is come.' It is not *going to* come, but it is a present tense reality.] and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready [not 'going to be ready' in some future supposed millennial reign, but 'now ready']. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it [to buy ground you have never seen is poor business]: I pray thee have me excused.

"And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out [that is the message] quickly [where?] into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in [You cannot bring in, if you do not go out. If you do not talk to anyone, you cannot influence anyone.] hither the poor, and the maimed [*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says 'the cripples'], and the halt [*The Diaglott* says 'the lame'; the *Amplified Bible* says 'the disabled'], and the blind."

God is interested in every soul. He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). Luke

14:22-23 tells us: "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them [That does not mean drag them in. Second Corinthians 5:14 says 'the love of Christ constraineth us.' You compel and constrain people by showing them you have a genuine love for their soul; a real concern for their spiritual welfare.] to come in, that my house may be filled." The going out is essential. **Verse 24** tells us, "**And when they went . . .**" God's people are to go out into the community. You can show forth Christ while shopping, at a restaurant, or at work.

Some Christians will never show forth Christ in a restaurant because nothing ever satisfies them. They complain about every meal. If you dislike it that much, perhaps you should stay home and make your own meals. Do not go out to the restaurant and complain and ruin your influence. Two of my children worked as servers at a restaurant. Often, when a church group walked in, the servers would argue over who was going to wait on them. None of them wanted to because they tied up the tables for an inordinately long time, ran the servers to death, and then many of them would stiff the servers in tips. Acting like that gives Christians a poor reputation. It is a sad commentary when servers do not want to wait on church people. In many states, the servers are exempt from the minimum wage law. They only get two dollars and something an hour, and the balance is to come from tips. If you go to a restaurant, you should tip and you should tip handsomely. Why? Do you want to leave a good testimony or be seen as a cheapskate?

We are talking about going out. That does not mean going out and knocking on doors and preaching to everybody who answers the door (which is a great way to get the door slammed in your face). It is talking about going out in the normal avenues of life ("the highways and hedges," or the streets). If the red light turns green and the person in front of you does not pull out quickly, that does not mean you should lay on the horn. That driver might look in the rear-view mirror and say: "Oh, that is Brother So-and-So. He goes to the Church of God. He does not have any patience." We go out in the normal avenues of life, and through how we conduct ourselves in those normal avenues, we are elevating the message. We are elevating Christ. Through our lives, people get a vision of Christ. When they look at us, we ought to be able to say: "If you have seen me, you have seen Christ. This is what Christ would do if He were standing right here in person because He is Christ in me." These are prophetic truths, but they have very practical applications for our lives today. These writings have been penned and preserved, not only just for their prophetic content, though that is important, but also so we can see the practical benefit God wants us to be enlightened to and to exercise in our lives.

"When They Stood, They Let Down Their Wings"

How is "**the terrible crystal**," the clarity of God's Word, revealed? How does the world hear the voice of Christ? **Verse 24** tells us, "**When they stood, they let down their wings.**" **Ezekiel 1:25** reads, "**And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.**" Twice in these verses, we read, "**When they stood, they let down their wings.**" At least two truths are revealed. First, "**the voice**" will only be heard when we stand. We must have a clear, consistent stand before anyone will ever hear "**the voice.**" One reason the world is sown in so much unbelief is because of the inconsistency of too many people professing religion. Whether in the shop, the mill, the coal mine, or the office, one minute they will profess—testifying, telling people how to get saved, and inviting them to come to their church services—and the next minute, when something happens, they blow up and throw a fit. That inconsistency has a negative effect on people. Some invite people to church services, but when people come, they are not there. Inconsistency damages your testimony, damages your influence, and hinders the message.

Again, the only way **"the voice"** will be heard, the only way people can get a vision of the crystal-clear message, is we must have a clear, consistent stand. Ephesians 6:13-14 says: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore." This stand is essential. When you are standing, you are not moving. Too many people today move. One day they are in this position, the next day they are in that position. Some people tell you, "This is the truth; you ought to do this." Then you learn they are not doing it themselves. They are inconsistent. Many children who were raised in Church of God congregations are lost because their parents were inconsistent. Our text tells us they had to stand. That is how the **"wings"** were **"let down."** In other words, the message was brought down to where people could embrace it, to where they could reach it so they could be elevated when **"the living creature"** **"stood"** (**"stood"** for the message, unmovable).

Today, too many people waver. James wrote in James 1:6-8: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." What is "a wave of the sea"? If you have ever been to the seashore, you saw the waves were constantly in perpetual motion, constantly moving. That is the way the religious world is. There was a time when you would have never seen false religion agreeing with same-sex marriage, ordaining homosexuals, or approving abortion. The raging waves of the sea are in constant motion, constant flux, constant change, but the truth does not change.

Psalms 119:89 reads, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." Malachi 3:6 states, "For I am the LORD, I change not." Hebrews 13:8 tells us, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." God does not change. He is immutable. He is unchangeable. He is forever the same. Christ does not change. Truth does not change. Yet, too many professing Christians today are like the waves of the sea "driven with the wind." Ephesians 4:14 tells us what that wind is: "every wind of doctrine." However, to truly be the evangelistic force God desires we be in the world, we have to stand. We have to be unmovable. When God reveals truth to us, we need to take a stand on that truth. That is where the convincing agent comes in. I repeat, too many waver, are not consistent, not faithful, not consecrated.

Those in our text **"stood,"** and this is what the Scriptures repeatedly admonish us to do. Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Satan wants to take every one of us back into bondage, but we do not have to go. We can stand fast! In other words, be not moved, do not shift positions, nor alter our stance. Philippians 1:27 says, "Only let your conversation [that word in the Greek means 'conduct'] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Not only are we to stand fast, but we are to stand in serried ranks with every other saint, striving together for the faith, measuring to the message, and standing on that message. That is what you see in Revelation, Chapter 15, where everyone who had victory all stood in a common place, in a common position, regardless of what their victory was over. They may have had victory over different falsities, but where they gained the victory and where they stood was in a common place. Revelation 15:2 reads, "And I saw as it were a sea of glass [the Word of God] mingled with fire [under the anointing of the Holy Spirit]: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast [papalism], and over his image [Protestantism], and over his mark [indoctrination], and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass." Regardless of what their victory was over, they had a commonality. **"They stood"** on the Word of God. **"The living creature"** stood on the message, and the convincing agent to the world is when you and I stand on the message, consistent and unmovable. When we are each measured to the truths of God's Word and stand

on the message, we should be able to say, "If you have seen me, you have seen Christ." Likewise, the world ought to be able to say, "If you have seen one saint of the Church of God, you have seen them all because they all live just alike."

Again, Philippians 1:27 says we have "one spirit [the Holy Spirit], with one mind [the mind of Christ] striving together [in unity, harmony] for the faith of the gospel." There are a host of Scriptures that teach the same truth. First Corinthians 15:55-58 states: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory [over sin] through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast [in your victory], unmoveable, [Too many people today are moving and shifting positions. These living creatures '**stood**.' They had one position. They were unmovable.] always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The "**living creature**" (the saints) in our text are portrayed as being very effective. When "**the noise of their wings**" was in motion, what they elevated and transported conveyed "**the voice**" of Christ (the Word of God) to a lost-and-dying world. They "**stood**." Someone may ask, "What if there is a failure?" There do not have to be failures, but there can be failures. The Bible makes provision for them. There are very few people who start out in the Christian life and somewhere along the line do not have a reverse or a failure. Not that you have to, but it is not uncommon to have a failure in your experience. First John 2:1 states, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not [the standard is the standard of holiness, but there is a conjunction here]. And if any man sin [not *when*, it is not a necessity, but it is a possibility], we have an advocate [an old English term for lawyer]; with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." If there be a failure, if sin occurs, we have a lawyer (Jesus Christ) who will go before the high court of Heaven, plead our case, and secure full-and-absolute pardon, which allows us to go forth free, restored in liberty, and ready to live for Him again.

We read in 1 John 2:2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This verse distinguishes between "the sins of the world" and "ours." Who is the "ours"? It is a saint who might fall into sin. A saint who has a failure, who is inconsistent. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 10:35, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." When a failure occurs, if sin does not occur, then the enemy will be right there, saying, "You have not got it, you may as well give up, you may as well throw in the towel." He wants to cause you to cast away your confidence. The Bible says do not do that. You have an Advocate. If you have had a failure, even if it is a sin, come to the Advocate, come to Jesus Christ, come to Him. He is a "propitiation" (Romans 3:25), or *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says "mercy seat." Christ is our mercy seat. Ephesians 2:4 tells us, "But God, who is rich in mercy . . ." God will deal in mercy if you come with an honest confession, humble down, and acknowledge the failure, and ask God for forgiveness. There is an Advocate who will plead your case, secure a pardon, and restore you to liberty and a position of your sonship where you can walk on in the things of God.

The World Hears the Voice of Christ When the Saints Stand and "Let Down Their Wings"

Although inconsistencies may occur, it is essential we realize the importance attached to consistency. What will standing, or being consistent in our stand, accomplish? **Verse 25** says that "**when they stood,**" they "**had let down their wings.**" Ezekiel 1:26 says, "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne." People began to get a vision. What does it mean when it says "**let down their wings**"? Through their stand, through their consistent living, they brought the message down to a level where people could understand and embrace it.

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 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 fleshy tables of the heart." Men can see what God's people elevate and exalt. Men can see the Presence that we transport. We are "the epistle of Christ," living epistles "known and read of all men." Manifesting Christ and His Word is how we "**let down their wings.**" That is how the message gets down to where a lost mankind can see it and embrace it.

What a beautiful, prophetic picture portrayed before us! We have, as **verse 22** of our text denotes, "**the living creature**" (the saints, the church) upholding "**the terrible crystal**" (the clear truths of "**the firmament,**" or heavenly places in Christ Jesus), and through their consistent lives, "**they stood**" in personal and collective holiness to where the message was let down to a lost mankind. They served as an evangelistic force by bringing the message to a level where people can understand it and embrace it. The world can actually hear the voice of Christ (His Word) through the lives of the saints when they stand and "**let down their wings.**" This truth is designed to be, as Revelation 21:11 says, "clear as crystal." But the one who makes it clear is the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose "light was like unto a stone most precious [Jesus Christ]," whose lives are conformed to His image, who put the truth on and consistently stand.

We must ask: "How is my experience as a part of the living creatures? What is my life elevating, reflecting, and transporting? Do my actions, behavior, and life clarify or confuse people? Am I revealing truths through both my personal holiness and interpersonal holiness as a representative of the other saints? Am I standing and letting down my wings to others?" There is a tremendous importance in that consistent stand! Sometimes you will work with people, and it may take years before they appropriately, favorably respond. What if you witnessed to them years ago, but when they were ready to give consideration to it, you were no longer standing where you once were? What would that do? Consistency is vital! Church of God, may God help us stand as these living creatures. When we stand, that is when we "**let down [our] wings,**" enabling other people to approach and then be lifted up.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE VISION OF CHRIST

Ezekiel 1:26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

This prophetic passage contains a description that almost defies expression. In **verse 26**, the prophet spoke of "**the likeness of a throne**" and then "**the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.**" In these verses, we are seeing a prophetic vision of Jesus Christ. As we consider this scene of Ezekiel's vision, we must recall what he was conveying to us. Ezekiel 1:1 reveals he was receiving "visions." We must be reminded of the truth that the nature of the language of visions is symbolic language. To understand what is being conveyed when we read of "**a throne**" and "**a man**" (**verse 26**), we must use symbolic language to be "rightly dividing" this passage. Ezekiel 1:9 says, "Their [the 'four living creatures'; verse 5] wings were joined one to another." *Tyndale's Old Testament Commentary* says, "The living creatures formed a square." The square they formed was foursquare, and verse 22 of this first chapter tells us in the *International Standard Bible* that it looked like a "canopy." Other scholars offer it as a "platform." When the wings of these four living creatures (symbolic of the redeemed of all ages) were joined one to another, not only does it portray the unity of the church throughout all ages, but it also shows they formed a square, a canopy, or a platform. In reality, they formed a chariot, or a manner of conveyance.

Psalms 18:10 reads, "And he rode upon a cherub [the living creatures are also referred to as 'cherubims' (Ezekiel 10:15), a Hebrew word that means 'the living ones,' describing the living creatures], and did fly." These cherubs, or cherubims, the living creatures, were the manner of conveyance. The living creatures are the redeemed (the saints, the church), and it is the church through the saints that conveys this vision of Christ (or the presence of Christ) to mankind. The living creatures (the individual saints who comprise the church) are the manner of conveyance to give the world a vision of Christ. We are the people responsible to take the presence of Christ forth to the world.

The Validation of Christ as God the Man

Verse 26 says, "**And above the firmament** [In the context of this chapter, '**firmament**' is 'an expanse,' or another rendering says 'heaven.' It is a vision being received in an exalted spiritual position, 'heavenly places in Christ Jesus'; Ephesians 2:6.] **that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone.**" The same description is in Ezekiel 10:1, which reads, "Then I looked [he was receiving a vision], and, behold, in the firmament ['heavenly places in Christ Jesus'] that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne." Notice the

constant repetition. In **verses 26-28** of this first chapter, there is a repetition of the expressions "**likeness**" and "**appearance**." They occur five times in **verse 26** and four times in the succeeding two verses. Recall that the prophet was using his best description of these divine scenes. He was trying to bring imagery to mind, under divine inspiration, that we can relate to and understand. Ezekiel was trying to describe a scene that is almost beyond description. He was trying to bring this vision into a manner of expression so that we can comprehend what he actually saw.

When Ezekiel related it, he said, in essence, "There was a '**likeness of a throne**.' The nearest thing I can describe it resembling is a '**throne**,' and it was '**as the appearance of a sapphire stone**.'" Ezekiel was reaching for words, under divine inspiration, trying to describe what he was actually viewing. Where else do we see the expression "**a sapphire stone**" used? Exodus 24:10 tells us, "And they [Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the elders of Israel; verse 9] saw the God of Israel." The *Septuagint* (the Old Testament in use at the First Advent of Christ) makes that a little more clear. It says, "They saw the place where the God of heaven stood." The *Amplified Bible* renders it in this manner: "They saw the God of Israel that is a convincing manifestation of his presence." They certainly did not see God personified, for Exodus 33:20 states, "There shall no man see me, and live." That was in 1491 B.C. (subsequent to the account in Exodus, Chapter 24). Come to A.D. 100, after John came off the isle of Patmos and wrote 1, 2, and 3 John (chronologically the last books of the Bible), and in 1 John 4:12 he penned, "No man hath seen God at any time." Notice what was connected in Exodus 24:10 with His presence: "under his feet as it were a paved work of a *sapphire stone*, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." In this passage, the "sapphire stone" is associated with "the God of Israel."

Second, when this verse describes "as it were the body of heaven in his clearness," the *Septuagint* says "of heaven in its purity." The "**sapphire stone**" is a clear stone. It is solid and durable. It has the intense clearness and coloration of heavenly blue. One scholar described this scene in Exodus as, "A foretaste of the blessedness of the sight of God in eternity." We find here at least three truths: (1) the "**sapphire stone**" is associated with "the God of Israel"; (2) it denotes Heavenly purity; and (3) it draws men's minds to eternity. As we consider these truths, let us look at the first aspect. Keep in mind, Ezekiel was an Old Testament prophet who, while fulfilling his prophetic role, was also envisioning the New Testament dispensation. (See Chapter 1 of this book.)

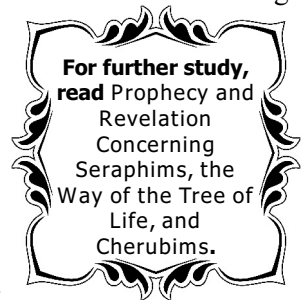
In our text, Ezekiel spoke of this New Testament dispensation. He said in **verse 26** that there was "**a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness . . . of a man**." Beyond any shadow of a doubt, this is a description of the incarnated Christ. Ezekiel was an Old Testament prophet envisioning the New Testament dispensation. In Matthew 1:23, the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." He was quoting Isaiah 7:14, which reads, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The angel was speaking to Joseph concerning the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Again, Exodus 24:10 lets us know this throne and the sapphire stone were related to "the God of Israel." Thus, the throne scene in **Ezekiel 1:26** gives a portrayal of God, or of His divinity and characteristics; but **Ezekiel 1:26** also tells us on this "**throne was the likeness . . . of a man**." Therefore, we are seeing a portrayal of God the man (Jesus Christ). We read in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 states, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Then, verse 17 says that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." This is a vision of God the Son, a picture of "Emmanuel, . . . God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

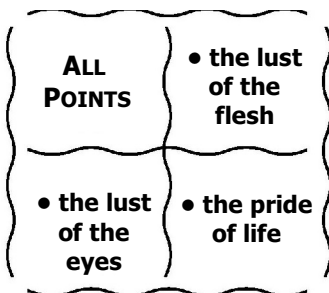
Hebrew 2:14-18 says: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself [speaking of Christ] likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren [why?], that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

In this text, we clearly see Christ portrayed as God the man. "Emmanuel, . . . God with us." Was He with them? Yes, He was on that "**throne**," upheld by the canopy and conveyed by the chariot comprised of the living creatures, or the redeemed of all ages. Isaiah received a very similar vision in Isaiah 6:1, which reads, "In the year that king Uzziah died [in the proximity of 758 B.C.] I saw also the Lord [notice that the word 'Lord' is a capital 'L' and small 'ord,' which is the Hebrew word *adonay*, meaning, 'Lord, master, owner'; the 'Master and Lord' is Jesus; John 13:13] sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, [What is the role of the living creatures? Where was this canopy? Where was this throne? It was above their heads, ever on their minds. The world gets a vision of Christ when Christ is ever on our minds, and we convey Him.] and his train filled the temple." The Hebrew word for "train" is *shuwl*, meaning "the skirts of his robe." It denotes a monarch or a high priest, and that word was used relating to the robes that they wore. Christ, the "High Priest of our profession" (Hebrews 3:1), is also is our Monarch and our King.

Isaiah 6:2-3 reads: "Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings [the seraphims are the same creatures as the cherubims, a picture of the redeemed of all ages]; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is he LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." The first truth in **Ezekiel 1:26** is the validation of Christ as God. Some people struggle with that, but Hebrews 1:8-9 makes it clear, stating: "But unto the Son, he saith [quoting Psalm 45:6], Thy throne, O God [God 'the Son,' one personage of the Triune Godhead], is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."



Jesus *is* God, but He *has* a God. He *is* a God, but He *has* a God. He *is* God the Son, but He *has* God the Father. There is a Divine Triune God. Through the Incarnation, God became man, and that is portrayed in this symbolic passage (**Ezekiel 1:26**). Is that important? If anyone is ever going to get an experience of salvation, they are going to have to get a true vision of Christ and see Him as more than just a good man, a good teacher, or a prophet. They are going to have to see Him as "Emmanuel, . . . God with us," as God in the flesh who came and purchased redemption's plan.



That is vital because Jesus is the only One who had the moral worth to purchase redemption's plan. He was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). There are misconceptions concerning what "all points" comprise, but 1 John 2:16 tells us, "For *all* that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life . . ." There are "all points." Matthew, Chapter 4, shows the three temptations recorded there consist of those "all points." In Genesis, Chapter 3, Eve was tempted in the same three points. That is the "all points": (1) lust of the flesh, (2) lust

of the eyes, and (3) pride of life. Hebrews 4:15 says He was "in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." That gave Christ the moral worth to be our sin offering. Hebrews 9:26 reads, "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Christ was the only One who had the moral worth to do that. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Thus, a penalty ("wages") had to be exacted. Jesus came and offered Himself as our substitute. He died a vicarious (substitutional) death. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin [why?]; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He became what we were so we could become as He is. The very first picture of Christ portrayed in our text is the validation of Christ as God. This is a clear truth held up by the church, or the living creatures. It is supported by the church and conveyed to the world that Christ is God the Son.

Christ Is Man's Access to Heavenly Purity and a Proper Understanding of Eternity

The "**sapphire stone**" of which "**the throne**" is comprised is a bluish color, denoting Heavenly purity. The second truth is that man's only access to Heavenly purity comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He *alone* is man's access to Heavenly purity. Peter preached to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:12, saying, "Neither is there salvation in any other [it is unique; it is singular; there is a sole access]: for there is none other name [the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; verse 10] under heaven given among men, whereby

we must be saved." The only way that we, the living creatures, can enjoy the spiritual blessings in heavenly places is through Christ Jesus. We read in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings [how?] in heavenly places [through what access?] in Christ." Christ Jesus is the sole access to Heavenly purity.



Christ Is Man's Access to Heavenly Purity

When Zacharias, the father of John the Baptizer, received his voice back (after saying, "His name is John"; Luke 1:63), he prophesied. Luke 1:68-75 reads: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed [talking about the plan of redemption] his people [how?], And hath raised up an horn [or a power] of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved [redemption enables

men and women to be saved] from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy [How do you get saved? Through mercy.] promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

"The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us [inclusive of all New Testament periods], that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear [how did this 'horn of salvation' bring to mankind access and the ability to live], In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Man's access to Heavenly purity, to holiness, to righteousness only comes through Jesus Christ. Subscribing to a doctrinal creed, joining a man-made organization, going through religious rites or rituals (religious performances such as baptism or other religious acts)—none of those give man access to Heavenly purity. The only access to Heavenly purity comes through Jesus Christ.

The third thing this reveals to us is when we get a vision of Christ on the throne, sitting at the right hand of the Father, when we get a real vision of that position, we are getting a vision of Christ in eternity. Then, we begin appropriately to consider eternity. Sadly, too many people can-

not see Christ any further back than the Incarnation. Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a child is born." That "child" who was "born" had a beginning. Birth is a beginning. That "child" was the physical form named Jesus, but He was not named until Matthew, Chapter 1, when the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. That was for more than one reason. Joseph was minded to put Mary away privately, thinking she had done something illicit, but the angel let him know she had not. The second reason is revealed when the angel said in Matthew 1:21, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS." The child was to be brought to the temple when he was eight days old to be circumcised, and at that time, it was the father who named the child. The name *Jesus* means "the salvation of Jehovah." However, that name was not given until the birth of this child. The child had a birth, a beginning, and an age. His age could be reckoned in months and years, just like ours.

Isaiah 9:6 reads, "For unto us a child is born [that is the physical form of Jesus, which was conceived in the womb; it had a beginning], unto us a son is given." That is distinct: that Son was God, and that Son was Christ. He is from everlasting to everlasting, and He moved into that body at conception. Psalm 90:1-2 says: "LORD [this is a prayer of Moses], thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." That is speaking of God, but of which Personage of God? It is the Personage that "brought forth" the "mountains," and "formed the earth and the world." Who was God's Agent in the Creation?

John 1:1-3 reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Who is the Word? Verses 14 and 17 tell us: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. . . . For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Who made them? Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3:9 states, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Colossians 1:13-16 says: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God ['his dear Son'], the firstborn of every creature ['his dear Son']: For by him [the antecedent of that pronoun is 'his dear Son'; verse 13] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him ['his dear Son'], and for him."

Jesus was God's agent in *Creation* because He is God's agent in *re-creation*. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [the Greek says 'creation']." Christ is what enables a man to be recreated. We need to understand, He is everlasting. In Psalm 90:2, the psalmist was speaking of Jesus Christ when he said, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." God the Son is "from everlasting to everlasting." Micah's prophecy, speaking prophetically of Christ's Advent, states, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). Here is a Messianic prophecy of Christ who would be born in Bethlehem. "Whose goings forth have been from of old." How old? "Everlasting." We read in Hebrews 7:1-3: "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, [Salem was the forerunner of what later became Jerusalem. Jerusalem means 'city of peace.' Salem means 'peace.' Melchisedec was the king of peace. Who would that be? The King of peace.] . . . who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all [or his tithe; 'the tithe . . . is the Lord's; Leviticus 27:30]; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem,

which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God."

This explains who Melchisedec is. He is "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." He is from everlasting to everlasting. In Exodus 24:10, they saw God's presence. Remember, scholars wrote the fact that "they saw the God of Israel" is a convincing manifestation of God's presence, and one scholar said, "It is a foretaste of the blessedness of the sight of God in eternity." In John 14:9, Jesus told Phillip that "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." What is this teaching us? As the church, which upholds and supports a clear vision of Christ, our lives are to reveal and validate His deity, that Christ is God, the second Person of the Triune Godhead. Only as He is lifted up and embraced can people see the vision of Christ. Only as we live a life of that Heavenly purity, only as we properly regard eternity, can Christ be properly seen. These are the truths that the church upholds in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and they reveal Christ.

We read in Ephesians 2:6, "And hath raised us [a collective aspect] up together, [It was not one of those four living creatures alone, but it was all of them together that formed the canopy, or chariot. It was their unity, their harmony, their being members one of another.] and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus [the *Amplified Bible* says 'giving us joint seating with him']." When we sit together in heavenly places, we do not just sit with one another, but we sit in the presence of Christ. Ephesians 1:20 states, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

Christ is in the heavenly places, and when we sit together with one another, we are jointly seated with Him. The connection of the living creatures and the canopy (or the platform) conveying Christ and our incorporating the truths of Christ, His deity, His purity, and the purity He affords to mankind provides the vision the world needs of Christ and a view of eternity. Living with these truths in sight and upholding them is what conveys Christ to a world and gives them a vision of Christ. This "**sapphire stone**" (verse 26) also connects God with His people because it is spoken of as being in Eden. Ezekiel 28:13 reads, "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created." Who enjoyed this? Ezekiel 28:14 tells us, "Thou art the anointed cherub," or the living creatures; the redeemed.

The "**sapphire stone**" connects God and His presence with His people. When you study the high priest's breastplate (representing old Israel—all the people of God in that dispensation), Exodus 28:18 tells us, "And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond." Revelation, Chapter 21, tells of the precious stones that were in the wall (the wall represents salvation; Isaiah 26:1). These stones in the wall represent a people who have the experience of salvation. Revelation 21:19 says: "And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire." Again, this is a portrayal of those who have an experience of salvation; those who make up this wall of salvation have the Heavenly purity that can only be afforded to mankind through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.



**High Priest's
Breastplate**

Christ Is on the "Throne" of Grace and Mercy

What kind of "**throne**" is Christ's throne? Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens [who?], Jesus the Son of God, let us hold

fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace [**'the throne'** He occupies is a 'throne of grace'], that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the Greek word for "grace" is *charis*, and it means "the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life." This verse is related in a common Hebrew teaching style known as *parallelism*. The first phrase speaks of "grace." The second portion speaks of "strength" and "the power of Christ." Therefore, this verse lets us know grace is strength; it is power. Christ is on the "throne of grace." When Gabriel appeared to Mary in Luke 1:32, he said, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest [Jesus; verse 31]; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." What kind of throne was that? The prophets spoke of it. Isaiah 16:5 says, "And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging." When was the tabernacle of David re-established?

Acts 15:13-16 tells us: "And after they had held their peace, James [a brother of our Lord and the pastor of the congregation in Jerusalem] answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written [quoting Isaiah 11:10; 54:1-5], After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." Jesus Christ is the One who did that. Isaiah 16:5 tells us the throne of David is a throne of "mercy." Isaiah 55:3 reads, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." **Ezekiel 1:28** says, "**As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud . . .**" That represents the covenant. Jesus Christ ushered in that everlasting covenant. Hebrews 13:20 says, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."

Christ is on a "throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16) and on a throne of "mercy" (Isaiah 16:5). As we proceed through the description the prophet gave in **verses 27-28**, we see this description is vitally connected with what is dispensed from this "**throne**" (mercy and grace). The only way the world is going to get a vision of that is found in the words of Jesus in John 12:32, which read, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." We read in Isaiah 6:1, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." How is He "high and lifted up"? Ezekiel 1:22 lets us know, "And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature . . ." It was "the living creature" that lifted up these "heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and in these heavenly places, **verse 26** says, "**And above the firmament [or heavenly places] that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man.**"

This "**man**" is Jesus Christ. How are others going to get a vision of Jesus Christ? How are they going to see these truths that are so necessary to their gaining an experience of salvation of their own? They must see these three truths. First, they must see the validation of Christ as God. He is more than a good man, a good teacher, and a prophet; He is God the Man. He is the One who came as the sinless Son, was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" so that He could be the acceptable sacrifice, an acceptable substitute. He is the only One who had the moral worth. When John saw the book sealed with seven seals, Revelation 5:4 says, "I wept much, because no man was found worthy." No man had the moral worth. John wept much because no man was worthy to loose the seals to bring understanding through the Spirit of God to the hearts of men. Then, he heard a voice saying, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of

Juda, the Root of David [Jesus Christ], hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Revelation 5:5). Only Christ had the moral worth.

Second, they must see a vision of Heavenly purity that not only surrounds Christ on the "**sapphire stone**" of which "**the throne**" is comprised, but that the saints are the ones elevating that "**throne.**" Our lives elevate Heavenly purity. We read in Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation [that is the '**throne**' He is on: the throne of grace that produces salvation] hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." That portrays the Heavenly purity to mankind. The third is when we get a real vision of Christ, we will live with eternity in view. We will not live for the moment. That is the way the world lives: "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." That is the world's manner of operation. A real creature, one who is a new creature in Christ Jesus and who has life, desires to maintain that life because it is everlasting life. Eternal life does not begin once we rend the veil of flesh (death), but it begins with salvation. John 3:36 states, "He that believeth on the Son *hath* [present tense] everlasting life."

That is not that easy "believism" with which the religious world is saturated today. If you ask people, "Do you believe Jesus is the Christ?" the majority would say, "Well, yes." If you ask, "Are you willing to ask Him to forgive you of your sins?" they would say, "Yes." Many would then say that they are saved. Yet, James 2:19 says the devil believes and trembles. This easy "believism" that false religion is touting is not adequate. When John wrote, "He that believeth," notice the word "believeth" is a present and continual tense verb. It means "believes and keeps on believing." What does it mean Biblically to believe? The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:16: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias [Greek for the Hebrew Isaiah] saith, Lord, who hath believed our report [quoting Isaiah 53:1]?"

Believing the report is obeying the Gospel. We do not believe a bit more than we obey. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The world says, "Oh, how I love Jesus," but those who truly believe will obey. We read in John 3:36, "He that believeth [or he that obeys and keeps on obeying] on the Son hath [present tense] everlasting life: [also, converse to that] and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth [present tense] on him." It is not *going to* abide on him, it already abides on him. The only thing that keeps him from feeling the full impact of it is that delicate thread of life. But the wrath of God already abides. First John 5:11-12 tells us: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life [how?], and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

The life is vested in the Son. When He comes, life comes, and if He goes, the life goes. Too many people rest on some experience they may have had twenty or thirty years ago. They say, "I know I was saved; I know I definitely received an experience of salvation; I know I was born again," but John let us know we must have that continual, abiding presence of Christ. "He that *hath* the Son." As long as He is "Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27), you have spiritual life, but if you grieve Him and He departs, when He leaves, the life leaves.

A true saint is enjoying everlasting life now. Because the life we have is "everlasting" (John 3:36), because it is eternal, the mind of a true saint of God ever thinks in terms of eternity. Decisions and choices in life are made with eternity in view. This vision of Christ on this "**sapphire . . . throne**" brings to our minds a picture of eternity and how we, as the saints, are ever to have eternity on our minds. We are to live with eternity in view. Before we make moves, decisions, and choices, we must consider how these will affect our everlasting life. Anyone who has an ounce of common sense will not do things that could jeopardize his physical life. Likewise, saints make their decisions and choices with eternity in view, considering: "How will this decision affect my everlasting life? If I take this job, if I move into this position, if I relocate to this house, to this

community, how will that affect my everlasting life?"

That is one truth being conveyed by this vision of Jesus being high and lifted up on this **"sapphire . . . throne."** The only way a world will ever receive a vision of Christ is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). The only way the world will ever see Christ and see that which Christ came to bring to mankind is through the example of your life. We read in 2 Corinthians 3:2 that we are epistles, "known and read of all men." The only way the world is going to get a vision of truth, a vision of Christ, is through our lives, the truths we exhibit, the characteristics we manifest, how we lift Christ in our lives to an exalted position, how we honor Him as God the Son, how we reflect Him in our Heavenly purity, and the observance of all of our actions being made with eternity in view. In the morning time of the Gospel Day, those living creatures were shining examples we are to emulate in this day and time in which we live.

A Vision of Christ, High and Lifted Up, Produced the People of God

After the Prophet Ezekiel spoke of this **"throne"** (verse 26), he proclaimed in verse 27, **"And I saw [remember, he was receiving a vision] as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire."** Ezekiel 1:4-5 first mentioned **"Amber"** in the prophetic picture of Pentecost. The original Hebrew word for **"amber"** is *chasmal*. In the Old Testament, this word only appears in Ezekiel's writings. One scholar said, "It is the name of a color nearest to the color of fire." We see that in Ezekiel 1:4, which reads, "As the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire." We see that **"amber"** is a fire-like color.

The same description of **"amber"** is found in our text: **"as the appearance of fire."** It was out of this "fire" (Ezekiel 1:4) that the living creatures were produced (Ezekiel 1:5). Notice the focal point the prophet described in verse 27. It is the description of **"his loins."** The verse speaks of **"his loins even upward, . . . his loins even downward."** What do **"loins"** represent? Peter, preaching on the Day of Pentecost, said in Acts 2:29-30: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." When our text makes **"the loins"** a particular focal point, it is bringing to the forefront the thought of "the fruit of his loins." Peter was picking up prophecy in the account in Acts. The prophecy is found in 2 Samuel 7:12, which reads, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee." Some feel that is referring to Solomon, but Solomon was coronated while David was still living (1 Kings 1:1, 32-34). This prophecy is not talking about David's natural lineage or his natural successor.

Second Samuel 7:12-14 states: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son." This prophecy is talking about the seed of David that would be realized in Jesus Christ. We read in Matthew 1:1, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David . . ." Christ was the fulfilment. Look again at Peter's prophecy in Acts 2:30. It says, "Therefore being a prophet [speaking of David], and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne."

God raised up Christ "of the fruit of his loins," or of the loins of David. This seed went further than the fulfillment in Christ. Isaiah 53:10, speaking of Christ, tells us, "Yet it pleased the

LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." Christ was going to produce a seed. We read in Galatians 3:29, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." When our text talks about **"the appearance of his loins even upward"** and **"the appearance of his loins even downward,"** the focal point is the **"loins."** The focal point of Christ is the **"loins"** because it is speaking of "the fruit of his loins," His seed, or what He would produce. Keep in mind, the prophetic time setting of Ezekiel, Chapter 1, is predominately the morning portion of the Gospel Day that commenced with Christ's Advent and then the institution of the church in A.D. 33. We are seeing the occurrences that brought about those divine realities. We are seeing a vision of Christ high and lifted up, and because of that, we are seeing the producing of a seed of a people, the people of God.

When **Ezekiel 1:27** speaks of **"fire,"** it reveals the agent Christ employed to produce His fruit, His seed, His people. Hebrews 12:29 tells us what that **"fire"** is, stating, "For our God is a consuming fire." **"Fire"** represents God. Yet, not only is it correlated with God, but it shows a picture of the personage of God that produces the seed. We read in Luke 24:49, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This is reiterated in Acts 1:4-5. It reads: "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." There is the promise.

We read in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Acts 2:1-4 tells us: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire [this fire came 'from heaven'; verse 2] . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." They received the promise, and they received the power. The first power they received was the power of life. Romans 8:11 reads, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal [not immortal] bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Verse 10 says, "The Spirit is life." The Spirit brought life. Romans 6:4 calls it "newness of life." The Spirit brought new life to them. They became "born again" (John 3:3). They became the fruit, or the seed, of Christ.

The seed was produced by the Holy Spirit after Peter preached that message in Acts. Acts 2:37 tells us, "Now when they heard this ['the gospel . . . is the power of God unto salvation'; Romans 1:16], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told them what to do in verse 41. The result was, "There were added unto them about three thousand souls." That is some of the "fruit of his loins." There is some of the seed. There is a people being produced by the Holy Ghost.

The "Fire" Enables People to Be Part of "the Fruit of His Loins"

To further substantiate that the **"fire"** our text speaks of represents the Holy Spirit, turn to Revelation 4:5, which states, "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." We know there is only "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4). When this talks about "seven Spirits of God," it is describing the Holy Spirit working throughout each of the seven periods that comprise this Gospel Day. The **"fire"** represents the Spirit of God. The "lamps of fire" (Revelation 4:5) represent the Spirit of God and what He brings to mankind. Isaiah 62:1 speaks of "the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Who is the agent Christ employs to enable mankind to be part of "the fruit of his loins," that enables an individual to become part of this seed that Christ produced by His redemptive work? Jesus told the disciples in Acts 1:4 to "wait for the promise." That is the only time He instructed them to "wait." The Holy Spirit had not yet been given. We read in John 7:37-39: "In the last day, that great day of the feast [the Feast of Tabernacles], Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly [or his inward part] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" The Holy Spirit was not an availability for all of mankind until after Jesus paid redemption's cost on Calvary's tree. Jesus said in John 16:7, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [the Holy Ghost'; John 14:26] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The Day of Pentecost is when He sent the Holy Ghost after He had been glorified.

Regardless of what other advocates may espouse, there is no necessity today for an individual to wait for the Holy Ghost. Why? He has been given. People sing the song, "Lord, Send the Power Down." That is outdated by two thousand years. The power came down in A.D. 33. Jesus said, "Wait for the promise of the Father which ye have heard of me." What was the promise? Acts 1:8 says, "But ye shall receive power." Luke 24:49 calls it "power." Acts 1:5 tells us what this power is, stating, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Let us examine that to clear away some confusion. People say they have the Holy Ghost baptism by speaking in some unknown tongue, rolling on the floor, frothing at the mouth, doing cartwheels, jumping over pews, throwing songbooks, or a second definite work of grace. What do the Scriptures say?

Let us look at the first time the Gospel was intentionally taken to a Gentile. When Peter went down to Cornelius' house, Acts 10:44-47 reads: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. [Let us identify what 'the gift of the Holy Ghost' is. False Pentecostalism says it is speaking in tongues.] For they heard them speak with tongues [or in languages], and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

What happened when the Gentiles received the Holy Ghost? What were they receiving? Was it a definite second work of grace? Was it speaking in some unknown tongue? If it was, how would Peter have known they magnified God? How would Luke have known that? They would not have understood it. Explaining what occurred to the brethren, Acts 11:15-18 says: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost [it is the same thing Jesus told them in Acts 1:5 when He gave the prophecy that was fulfilled in Acts, Chapter 2]. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift [the gift of the Holy Ghost'; Acts 2:38] as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

When Peter related what occurred to the brethren, he told them how the angel told Cornelius that Peter would "tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). The baptism with the Holy Ghost is being saved, receiving new life, being born again, getting "newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Again, Romans 8:10 tells us, "The Spirit is life." They were not getting some second work of grace. They had not received a first one. The gift that they received was the Holy Ghost. That brought "life."

In answer to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The gift was the Holy Ghost. The baptism in Acts 2:38 had nothing at all to do with water. The New Testament clearly teaches water baptism as an ordinance to be practiced, but that is not what is being spoken of in Acts 2:38. It was the baptism with the Holy Ghost. That baptism is "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). The Agent used to bring life is the Holy Ghost. Christ is portrayed with a "fire" all about "his loins" because what produces His seed, His fruit, His lineage is the Holy Ghost. Second Corinthians 3:6 reads, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

In our text, when we read "**above the firmament**" (verse 26), or the heaven, this is a vision of heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That is where the presence of Christ is, high and lifted up on the throne of mercy, or on that throne of grace. That "**sapphire**" throne ("**sapphire**" identifies and validates Him as God) brings a picture that man's access to heavenly purity only comes through Jesus Christ. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). John 14:6 says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus is the access. John 10:9 tells us, "I am the door." He also is the One who causes us to consider eternity, to have eternity in view.

As Ezekiel proceeded in this vision, he saw "**the colour of amber**" (a yellowish, fiery color) "**from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward.**" He saw "**the appearance of fire,**" or the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9 tells us, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Luke 4:1 tells us the Spirit of Christ is "the Holy Ghost," and it is the Holy Ghost in His divine agency that produces "the fruit of his loins," that brings forth His seed, that births the believer. When Jesus talked about being born again, He said in John 3:6, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is a birth brought about by the Spirit. This life comes about through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

The Rainbow Symbolizes a Covenant

Ezekiel 1:28 speaks of "**the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.**" This is speaking of a rainbow. What does the rainbow represent? After Noah and his family came off the ark, after the antediluvian world perished, Genesis 9:12-13 tells us, "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." The rainbow is a picture of God's covenant.

In this New Testament dispensation, the rainbow is portrayed in the throne scene in Revelation 4:2-3, which reads: "And immediately I was in the spirit [that is the only way you can receive a vision of these truths]: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." This particular scene of the throne is speaking of God the Father. Revelation 5:13 confirms this, stating, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." The Lamb is Christ (John 1:29), and here we see a distinction between "him that sitteth upon the throne" and "the Lamb." The "one [who] sat on the throne" in this particular context (Revelation 4:3) is God the Father.

In this throne scene of God the Father, we see a "rainbow round about the throne." The rainbow is in His presence; it is ever before His mind. According to our text in **Ezekiel 1:26**, this

"throne" had **"the likeness as . . . of a man."** This is speaking of God the man, or Jesus Christ. When **verse 28** speaks of **"the appearance of the bow,"** that is the "rainbow round about the throne." This pertains to Jesus Christ and reveals the Father and Son are in harmony. According to Revelation, Chapter 4, this rainbow had a different hue. (Keep in mind, we are dealing in symbolism.) This rainbow is symbolizing a covenant. Just as the rainbow symbolized a covenant that was made in the Old Testament dispensation, in this New Testament dispensation, a rainbow also symbolizes a covenant. According to Revelation 4:3, this rainbow has a prevailing "emerald" colorization. It is a new and different rainbow, letting us know it is a new and different covenant. A clear vision of Christ reveals He came to usher in a new covenant.

We read in Hebrews 13:20, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Christ came to bring in an "everlasting covenant," and it is "a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20). Hebrews 8:7-10 states: "For if that first covenant [the old covenant dispensation and its articles] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second [the second covenant]. For finding fault with them [the tenets of the first covenant], he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord [quoting Jeremiah 13:31-33], when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

The new covenant is written "in their hearts." How is the Lord going to write it there? What kind of covenant is this? Second Corinthians 3:3 says the new covenant is "written" on the "fleshy tables of the heart" by "the Spirit of the living God." When Hebrews 8:10 says, "I will . . . write them in their hearts," it is by "the Spirit of the living God." Hebrews 8:10 also says, "And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Hebrews 8:13 states: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." That first covenant, the old covenant, vanished away, and it was replaced by a new covenant, a covenant where God said, "I will put my laws into their mind" (Hebrews 8:10). No longer do God's people have to wear a frontlet with Scriptures hanging on their foreheads (Deuteronomy 6:8) in front of their eyes to remind them of what the Word of God says, as in the Old Testament. In this new covenant, He writes it in the mind.

When the trying scenes of life come, the Holy Spirit brings to your remembrance what has been written in the mind. He also writes it in the hearts by the Spirit of the living God. This is a spiritual covenant. We read in Jeremiah 31:31, "Behold, the days come [this was not for Jeremiah's day, not for the Old Testament dispensation], saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant." Jesus Christ ushered in that new covenant. Hebrews 9:14-17 reads: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament [or new covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For the testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." Thank God, our Testator sealed His testament, the new covenant, with His blood.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 tells us: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake,

although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts [by 'the Spirit of the living God'; 2 Corinthians 3:3]; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." This new covenant is when a new people, these living creatures, actually came on the stage of action because in the truest sense there was not light until Jesus came to bring it. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Hebrews 10:20 tells us He brought "a new and living way." There was not a true living way under the old economy. They were "just men" (or justified), but Galatians 3:22 says they were "concluded all under sin." God gave them that legal declaration of justification, but they did not have the experience we are privileged to enjoy of being "a new creature" in "Christ Jesus" (Galatians 6:15).

What enabled the Spirit of God to produce "the fruit of his loins"? What enabled Him to produce the seed, or the people of God, in this new dispensation? **Verse 28** tells us it was "**the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.**" The rainbow, or the covenant that Jesus ushered in, is what made this "new and living way" possible, enabling people to become new creatures, a living creature, and to walk in "newness of life." What does this "**rain**" represent? Deuteronomy 32:2 reads, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain." The new covenant Christ ushered in brings forth a doctrine that is under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That doctrine (truth) produced by the new covenant enables the Spirit of God to birth believers, to bring newness of life to man's heart, to make him part of "the fruit of his loins," part of that seed of Christ, or one of His people.

We read in Ezekiel 36:25, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Physical water does not make anyone spiritually clean. What is this talking about? Ephesians 5:26 states, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." John 15:3 tells us, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Again, Ezekiel 36:25-27 reads: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you [the washing of water by the Word; that rain is the water, the doctrine, the Word], and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments." When your spirit is changed, He will not *make* you, just *cause* you. We are no longer living in a day of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." When you get a change of heart and spirit, when you know what God's will is and desires are, His Spirit is within you, and it will "*cause* you."

The Spirit He puts "within you" (Ezekiel 36:27) is "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8:9), which is "the Holy Ghost" (Luke 4:1). Christ (through His atoning work of death, burial, resurrection, and ascension) made this new dispensation possible. Jesus said in John 14:16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you [in the person of Christ], and shall be in you." On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit moved in, and He became an abiding reality, an abiding presence.

The Coloration of a Rainbow

Let us look a little further at "**the bow**" (**verse 28**), or "the rainbow" (Revelation 4:3). A rainbow has seven distinct prismatic colors. Likewise, this Gospel Day, or the Holy Ghost dispensation, has seven distinct periods. The coloration of a rainbow is always the same. If you take

those seven colors and run them back through a prism, they make a white light (representing purity, holiness). All seven of these characteristics produce a composite of holiness. The coloration of the rainbow represents the various characteristics of the redemptive plan and the predominate features accented throughout the various periods of this Gospel Day. These seven colors are also found in the twelve stones in the high priest's breastplate (Exodus, Chapter 28), which represented all God's people (old Israel) under the Old Testament dispensation. Those same seven colors are also found in Revelation, Chapter 21, as a picture of the stones in the foundation of the wall of the city (representing the church).

The coloration of a rainbow has great importance. Revelation 4:3, describing the throne scene, says, "And he that sat was to look upon like . . . a sardine stone." The sardine stone was blood red in color. In the new covenant, red represents the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The outermost color on the rainbow is red, letting us know one must come through the blood of Jesus Christ before he can proceed any further. Romans 3:24-25 lets us know it is faith in His blood that brings "remission of sins that are past." The tribe represented by the sardine stone was the tribe of Judah, the tribe from which Jesus Christ came. The first thing one must do is to understand why Christ came, understand His sacrificial work and His shed blood. This coloration of this stone represents the first period of time of the Gospel Day (A.D. 33-270), the morning time when Christ's blood was shed. Revelation 4:3 describes the sardine stone, and it is symbolically portraying the great sacrificial price paid to purchase our salvation. God giving His "only begotten Son" (John 3:16), the high premium expended on Calvary, is ever before God's mind and His presence. God does not count it a light thing when people "hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing" (Hebrews 10:29). This verse shows us the blood is a vital part of the covenant.

The second color of the rainbow is orange. It is comparable to the onyx or the sardonyx stone (Exodus 28:20; Revelation 21:20). In ancient times, the onyx was a fire-like orange color. We have already found "**fire**" represents the Holy Spirit. This orange stone with a fire-like brilliance is a portrayal of a day that dawned (2 Peter 1:19). The tribe represented by the color orange is the tribe of Asher, which means "blessed." The period of time represented is when many of God's people were going into apostasy (A.D. 270-530). The name *Asher* reveals that those who held true to Christ in this era of apostasy were indeed "blessed." This stone shows people who had the Holy Spirit (which is life) contrasted with people affected by the prevailing condition in that second period (going into apostasy). God took that woman and hid her away in the wilderness, in a secluded place, where He fed her (Revelation 12:6, 14) with hidden manna (Revelation 2:17). Revelation 11:3 tells us the Word and Spirit prophesied, or fed her. Although all about was a condition of apostasy, these people enjoyed the "**fire**" of the Holy Spirit. While those about them were going into bondage, into darkness, they were still enjoying spiritual life. The literal sun is only orange when there is darkness all around at dawn. Accordingly, in this second period of the Gospel Day, still very early in the history of Christendom, spiritual darkness was gathering around. It was a transitional period, and apostasy was taking place right in the midst of it. The people who had had a day dawn, a people to whom "the Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2) had arisen, right in the midst of gathering darkness, they had light and life. What a beautiful picture!

The third color of the rainbow representing the third period is yellow, which corresponds with the beryl stone in Exodus 28:20. The tribe it represented was the tribe of Dan, which means "judgment" or "he that judges." The timeframe referred to by this portion is the Dark Ages (A.D. 530-1530). This brilliant yellow is a picture of a beautiful, precious golden light and a people who were blessed to see this light. This was an era when spiritual darkness was the prevailing condition. Yet in His faithfulness, God sent forth judgment to His people. He allowed them to have understanding even in the midst of the dark age. During this time, Bibles were chained to

the pulpit. Yet, the most familiar inscription in the catacombs and caves where the saints hid was, "The word of God is not bound" (2 Timothy 2:9). While the prevailing condition on the religious landscape was a dark age, God's people were in the catacombs and caves being fed the hidden manna by the Word and the Spirit, enjoying the brightness of light. When light is naturally radiating on one side of the earth, darkness fills the other side of the earth. While we are enjoying bright daylight, the other side of the world is in darkness. While there was a dark age, God still had a people who were enjoying light. First John 1:5 says, "God is light," and they had God. The fifty to sixty million martyrs in that period were the ones who had light; they had God.

The fourth color of the rainbow is green, corresponding with the emerald stone in the breastplate (Exodus 28:18; Revelation 21:19). This is a bright green color with no mixture, and it represents the tribe of Reuben. The word *Reuben* means "see a son." Green is a very soft, appealing color, and it stands for the mercy of God by which alone we can meet the purity and justice of God. It portrays an essential element of the new covenant. This is the centermost color: there are three on each side. Likewise, it is centermost to the covenant. Mercy is the central doctrine of Christianity. Hebrews 10:28, talking about people under the old covenant, says they "died without mercy," but in the New Testament, God is "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). This color represents the sixteenth-century Reformation (A.D. 1530-1730), the time when the light began to shine forth in a great way concerning, "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). A public message on salvation began to be declared again. Notice, in Revelation 4:3, the rainbow has a hue "like unto an emerald." Its prevailing hue was emerald, and the prevailing hue of this new covenant, in all its characteristics and attributes, is the mercy of God.

The fifth color of the bow is blue. It corresponds with the sapphire stone (Exodus 28:18; Revelation 21:19). It is next in hardness to the diamond. The intense blue of the sapphire is made in all ages the natural symbol of heavenly purity. This stone represented the tribe of Simeon, which means "hearing with acceptance." It portrays the Wesleyan era (A.D. 1730-1880), a time when the message on purity and holiness was restored. One must truly "endure hardness, as a good soldier" (2 Timothy 2:3) in order to maintain purity. Those who enjoy this purity must have what the name implies: "hearing with acceptance." They must have ears to hear what the Spirit saith and continue to walk in the light to maintain this purity.

The sixth in order of color in the rainbow is indigo, which relates to jasper (Exodus 28:20; Revelation 21:19). There are two varieties of this stone: violet and blueish-grey. Jasper corresponds with the tribe of Naphtali, which means "my wrestling." Here we have a combination of colors symbolizing the sixth-seal period (A.D. 1880-1930) because the sixth-seal brethren did not have just a single message as the other eras but a combination of truth of all the previous eras. During this age, they had the message on salvation (or justification by faith), the message on holiness, and the message on the unity of God's people. There were many who had accepted holiness in the prior period, the Wesleyan era, but there was a great wrestling as the message to "come out" (Revelation 18:4) was sounded out. Though many embraced it and came to Zion "with songs and everlasting joy" (Isaiah 35:10), many others wrestled with the message. In this timeframe of the sixth seal, Christ was bringing together a people.

The seventh and last, innermost color is violet, which corresponds with the amethyst (Exodus 28:19; Revelation 21:20). The tribe it represents is Benjamin, which means "son of the right hand" and "reigning." When Christ, the Son of the right



hand, has been formed in us (Galatians 4:19), then we through Him "shall reign in life" (Romans 5:17). In this seventh-seal period of time, God has a victorious people. Their numbers are so great, John called them "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Revelation 7:9). In this seventh-and-final period of time, God is bringing His people to a full victory. He is calling His saints out of sectarian religion, and He is amassing a people under the leadership of Christ. Thank God, this is not something being done in a corner! Daniel 2:35 says it "filled the whole earth."

Jesus Is "the Glory of the LORD"

When we understand this portion of the vision of Christ, we see that "**the bow**," or the rainbow, portrays the characteristics, attributes, and various periods comprising the Gospel Day. **Ezekiel 1:28** reads, "**As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.**" Enlightenment was brought to mankind. Ephesians 1:17-18 tells us who brings that enlightenment, saying, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Jesus said in John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . . whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." When the Holy Spirit enlightens the eyes of our understanding (the "**brightness**") concerning the "**rain**" (the doctrine) and "**the bow**" (the covenant), and after He has made us part of "the fruit of his loins" (part of the seed of Christ, born as one of the people of God), then what enables us to have a vision, or an "**appearance of . . . the glory of the LORD**" (**verse 28**)? Hebrews 1:2-3 tells us, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, . . . Who being the brightness of his glory . . ." "**The glory of the LORD**" is Christ. The doctrine of His Word brought in by the new covenant through the Holy Spirit has brought us new life. It has made us a living creature. We can truly get a vision and see Christ because Christ is "**the glory of the LORD**," and as we are "conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), we can reflect that glory.

Is the glory of God a person? We read in Ezekiel 43:2, "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his [personal pronoun] voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory." This tells us "the glory" is a he ("his"). When John described Christ in Revelation 1:15, he said, "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters." Revelation 1:11 tells us this is the "Alpha and Omega," and Revelation 22:13 and 16 tells us the "Alpha and Omega" is "I Jesus." Jesus is "**the glory of the LORD.**"

How does the world get a vision of the glory of God? When John received a vision of the church in this evening time, he was told in Revelation 21:9, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." According to Revelation 21:11, her first and most outstanding attribute was "having the glory of God." What produced it? The verse continues, "Her light was like unto a stone most precious [Christ; 1 Peter 2:6-7]." Her light was the light of Christ. We reflect the glory of God to the world when we take in the doctrine that comes from His Word (the "**rain**" produced by the new covenant, "**the bow**" that ushered in the advent of the Holy Spirit), and through that message, His Spirit make us "the fruit of his loins." We are then His seed, His people, and as His people, we lift up Him and the truths of "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Thus, we not only enjoy the glory of God ourselves, but we show it forth to a sin-filled world.

The "**glory of the LORD**" is Christ. Christ is revealed. A vision of Christ becomes clear when it is upheld by the living creatures, when we support, uphold, and stand for the "**bright-**

ness" (the enlightenment we receive concerning the Word by the Holy Ghost), **"the glory of the LORD"** (or Christ) is revealed. It puts people in a position to hear His voice. The last portion of **Ezekiel 1:28** says, **"I heard a voice."** Taking hold of the truths that come from the doctrine which the Holy Spirit reveals enables us to hear a **"voice,"** or to receive divine revelation. As this portion of Ezekiel's vision concludes, we see the living creatures who have formed a canopy (or a platform) act as a chariot (or a manner of conveyance) of the presence of Christ. The only way this world is going to see Christ, or see His presence manifested, is through the church, the saints. When He is "lifted up" (John 12:32), men will see validation of Christ as God. They will see Him as more than just a good man and a good teacher when they see "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). They will see Christ as God. They will see heavenly purity when they behold your walk. They will see that He is the way for man to live holy. It will cause them to consider eternity. They will see this is possible because of who Christ is and because of who He uses as His Agent—the Holy Ghost. Christ came to bring "a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20), a new covenant, a Holy Ghost dispensation. Through the Holy Ghost, we receive a new heart, a new life. We can receive **"brightness"** through His enlightenment, and this is what makes the glory of God visible to mankind (Revelation 21:11).

This chapter portrays predominately the inception of these prophetic realities. It depicts the Incarnation, the institution of the redemptive plan, the advent of the Holy Spirit, the life He brought, and the church He instituted in A.D. 33. It also portrays characteristics and nature throughout what Isaiah 30:26 calls the "seven days, in the day." As we behold the beautiful, prophetic picture portrayed in these verses, we must ask ourselves, are we upholding Christ and His truth in such a way that others can see Christ? Are we revealing the redemptive plan of Christ? Are we walking in the **"brightness,"** or the enlightenment He has provided to us? This is the only way the world will see **"the glory of the LORD."** The morning-time church did this effectively in the first portion of the Gospel Day, and they serve as an example to us. The song writer said, *"Back to the light of the morning, Jesus our captain leads."* We are getting back to that which was "from the beginning" (1 John 1:1).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TYPICAL TRUTH CONCERNING THE POSITION OF OLD ISRAEL

Ezekiel 2:1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.

4 For they are impudent children and stiff hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.

We have been studying the prophecies of Ezekiel and following the prophetic scheme in the Book of Ezekiel that utilizes visions and types to parallel the realities of this New Testament Gospel Day. In Chapter 1, we saw the predominant, prophetic picture (or prophetic time study) was at the commencement of this Gospel Day (A.D. 33). As we proceed to Chapter 2, we find the scene and event have changed to a typical depiction of the position of old Israel. As we view this Scripture passage, there are a couple of truths of which we must ever be mindful. The first is, these Old Testament texts not only contain historical merit (certainly, they serve as a historical record, and there is a historical benefit), but many serve as historical types as well. What occurred literally in Ezekiel's day represents spiritual truths that have occurred in this New Testament dispensation.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things [the proceeding ten verses let us know they were Old Testament events] happened unto them for ensamples." The word "ensamples" in the Greek is the word *tipos*, which means "a type." This verse in *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says, "These things occurred to them typically." Another rendering offers it as, "These things, by way of type, were happening to them." We must be reminded *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a *type* as "a person or thing or an event that represents or symbolizes another, especially another that is to come."

The second principle we must recognize is that history is cyclic. It runs in cycles. The words of the wise man, recorded in Ecclesiastes 1:9, state, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." History is recurrent. Our text not only has a *literal* application to the time then present (in the proximity of 595 B.C.), but these things also occurred to them *typically* (as a type or representation). This text reveals the typical truth concerning the position of old Israel. In the closing verses of Chapter 1, the prophet portrayed a symbolic picture, a prophetic portrayal, of Christ. Ezekiel 1:28 reads, "I heard a voice of one that spake." This was the voice of Christ. As Chapter 2 commences, **verse 1** reads, "**And he said unto me . . .**" This voice of Christ spoke to the

Prophet Ezekiel. Who was the primary subject being addressed in Chapter 2? **Ezekiel 2:3** states, **"And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel."** The focal point of this second chapter is **"the children of Israel"**: how God wanted the prophet to understand their condition and their position (a type of New Testament reality that we will study as well).

"A Rebellious Nation . . . Even Unto This Very Day"

Ezekiel 1:28 tells us Ezekiel "fell upon [his] face" when he saw this portion of the vision (just as the revelator did when he saw a vision of Christ in Revelation 1:17; there are great similarities). This chapter, predominately, portrays **"the children of Israel"** as **"rebellious."** **Ezekiel 2:3** describes them as **"a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day."** Even though the Jews were still in captivity, they were experiencing the wrath of God because of their rebellion. They were still rebelling **"even unto this very day [595 B.C.]."** Five times in ten verses, the word **"rebellious"** is used to describe the condition and position of **"the children of Israel."** Spiritually, old **"Israel"** was in a deplorable state at this time. Ezekiel received this message in a time of terrible, national apostasy. As soon as Ezekiel commenced his prophetic ministry, the first direct message given to him was concerning the condition and position of old **"Israel."** That serves as a type. Christ (as well as the morning-time church) had no sooner begun the New Testament message when He had to contend with the sad spiritual condition and position of old **"Israel"** as well.

This had been a perennial position with old **"Israel."** In Matthew 23:29-35, Jesus said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! [He was speaking to the leaders of the Jewish nation, those who were at the zenith of their religious organization. What was their spiritual condition? 'Hypocrites.'] because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? [Literal serpents and vipers do not go to hell. Jesus was speaking in a symbolic language, which represented their spiritual state. When the serpent appeared to Eve and contradicted God's Word, he worked to deceive her. He sowed unbelief in her mind, saying, 'You shall not surely die'; Genesis 3:4. These religious leaders were operating under the same type of spirit.]

"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you [the Jewish nation] may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." This was from the first family ("Abel"), "unto the blood of Zacharias." *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* says, "The space from Abel to Zacharias covers the whole history of the Jews."

Christ was charging the entire history of the Jews as being a **"rebellious"** people. Throughout their history, they repeatedly acted in a **"rebellious"** manner toward God and toward His truth. Our text in **verse 3** says they are **"rebellious"**; they **"rebelled"** and **"transgressed."** This serves as a vivid type of what Christ and the church contended with at the commencement of the New Testament dispensation. When Christ first made His Advent, we read in John 1:11, "He came unto his own [the Jewish nation, the Hebrew people], and his own received him not." The Jews rejected Jesus from the onset. Notice, the verse says, "He came unto his own." Initially, Jesus exclusively worked with old Judaism when the Syrophenician woman came to Jesus, beseeching His aid, saying, "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (Matthew 15:22). Look

at Jesus' response in verses 23-24: "But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."



The "house of Israel" is to whom Jesus initially appealed. He initially offered the opportunity exclusively to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." When the Gospel Day was under full sway, in the morning time, Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, [The Jews were where the priority was at the commencement of this Gospel Day. However, it had widened out at this juncture.] and also to the Greek." Under the Old Testament, the Jews enjoyed a special favored position. Romans 3:1-2 reads: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." They had an "advantage" for God had given them the Word and the Messianic prophecies. They had been schooled on "he who was to come." They had been delivered "the oracles of God." No other people had. If any people should have been ready for the Advent of the Messiah, it should have been the Jewish people.

The Gospel was presented to the Jewish people first, but Acts 13:44 reads: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God [Paul's first missionary journey]. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy [that still keeps many people from taking the truth today], and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [the Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

The Gospel was first sent to that Jewish nation, which our text styles as a "**rebellious nation**" (verse 3). However, we must recognize the truth concerning God's foreknowledge. This foreknowledge was spoken of by Isaiah. Isaiah 46:9-10 tells us: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." Isaiah 42:8-9 states: "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images, Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." The Scriptures are clear concerning God's foreknowledge. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 147:5, "His understanding is infinite." There are those of the erroneous persuasion that when Jesus came unto His own and His own received Him not, it thwarted the plan of God. Some say there has not been a tick on the prophetic clock since the Jews rejected Christ. Certainly, that does not give validity to Isaiah's words: "I am God . . . Declaring the end from the beginning."

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"Declaring the End From the Beginning"

What significance do these prophecies have "before they spring forth"? God said, "I tell you of them," for He declares "the end from the beginning." Go to Daniel's prophecy concerning the seventy prophetic weeks. We certainly do not have the space to delve into that in its depth, but let us gain a couple of truths in overview. Daniel 9:24 says, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people." The word "determined" in our English language does not clearly describe what is meant to be conveyed. The Hebrew word is *chathak*, and it means "to cut off." In the Hebrew,

it says, "Seventy weeks to cut off thy people." At the end of the prophetic seventy weeks, old Israel was going to be cut off. Daniel understood this prophecy.

Daniel 10:1-3 tells us: "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed [seventy prophetic weeks] was long [four hundred and ninety years]: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Daniel was grieved and mourning because he realized after these seventy prophetic weeks, old "Israel" was going to be cut off as a people. God was "declaring the end from the beginning." Before things occur, He declares them. God knew what Israel's reaction to the Messiah would be.

Daniel 9:24 says, "Seventy weeks are determined [the Hebrew says 'to cut off'] upon thy people." This is referring to one single people. Daniel 1:3 calls them "the children of Israel." Daniel 10:14 reads, "Now I am come [an angel appeared and spoke to Daniel] to make thee understand what shall befall thy people ['the children of Israel'; Daniel 1:3] in the latter days [the *Septuagint* says 'the last days']." Biblically, the last days commenced in A.D. 33 (Acts 2:16-17). The "seventy weeks" is a prophetic time figure. These actually are "week years." To understand what the reckoning of them is, let us go to Genesis 29:27. Jacob had labored for seven years to receive Rachel to wife, and when Laban deceived him, he married Leah. Yet, he still loved Rachel. It reads, "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years." Leah's "week" was seven days. For Jacob to "fulfil her week," he labored "yet seven other years." Thus, a prophetic week (seven days) equals seven years. Let us get another Scripture. After the spies had gone into Kadesh Barnea, spied out the land, and came back with an evil report, we read in Numbers 14:34, "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." Thus, "each day for a year" lets us know a day represents a year.

In Ezekiel 4:6, God told the prophet, "And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year." When read in Daniel 9:24, "Seventy weeks are determined," using the prophetic measurement of "each day for a year" means four hundred ninety days (a week has seven days, and seven days times "seventy weeks" equals four hundred ninety days) equals four hundred and ninety years. Starting the measurement there takes us "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25).

The seventy prophetic weeks are a historical timeline (457 B.C. to A.D. 33), a total of 490 years.

It is taking us from the time the Jews came out of Babylonian captivity, when Cyrus and Darius (the kings who began the joint Medo-Persian empire) came into control and Cyrus gave the decree to the Jews to go back and rebuild (in 457 B.C. using the Anstey-Mauro chronological system), to "Messiah the Prince" being cut off. That brings us to A.D. 33. If you add 457 to 33, that equals 490 years. These seventy prophetic weeks are a historical timeline. We read in Ezra 1:1-3: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia [457 B.C. by the Anstey-Mauro chronological system], that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem."

Cyrus' decree was issued in 457 B.C. When did the seventy prophetic weeks end? Paul, called to be "the apostle of the Gentiles," (Romans 11:13), was saved in A.D. 33. Acts 13:46-47 reads: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [the Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." There was the end of that seventy prophetic weeks (or 490 years). This substantiates that at the end of the seventy weeks, old "**Israel**" lost their favored position. The Scriptures are plain.

The first condition with which Christ and the morning-time church had to contend was old "**Israel**" and Judaism. **Ezekiel 2:4** portrays them as "**impudent children and stiff hearted,**" or one rendering says "stubborn." Being stubborn is not always a good attribute. There is a difference between being *determined* and being *stubborn*. God wants a *determined* people, but He does not want a *stubborn* people. Samuel told King Saul to destroy all the Amalekites, but he did not do that. First Samuel 15:23 says, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." God views stubbornness "as iniquity and idolatry." That is exactly the reason old "**Israel**" in Ezekiel's day had been carried away into captivity. They had gone into idolatry, and they were very stubborn when reproved by the prophet. Ezekiel's writings refer to them as "**impudent children and stiff hearted.**" Let us take a broad jump from Ezekiel's day and look at the anti-type. As Stephen was preaching to the Sanhedrin (the Jewish supreme court of the day), we read in Acts 7:51, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." The *Amplified Bible* says, "Stubborn and stiff-necked."

The Jewish nation opposed Christ. When Christ first graced the stage of time, we read in John 5:18 how they opposed Him. It says, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." They were ready to kill Him. They also opposed the morning-time church. We read in Acts 14:2, "But the unbelieving Jews [in Iconium; verse 1] stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." They fought against the brethren. All this took place in the dawn of this Christian dispensation. The Jews were "unbelieving," and they turned the minds of others. They worked to evil affect people against the brethren and against the truth they were preaching.

Acts 14:19 reads, "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium [these Jews followed Paul from Antioch and Iconium to Lystra], who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." That is how they opposed the morning-time church. They were "**a rebellious house,**" an unbelieving people. **Verse 6** reads, "**And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions** [remember, we are dealing in symbolism]: **be not afraid of their words** [physical scorpions do not talk, but these '**scorpions**' did], **nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.**" This "**rebellious house**" God was talking about was "**the children of Israel . . . a rebellious nation**" (**verse 3**). The Lord was talking about old "**Israel,**" and He likened them to "**scorpions.**"

In the Middle East, there is a deadly scorpion. Its sting is a deadly sting, and the sting is in the tail. This is a picture of the end of a rebellious life. It has a deadly sting at the end. Rebellion is sin, and the wages of sin is death. Where is the sting of death? It is in sin. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death." That is spiritual death, but what about physical death? What is its sting? First Corinthians 15:55-56 tells us: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin"; and rebellion is sin. The Prophet Samuel said to King Saul,

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:23). Rebellion is sin, and the wages of sin is death. At the end of a rebellious life is that terrible sting of everlasting death. This is why the Lord likened this "**rebellious house**" of "**Israel**" to "**scorpions**." The spirit of rebellion is very similar to what a scorpion does: it brings death in its end.

**Serpents represent
a RELIGIOUS spirit.
Scorpions represent
a REBELLIOUS spirit.**

Jesus told the disciples in Luke 10:19, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents." In Matthew 23:29-33, when Jesus spoke to the "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," He revealed "serpents" represent a religious spirit. How did the devil appear to Eve? He said in Genesis 3:4-5: "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof . . . ye shall be as gods." It was a religious spirit. Yet, Jesus said to His disciples, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents" (religious spirits) and "**scorpions**" (rebellious spirits). Jesus was not talking about handling literal snakes or treading on literal scorpions; rather, He was symbolizing the nature of these spirits.

Luke 10:19-20 states: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on [put under your feet, being in a victorious position over] serpents [religious spirits] and scorpions [rebellious spirits], and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you." Those "serpents" and "scorpions" are representing "spirits." People are rebellious because they have a rebellious spirit. People do the things they do and live in the manner they live because of the spirit they possess. People are bound with rebellion because they have a rebellious spirit. It is a spirit of the enemy, a spirit of the devil. Jesus gave His people "power . . . over all the power of the enemy," over serpents (or religious spirits), over "**scorpions**" (or rebellious spirits), and "nothing shall by any means hurt you."

The Condition and the Consequences of Old Israel

We read in Matthew 13:53-58: "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country [Nazareth and Galilee], he taught them in their synagogue [He came to the Jew first], insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? [People have a hard time getting past literalism. 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' No, they had it wrong. This is the Carpenter. He is the One who is going to build the church.] is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?"

"And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not [here is the Lord of glory] many mighty works there [why?] because of their unbelief." Unbelief knocked these people out. Therefore, when He "came unto to his own, his own received him not." It was because of unbelief. This is the besetting sin. After Hebrews, Chapter 11, talks about "By faith," it then gives the Faith's Who's Who, or Faith's Hall of Fame. Then, Hebrews 12:1 reads, "Wherefore [or because of what was said previously in Chapter 11] seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [all the ones mentioned in the previous chapter], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin [singular] which doth so easily beset us." The besetting sin is unbelief.

Unbelief knocked the first family out of their position. We read in Genesis 3:1-3: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch

it, lest ye die." Read exactly what God said in Genesis 2:16-17, which states, "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Did God say anything about not touching the tree? No, He did not! When God put man in the garden, he was "to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). That would require touching it. God never said, "Do not touch it." (Note, Adam was not created in the Garden of Eden, but after he was created, God put him in the Garden of Eden; Genesis 2:8. There is a real type there. Many people get saved at home or they may get saved in Babylon, but 1 Corinthians 12:18 says, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.") The serpent came to Eve because he knew she was already galled at not being allowed to eat of that tree. Thus, when the enemy approached her, she made the commandment *more* than God made it. She amplified it because it was already amplified in her life. Genesis 3:4 says, "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." He was sowing unbelief. His first approach to mankind with sin was through unbelief; yet, he approached as a religious spirit, promising "ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5).

When Jesus came on the stage of action in the New Testament, John 1:29 reads, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Notice the word "sin" is in the singular. Why? Because this is the root of all sin. If this sin is dealt with, then all other sins can be addressed. What is the sin? Jesus spoke in John 16:7-9, saying: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he [The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost; John 14:26. There is only 'one Spirit'; Ephesians 4:4.] is come, he will reprove [The *Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says 'convict.' The Greek word means 'convict and convince.'] the world of sin [singular] . . . because they believe not on me."

The sin of unbelief is the sin of all sins. All other sins proceed from it. That is the besetting sin which Hebrews 12:1 talks about. That is the sin which overcame old "Israel" repeatedly. Hebrews

Unbelief is the besetting sin. All other sins proceed from the sin of unbelief.

3:12 tells us, "Take heed, brethren [he was talking to 'brethren,' not the world], lest there be in any of you [the 'brethren'] an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Verses 17-18 read: "But with whom was he grieved forty years [talking about Israel in the wilderness]? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?"

The Israelites could not enter Canaan because of unbelief. That was a repeated issue with the Old Testament house of Israel. This was the sin that worked at the dawn of Creation and was also the sin that worked at the dawn of the Gospel Day. We see a vivid example of this in Matthew 15:1-9. It reads: "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees [the religious leaders of old Judaism], which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded [going back to the Old Testament, the Torah, the Pentateuch], saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

"But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did

Esaias [Greek for the Hebrew name Isaiah] prophesy of you, saying [quoting Isaiah 29:13], This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Jesus quoted that which God gave them, the Torah, which is also called the Pentateuch. The word "Pentateuch" is from a Greek word meaning "fivefold volume," because Moses wrote five books. God gave them the Pentateuch, but centuries later, these Jewish leaders wrote what became known as the *Talmud* ("the authoritative body of Jewish tradition"; *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). At the time of Jesus' First Advent, the Jewish leaders gave more credence and weight to the Talmud (the tradition of the elders) than they did to the Torah (the Word of God).

It is the same in spiritual Babylon today. You can read Scriptures right out of the Bible, and many will say, "But my church does not teach that." They are just like those Jewish leaders who were following the traditions of men rather than the Word of God. Nothing has changed. "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). It is the same in the twenty-first century as it was in that first century. The Talmud was dramatically, diametrically opposite to the instructions of the Torah. What produced it? What was behind it? It was unbelief fostered by a religious spirit. They believed the tradition of the elders *more* than they did the Word of God because they were full of unbelief.

What were the consequences? **Ezekiel 3:4** gives the type, saying they were "**stiff hearted.**" Stephen, the first Christian martyr, preaching to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:51, called them "stiff-necked." Proverbs 29:1 warns, "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." One rendering says "stiffens his neck." Another says "stiffeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed." (Please do not misunderstand; we are not against people. Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers . . . against spiritual wickedness [the Greek says 'wicked spirits'] in high places." We are dealing with spirits that have produced moves and generated religious systems that are contrary to the teachings of God's eternal Word, systems that dupe, damn, and deceive the souls of men. We are not laboring or warring against people, but against those systems.)

Israel Was Cut Off "Without Remedy"

Why did Proverbs 29:1 say that they were cut off "without remedy"? Go back to 2 Chronicles, Chapter 36. Although it is talking about King Zedekiah, yet the principle applies in a broader scope than just him. Second Chronicles 36:13-16 tells us: "And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck [this stiffening your neck and rebelling goes together], and hardened his heart [that is also a portion of it] from turning unto the LORD God of Israel. Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

There was "no remedy" because "**Israel**" had sinned against the remedy. The remedy was God's messengers, His words, and the prophets He sent. When they mocked the messengers, despised the words, and misused His prophets, they sinned against the remedy. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, and when they refused Him, they sinned against the remedy until there was no remedy. When John the Baptizer commenced his ministry and was preparing the way of the Lord, we read in Matthew 3:7-9: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and

Sadducees come to his baptism [and they did not even believe in baptism], he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

First, notice it was the Pharisees and Sadducees, the leaders of Judaism, who came to John's baptism, but they had not come with "fruits meet for repentance," and John perceived that immediately. He told them they were "vipers." He also said, "God is able of these stones to raise up children." John was not talking about the literal stones laying on the river bank. To see what stones he was saying could be raised up to become children of God, read Ezekiel 36:26-27, which states: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." John was talking about the condition of men's hearts. They had stony hearts. John said in Matthew 3:9-10: "I say unto you, that God is able of these stones [these stony hearts] to raise up children unto Abraham [but for this to happen, they had to 'Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance'; verse 8]. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees."

Malachi 4:1 says, "For, behold, the day cometh, [It was not in Malachi's day. It was not in the Old Testament dispensation. He was picking up the prophetic glass, looking down through the telescope of time, and envisioning this New Testament dispensation.] that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh [this Gospel Day, 'the day of salvation'; 2 Corinthians 6:2] shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." When John said that "the axe" was going to be "laid unto the root," he was saying that the old tree of Judaism was going to be cut down and rooted up. This was a prophecy concerning the Jewish nation.

Matthew 21:23 reads, "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" Matthew 21:42 says, "Jesus saith unto them [chief priests and the elders of the people'; verse 23], Did ye [the Jewish people] never read in the scriptures [quoting Psalm 118:22], The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." Who is this stone? Peter, preaching to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:10-11, said: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This [quoting Psalm 118:22] is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Stone. Matthew 21:43 states, "Therefore say I unto you [addressing the Jewish leaders], The kingdom of God shall be taken from you [the old Jewish nation], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Again, in Matthew 3:8 John the Baptizer told them the fruits were "repentance." They needed to repent, have a change of heart and a change of direction. Then Matthew 21:44 says, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone [Jesus Christ] shall be broken."

Psalms 51:17 tells us, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." When Matthew 21:44 talks about falling on the "stone," verse 43 says, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you [old Judaism], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits ['fruits' of 'repentance'; Matthew 3:8]." When they fall with a broken and contrite spirit on "this stone" (Jesus Christ of Nazareth; Acts 4:10-11), then they become the "nation." We are talking about "The kingdom of God," the spiritual reality, and a people who bring forth fruits make up that "nation." When those people fall on Christ with a broken and contrite spirit and come in old-time Bible repentance, what happens? We read in Galatians 6:15-16: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as

many as walk according to this rule" What "rule"? Becoming "a new creature." How do you become "a new creature"? When you bring forth "fruits meet for repentance," fall on the Stone (Jesus Christ), recognize Him as the head of the corner, and come with a broken and contrite spirit, that is when you meet the Bible conditions and become a "new creature." Verse 16 tells us this constitutes the "Israel of God." The "nation" Jesus said He was going to give the kingdom to is this New Testament "Israel of God." It is those who "walk according to this rule." They are new creatures.

Notice Jesus' pronouncements concerning the old Jewish nation. Matthew 8:5-9 reads: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Then, Jesus said in Matthew 8:10, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Why? Because all He was dealing with out of old "**Israel**" was unbelief.

Matthew 8:11-12 reads: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom [old Judaism] shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Luke's Gospel is a little more explicit. Luke 13:26-30 states: "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

The "last" was the Gentiles, but now they "shall be first." The ones to whom the Gospel went to "first," the Jews, were now "last." Jesus said in verse 29 that they "shall sit down in the kingdom of God," and those who were "first" will be "last." To understand what He was talking about, look at who He was talking to. We read in Luke 13:6-9: "He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, [Who is that referencing? Who had He been working with for three years? 'He came unto his own.'] and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Jesus had worked with the Jews for the past three years, and it would be another half a year in His public ministry until He was crucified. By that time, He had given them ample opportunity, and they repeatedly rejected it to where He proclaimed, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). After that pronouncement, Jesus worked with them for another half a prophetic week in the morning time, for a total of seven years, concluding that seventieth prophetic week, which is mentioned in Daniel, Chapter 9. Yet, there still was no fruit. Thus, old "**Israel**" was cut down, just as those in the wilderness were cut off, or broken off, because of their unbelief. Romans 11:19-21 states: "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches [old Judaism], take heed lest he also spare not thee." We must recognize, old "**Israel**" has been "broken off," cut off. They are no longer

a favored people of God. They hold no special position. If they come, they must come individually, as anyone else comes in response to the Gospel.

In the Book of Ezekiel, "**Israel**" is referred to as "**a rebellious house**" three times (2:5, 6, 8), as "**a rebellious nation**" (2:3), and as a "**most rebellious**" (2:7). Thirteen times, Israel is referred to as rebellious in Ezekiel. Look at the pronouncement Jesus made upon them, as it will be germane to where we tie in. Jesus went in at least three times to that temple, and He cleansed it twice. He went in that first time and let them know, "Make not *my Father's* house an house of merchandise" (John 2:16). He went in the second time and referred to it as "*my* house" (Matthew 21:12-13). The third time and final time He went in, He referred to it as "*your* house" (Matthew 23:38). Why? God was done. Jesus said in Matthew 23:37-38: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Once it became "*your* house," Jesus said, it "is left unto you desolate." Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:15, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand)." Then, Jesus prophesied about how "the abomination of desolation" would occur, and in A.D. 70, under Prince Titus and the Roman army, it did (more on that in our next study).

False teachers advocate old, literal "**Israel**" is a favored people. Sectarian preachers proclaim, "A friend of Israel is a friend of God." That is not what the Bible teaches. We read in John 15:14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." The Jewish nation is not God's friends because they refused Christ and His Word. They are not a special people now after the flesh. It is not a measurement by the flesh in this dispensation. Philippians 3:3-8 reads: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more [Paul then gave his Jewish, or Hebrew, credentials]: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss [those Jewish credentials were 'but loss'] for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Paul wrote that we "have no confidence in the flesh." Second Corinthians 5:16-17 states: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh [the old dispensation was all fleshly measurement: a fleshly birth, fleshly circumcision, fleshly lineage, fleshly observances]: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh [Christ appeared to Paul in the flesh on the Damascus road; Acts 9:17], yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away." In this context, Paul was not talking about when somebody gets saved, but about how those old things under the old economy are passed away, and now all things are under a new economy. It is no longer a fleshly, literal measurement, but a spiritual measurement. There is no difference now based on literal lineage.

Galatians 3:28 reads, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." It is no longer after a literal birth, a literal circumcision, a literal lineage. Jesus came unto His own, and His own received him not. God spoke the end before the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). He knew that His own would not receive Him. Because of that, He prophesied of what would occur. The condition and position of old "**Israel**" was a position of unbelief, and they are still in that position today. The only way they will ever get help is coming in faith, believing.

Israel Was Made "Desolate"

Daniel 9:27 states, "And he [verse 26 says this is 'Messiah,' which in Hebrew means 'the anointed one'; it is 'Christos' in the Greek, which means the same thing] shall confirm the covenant [the new covenant Jesus came to institute] with many for one week [or seven years, using prophetic time symbols; Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, [The midst of seven is three and a half. Christ's public ministry was for three and a half years. At the end of three and a half years, He made a sacrifice for sins and did away with those Old Testament sacrifices; Hebrews 9:25-26.] and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate."

Daniel 9:24 says, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city." Because of "the overspreading of abominations," God was going to make the "holy city" (Jerusalem) "desolate." The end of verse 27 reads, "Even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Jesus worked with old **"Israel"** for three-and-a-half years. In the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, there was a call to cut the tree down, but in Luke 13:6-9, Jesus (in essence) said, "Let me work with it a little longer, and then if it does not bear fruit, I will cut it down." However, it did not bear fruit, and Jesus said in Matthew 23:37-38: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house [the house of Israel] is left unto you desolate."

The disciples showed Jesus the beauties of Herod's temple (a great wonder that, according to John 2:20, took forty-six years to build, with some stones being thirty feet long by six feet wide, made of white marble and plated with gold). We read in Matthew 24:2, "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things [speaking of the temple]? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Then Jesus explained, saying in Matthew 24:15-22: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet [Daniel 9:27], stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." This text is famously used by dispensationalists to teach a supposed great coming tribulation. Millenarians teach this is a worldwide tribulation period (many say of seven years' duration). Jesus said in Matthew 24:16, "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." If it is to be a worldwide tribulation, where could you flee? What good would it be to flee to "the mountains" if it was a worldwide tribulation? This lets us know it was something regarding "Judaea," not worldwide.

We read in Matthew 24:17-18 and 20: "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes [indicating that if they fled to the mountains, they would be in a position of safety, but if they came back into the afflicted area, their safety would be in great jeopardy] . . . But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter [if it was a seven-year tribulation period, there would be at least seven winters], neither on the sabbath day [a seven-year tribulation period would include three hundred and sixty-four Sabbath days]." This is not speaking of a worldwide tribulation. Matthew was a Hebrew, and his audience was predominantly those of Jewish stock. Therefore, he used

many Old Testament Scriptures. He spoke of "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15), the same terminology spoken of by the Prophet Daniel in Daniel 9:27. Luke was a Gentile, and he wrote his Gospel account for the benefit of Gentiles so they could understand Hebrew imagery.

This has great relevance to our text in Ezekiel because this is being typified in Ezekiel, Chapter 2. It reveals what the result of rebellion and unbelief can be. Luke put it in this context in Luke 21:20, writing, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." Again, this is not worldwide, but localized, speaking of Jerusalem. Remember, Daniel 9:24 says, "Seventy weeks," or four hundred and ninety years, "are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city," Jerusalem. The abomination of desolation that Daniel and Matthew spoke of is when Jerusalem would be compassed with armies. Luke 21:21 says, "Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains [what Matthew, quoting Jesus, called the great tribulation was localized to Judaea, to Jerusalem, not worldwide]; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out [evidently, there must have been a way to depart and enjoy safety from this tribulation]; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." If they were in another country, they were in a safe place. It was Jerusalem that was going to be compassed with these armies.

"The Abomination of Desolation" Is the "Great Tribulation"

Luke 21:22-24 reads: "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land [not the *world*, but 'in the *land*'], and wrath upon this people [not *all* people, but '*this* people'—old Judaism]. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." It is important to understand what this desolation actually is because this is what we are seeing a type of in Ezekiel 4:1-3, which reads: "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem: And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel." The antitype of this is the picture of what Daniel and Jesus prophesied and what had occurred historically. Yet, this prophecy goes back even further. (Remember, the Lord knows "the end from the beginning"; Isaiah 46:10.)

Deuteronomy 28:48-57 says: "Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron [That is figurative, but who is referred to in the Old Testament by iron? The image Nebuchadnezzar saw was composed of four metallic substances; Daniel 2:32-33. The fourth metallic substance, representing the fourth kingdom, was iron. When Daniel saw four beasts, representing the same four kingdoms, the fourth beast was described in Daniel 7:19 as 'exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron.' Verse 20 says it had 'ten horns,' which Revelation 12:3 calls the 'red dragon,' or the Roman Empire.] upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee [referring to the Roman Empire].

"The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed

thee. And he shall besiege thee [Jesus talked about Jerusalem being compassed with armies; Luke 21:20. Ezekiel 4:1-3 talks about besieging the city. Here it is prophesied of in Deuteronomy in the proximity of 1451 B.C.] in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

"And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, [Jesus said, 'Woe unto them . . . that give suck in those days'; Matthew 24:19. Why? They were going to become so desperate, they would eat the fruit of their own bodies. That actually occurred in A.D. 70.] the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee: So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates."

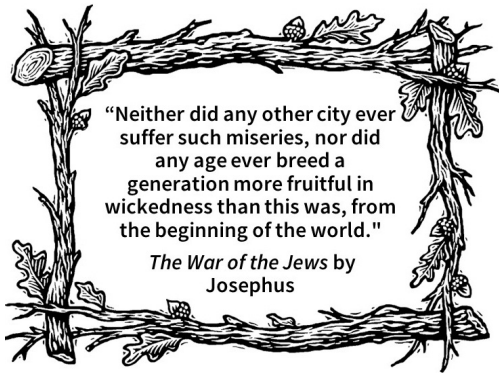
This graphic and repulsive account came about because of Christ coming to His own and His own receiving Him not (John 1:11). The cause was unbelief for which old **"Israel"** paid a terrible price! We have read several prophecies: Deuteronomy, Daniel, Matthew, and Luke. The writings of the famous Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, verified what happened was exactly as the Scriptures said. This took place in A.D. 70, under Prince Titus and the Roman armies. It is the antitype of what we read in Ezekiel, Chapter 4.

I want to expand on the truth concerning that which dispensationalists want to put out in the realms of the future. Jesus said in Matthew 24:21, "For then [the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet; verse 15] shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." These historical accounts from Josephus validate what Jesus called the "great tribulation." Flavius Josephus wrote these were literally fulfilled. He told of a mother named Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, from the country beyond Jordan who killed her child for food and then publicly confessed it (just as Deuteronomy 28:53 said would occur).

Josephus wrote of those fearful days of the siege and famine: "Then did the famine widen its progress and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market-place like shadows, all swelled with famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. As for burying them, those that were sick themselves were not able to do it; and those that were hearty and well were deterred from doing it by the great multitude of those dead bodies, and by the uncertainty there was how soon they should die themselves; for many died as they were burying others, and many went to their coffins before that fatal hour was come. Nor was there any lamentations made under these calamities, nor were heard any mournful complaints; but the famine confounded all natural passions; for those who were just going to die looked upon those that were gone to rest before them with dry eyes and open mouths. A deep silence also, and a kind of deadly night, had seized upon the city Now every one of these died with their eyes fixed upon the temple."

Josephus' account tells of the dreadful story of a woman who in those days killed, roasted,

and ate her suckling child. He wrote that when the Romans had taken the city and were going through it to plunder, they were so stricken with horror at what they saw, they could not but stay their hands. When the Romans were come to the houses to plunder, they found entire families of dead people. The upper rooms were full of corpses. They stood in such horror at this sight that they went out without touching anything.



Josephus himself shared in the horrors of the siege. He told that 97,000 people were taken captive and enslaved and 1,100,000 died in this siege. After the siege was over, 11,000 more perished from starvation and 97,000 were carried away. In Josephus' writing, *The War of the Jews*, he said, "I shall, therefore, speak my mind here at once briefly, that neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world." Josephus was validating what Jesus said in Matthew 24:21, when He stated, "For

then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

The Romans were fierce. Josephus told of bodies piled five feet deep and the ground being so full of crosses where the Romans crucified those who remained that there was no room for any more crosses. The Romans had no regard, just as the prophecy in Deuteronomy said, for the young or the old. They used the swords on women who were with child and cut out the unborn babies. They threw babies up in the air and then caught them on the end of their swords in sport. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* tells us this desolation of Jerusalem took place on Friday, August 9, A.D. 70. It was the same day that centuries earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jerusalem.

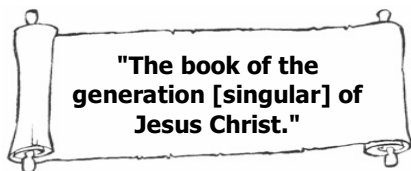
All this occurred because of unbelief. That ought to cause a soberness in how we treat Christ and His truth. We read in Romans 11:22 (right after talking about how God cut off the natural branches), "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God." God has a goodness (and He would much rather operate in goodness), but there comes a time when He operates in severity, wrath, and judgment. We need to understand that this all occurred because of Israel's unbelief. Old "**Israel**" was cut off, just as the prophecy in Daniel said they would be.

Israel Is No Longer a Literal Lineage but a Spiritual Measurement

There are no special people or favored physical lineage in this New Testament dispensation. There are no special people after the flesh. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:3-9: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more [Paul gave his Jewish credentials]: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Notice Paul spoke of "no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3), but he said this even stronger in 2 Corinthians 5:16, writing, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh [Christ actually appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus; he saw Christ in the flesh, a glorified Christ; Acts 9:3-5, 17], yet now henceforth know we him no more." The Old Testament, the old economy, was all "after the flesh." It was a natural birth, a natural lineage, a natural heritage, a natural circumcision, but Paul let us know that with Jesus Christ, things had changed. Second Corinthians 5:17 reads, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." That is not contextually talking about a person's experience but about the change of dispensation, that the old covenant (the old dispensation, the old economy that was after the flesh, the natural lineage, birth, heritage, circumcision) had passed away and now there was a new covenant. It was now in Christ, and it was spiritual.

Today, there is no difference from one literal nation to another, from one flesh to another. The literal Jew is no more favored than the Russian, the Chinese, the American, or any other nationality. It is now based on spiritual lineage. We read in Galatians 3:28-29: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The "promise" is now to a spiritual seed (not a literal seed), to a spiritual lineage (not a literal lineage).



Until Christ ushered in this New Testament dispensation, the measure was literal. Notice in the genealogies in Matthew, Chapter 1, under the Old Testament, that there were *many* genealogies and *many* generations. It repeatedly speaks of "*generations*" in the plural. Matthew 1:17 states, "So all the generations [plural] from Abraham to David are fourteen generations [plural]; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations [plural]; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations [plural]." Under the old economy, it was all literal generations, lineage, heritage, but look at what Matthew 1:1 says (the first verse of our New Testament canon): "The book of the *generation* [singular] of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Under the Old Testament, it was all a literal measurement of generation after generation, but when Christ came, He ushered in one spiritual generation. Isaiah 53:8 tells us, "He [speaking of Christ] was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation [singular]?" Not only would Christ usher in a spiritual generation, but Isaiah 53:10 says that "he shall see his seed [singular]." The "generation" of Christ is "his seed." So, it is no longer a literal measurement. With Christ and this Holy Ghost dispensation being ushered in, there was a transition. The measurement changed from a literal measurement to a spiritual measurement.

It is important we deal with these truths because there are those who feel the natural Jews are still God's favored people. But the truth is very clear—they were broken off. Their unbelief cut them off. Daniel 9:27 tells us they will be "desolate, even until the consummation," or when Christ returns. The measurement now is a spiritual measurement. We read in Romans 2:28-29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly [literal or physical]; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit." It is now a spiritual work, a spiritual circumcision, a spiritual birth, a spiritual lineage. Paul wrote about the spiritual circumcision in Colossians 2:9-11, stating: "For in him [Christ; verse 8] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him [Christ], which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands."

This is not an external circumcision that deals with the flesh, but it is a spiritual circumcision, putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. This circumcision works through faith. Colossians 2:12 says, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God." It is an operation of faith; it is a spiritual circumcision. There has been a transition between the Old and the New Testaments, the old and new economy. The measurement in the old was after the flesh. The measurement in the new is after the Spirit.

The Kingdom of God Is a Spiritual Kingdom

Galatians 6:15-16 tells us: "For in Christ Jesus [if you are in Christ, you are Abraham's seed and heirs of the promise] neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, [The external, the physical, measurement is gone. What is the new measurement?] but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule [a new creature], peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The New Testament "Israel of God" are those who "walk according to this rule." They are a new creature. They have been born again. It is a spiritual measurement. A New Testament Jew is a spiritual Jew; the New Testament "Israel of God" is a spiritual people. There is a new type of Jew, a new circumcision, and a new Israel. Christ is not coming back to set up a literal kingdom, to restore old Israel, or literally to sit on David's throne. When He comes back, He is going to *deliver* "up the kingdom to God" (1 Corinthians 15:24). He will not *set* it up. It was set up back in the morning time. Christ is not going to sit on David's throne because He is already on David's throne.

In Luke, Chapter 1, Gabriel, speaking to Mary, gave the Annunciation. After he said in verse 31, "Thou . . . shalt call his name JESUS," verses 32-33 tells us: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (That beats a thousand-year reign all to pieces.) It says that God will give "him" (Christ) "the throne of . . . David." Did He do it? Look at what Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost (a Jewish feast). Jerusalem was full of devout Jews on that day.

Acts 2:29-34 reads: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh [quoting 2 Samuel 7:12], he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne [this sentence is not complete]; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ [Christ assumed David's throne when He resurrected and ascended], that his soul was not left in hell [His body was not left in the grave], neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up [raised up 'to sit on his throne'; verse 30], whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand." There is when Christ sat on David's throne. It is not something coming in a future point of time, but what Jesus assumed when He ascended.

Jesus is not coming to set up a kingdom. The kingdom has already been set up. We read in Mark 9:1, "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." From this verse, we can only conclude one of three things: (1) Jesus lied. Hebrews 4:15 says He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Lying is sin. Thus, He did not lie. So, we can dismiss that. (2) If the kingdom has not come, then somewhere there must be men who

are over two thousand years old. I think if that were the case, you would know. (3) The Kingdom of God came with power while those men were yet living.

The kingdom came with the King, Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Luke 16:16, "The law and the prophets were until John [speaking of the Baptizer]: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." You cannot get into something that does not exist. It came with Jesus Christ, but it did not come with *power* until the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 1:6, the disciples asked Jesus, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" They were still literalists right up to that point. Jesus let them know in Acts 1:7-8: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power [when?], after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." When the Holy Ghost came upon them, Peter stood right up and talked about how Christ has assumed David's throne. He had understanding when he received power. The kingdom came with power on the Day of Pentecost.

The kingdom is not something that is literal. We read in Luke 17:20-21: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come [they were looking for it just as people today are still looking for it], he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [not something that is literal, that you see with the naked eye]: Neither shall they say, Lo here [Jerusalem]! or, lo there [Salt Lake City or Pasadena, California, or Mecca or some other place]! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." It is not something that is literal and physically observable. It is a spiritual kingdom.

Romans 14:17 tells us, "For the kingdom of God is [notice he did not say, the Kingdom of God is *going to be*; he employed the present tense] not meat and drink [not literal, not physical, not temporal]; but righteousness, and peace, and joy [spiritual qualities] in the Holy Ghost." It is a spiritual kingdom. In reality, the kingdom is an experience when one gets right and the Holy Spirit moves into the heart and life, bringing the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, etc. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality. When Daniel interpreted that dream for Nebuchadnezzar and explained what those four metallic substances represented (four succeeding kingdoms), it gave us a prophetic timeline from the day of Nebuchadnezzar down to when the Stone (Christ) was cut out of the mountain without hands (a picture of the virgin birth and the First Advent of Christ), which would smite that image in the feet (during the reign of the Roman Empire). We read in Daniel 2:44, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." This took place in the days of the Roman Empire, that fourth kingdom. These truths that we are looking at should cause a soberness to strike our soul.

Come back to our text. **Ezekiel 2:3** says, "**And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me.**" They "**rebelled**" and they continued to rebel until the ax was laid at the root of the tree, and as a nation (as a people), they were rooted up, cut down, broken off, and destroyed. This all took place because of their unbelief. That is being typified in this portion of Ezekiel's writings. He was bringing us from A.D. 33 to the desolation of Jerusalem under Prince Titus and the Roman armies in A.D. 70. Romans 11:20-21 reads: "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches [old Judaism], take heed lest he also spare not thee."

This should serve as a sobering warning when we look at what unbelief has done to those of the past, for that same spirit is loose and working today. You can preach God's eternal Word to people and give godly counsel, yet they will not believe it. Unbelief is deadly! It killed 1,100,000 people in the desolation of Jerusalem. Someone might ask: "Do you think they were all filled with unbelief? What about those babies and children?" This lets us know that we all have an effect on others. When people make poor choices, it is not just them they are affecting. It is their sphere of influence: their families, their children, their posterity. Unbelief works yet today, and it is very

deceitful. The Hebrew writer said Hebrews 3:12, "Take heed, brethren, [He was not writing to the lost. He was not writing to an unregenerate world. He was writing to 'brethren,' people who had been born again.] lest there be in any of you ['brethren'] an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

Unbelief will cause you to depart from the living God. There are those who should be in various congregations, but the reason they are not where they should be is because unbelief took hold of them. They sat under the sound of the truth, and God was faithful to them, but unbelief took hold of them. Hebrews 3:13 tells us, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." This sin of unbelief is a deceitful sin. Study the history of the Jews. When they came out of Babylonian captivity, they brought many Babylonian ideas with them. Many of those false conceptions they imbibed were concerning the Messiah. They were looking for a golden age to come, for a Messiah who would come riding a white horse, throw off the Roman yoke, defeat Rome, and restore sovereignty to Israel. Christ did not come according to their conception. He came according to the Scripture, "lowly . . . upon a colt the foal of an ass," (Zechariah 9:9), but their minds had been corrupted to where they would not receive it. They would not believe it because of that unbelief.

Unbelief has been a deceitful work since the garden when the serpent appeared to Eve, saying, "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). Look what unbelief did to those in the Exodus. Hebrews 3:13 warns of "the deceitfulness of sin." Notice, the word "sin" is in the singular. The mother of all sins is unbelief, and everything else springs from that. We read in Hebrews 3:17-18: "But with whom was he grieved forty years [talking about Israel in the wilderness]? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" They could not enter because of unbelief. That was the deceitful sin which had gotten hold of them. Hebrews 12:1 calls it the besetting sin.

Hebrews 4:1-2 tells us: "Let us [that takes in us today] therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the

Fear the besetting sin—UNBELIEF.

gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." What did he caution? What are we told to fear? Fear this besetting sin: unbelief. It destroyed those in the Exodus, it destroyed old "**Israel**" in the abomination of desolation in A.D. 70, and it has destroyed many souls since then. That spirit is loose and working yet today. "Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2). What worked against their faith? Hebrews 3:19 says it was "unbelief." Ecclesiastes 1:9 tells us, "There is no new thing under the sun." The enemy will attempt to work on us in this same manner—to cause us to become rebellious to the truth, to God's Word. These Scriptures make me shudder. First Samuel 15:23 says that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." We have to be careful. Unbelief will produce rebellion. It will move us, making us feel we do not have to obey God's Word, that we can compromise Biblical standards. Yet, the Scripture is clear in 2 Corinthians 7:1, which reads, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The enemy tries to make us feel we do not have to remain a separate and distinct people. Yet, 2 Corinthians 6:17 admonishes, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." The clear implication is that if you do not do this, He will not receive you. The enemy tries to make some feel they do not have to be faithful. That is the spirit of unbelief trying to work. First Corinthians 4:2 reads, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." These are all moves to produce what

Hebrews 3:12 calls "an evil heart of unbelief." Unbelief is that which creates "an evil heart." Old **"Israel"** ought to serve as a sobering example. Romans 11:21 says, "For if God spared not the natural branches [old Israel], take heed lest he also spare not thee."

Our text depicts a sobering typical picture of **"a rebellious house,"** a picture of a people who would not take, accept, nor believe God's Word. Ultimately, that **"house"** was cut off, broken off, and then a terrible desolation took place in A.D. 70. Unbelief produces terrible tragedies yet today. May God help it serve as a sobering example to us! Our text sets forth a converse (positive) picture as well, revealing the secret of success right in the face of such a sad condition. We read in **Ezekiel 2:8, "But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee."** Take it in and make it a part of you. This is why Ezekiel was successful when others were not. It also is typical of why the morning-time ministry was successful. Likewise, it reveals how we can be successful today. (We will study more on this in our next segment.)

In our text, we see both a historical picture and a typical picture. The typical picture reveals the first opposition that was faced in the morning time: unbelief. They faced it in old Judaism, and then they faced it through the pagan Roman Empire; but they were victorious in the face of it all. Revelation 12:11 tells us, "And they overcame him [speaking of that dragon, paganism, promoted by a spirit of unbelief]." We are facing the same spirit of unbelief today. Second Corinthians 2:11 tells us not to be "ignorant of [Satan's] devices." God wants us to understand. As we proceed through this prophetic study, as we see the typology concerning this Gospel Day and what has occurred throughout this Gospel Day, it should serve as vivid, sobering lessons. We can rejoice in the victories and the triumphs, but we can also be sobered and exhorted by the sad conditions portrayed as well. Our lesson text reveals the tragic course and consequences of unbelief and rebellion and the dire, eternal necessity of taking in the truth of God's Word in order to have spiritual strength and success and not fall prey to the devices of the enemy.

I ask you, is the enemy attempting to work on you through unbelief? Have you raised up and become rebellious to the known truths of God's Word in any manner? If so, you need to pray. Unbelief will destroy you. If not, thank God for it, but take heed. It is a sobering reminder. When I read about the desolation, the atrocities, and the barbarities Josephus recorded, it makes me shudder because these were once a favored people. In Romans 3:1, Paul asked, "What advantage then hath the Jew?" They had much advantage in every way, for "unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). If there were any people who should have been ready for a Messiah and embraced the truths of His Word, it should have been old Judaism, but "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11), and then that abomination of desolation (God's judgment) was poured out on them. God does not want to deal in judgment. He would much rather deal in mercy. However, when people refuse the remedy, they leave God no recourse. Let it be a sobering lesson to you and me as God's people today.

CHAPTER NINE

A TYPE OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS IN THE MORNING TIME

Ezekiel 2:8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

9 And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;

10 And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Ezekiel 3:1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

5 For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel;

6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.

7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.

8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.

9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.

11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.

13 I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Although there are many truths and aspects worthy of consideration in this examination of the words of the Prophet Ezekiel, there is a thread of truth that runs throughout this entire prophetic book. This typical thread reveals visions and historical occurrences that serve as vivid types of New Testament realities and parallel the progression of this Gospel Day, or Christian dispensation. In this passage, Ezekiel (being both equipped and effective at the commencement of his prophetic ministry) serves as a type of the spiritual success and effectiveness the morning-time

ministry enjoyed—how they were equipped and how they enjoyed success at the commencement of this Gospel Day.

Let us consider this text from the perspective of being a type of the spiritual success in the morning time. As we study Ezekiel's prophetic writings, we will follow this typical thread of how his writings parallel and serve as a type of the realities, occurrences, and conditions of this New Testament dispensation. We must be reminded, this portion of prophetic text was not only penned and preserved for its historical *merit* (because of the historical record that it conveys), but it also serves as a historical *type* (a literal event in the days of Ezekiel—in the proximity of 595 B.C.—is also typical, or representative, of New Testament realities). Our text is a portrayal and type of the spiritual success enjoyed by the morning time, and it also reveals why they enjoyed such eminent success.

"A Voice of One That Spake"—A Divine Revelation

The Book of Ezekiel was not originally broken into chapters and verses. That was done many centuries later to enable ready reference sake. Ezekiel wrote in continuity, just as you and I would write. At the end of what we call Chapter 1, Ezekiel said, "I heard a voice of one that spake." This voice (the voice of Christ) brought divine revelation to Ezekiel, letting him know *who* he was to speak to, *what* he was to speak, and then equipped him to do so. Ezekiel 2:3 says, "And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel." That was whom Ezekiel was to exclusively address. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:33, "For God is not the author of confusion," and 1 John 1:5 says, "God is light ['understanding'; Psalm 119:130]." Anytime confusion enters the equation, there is another spirit working on us for God brings understanding and clarity. Initially, Ezekiel did not know what God wanted him to do or where he was to go. So, God told Ezekiel *who*, *what*, and *how*, and He does the same for us yet today. The real effectiveness lies in speaking the Word, but it must be under the divine direction of the Holy Ghost. Although Ezekiel was Spirit-led, as a human instrument, he still had to know what the Lord desired to be communicated.

God said in Ezekiel 2:7, "And thou shalt speak my words unto them." This reveals *what* Ezekiel was to speak. He had very specific directions: "**Speak with my words unto them**" (Ezekiel 3:4). Ezekiel was to speak the Word of God "**unto the house of Israel.**" Then, Ezekiel 2:2 tells us, "And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me." This reveals *how* he was equipped, *how* he was going to have this effective speaking ability—by the Spirit of God. Ezekiel did not know what God wanted him to do, where he was to go, and what he was to say. Thus, God told him *who*, *what*, and *how*. This shows not only why Ezekiel was successful at the very commencement of his ministry, but it also serves as a type of why the morning-time church was so effective and successful at the beginning of the Gospel Day. Real effectiveness lies in speaking the Word under the divine direction of the Holy Ghost.

We read in Ezekiel 2:2, "And the spirit entered into me." This was the starting point. Consider what Jesus told the disciples prior to going to the garden of Gethsemane in John 16:7. He said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter ['the Holy Ghost'; John 14:26] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." When the Comforter came, what was one thing He would accomplish? John 16:13 tells us, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ['thy word is truth'; John 17:17]: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." It was an absolute necessity ("expedient") that Jesus "go away" so the Comforter could be sent. "When he . . . is come, he will guide you into all truth." The administration of the Spirit of God was absolutely critical to the successful

operation of those morning-time brethren.

Prior to His Ascension, Jesus said in Luke 24:49, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power [the 'promise' was 'power'] from on high." How did they receive that power? Acts 1:4 (taking place after His Resurrection and prior to His Ascension) reads, "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." What was the promise? Acts 1:5 states, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Then, Acts 1:8 says, "But ye shall receive power [when?], after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." That power was in the Holy Spirit and what He would bring to their hearts. This was "the promise of my Father" (Luke 24:49).

We need to understand why this was necessary. To be effective, we must have power. We read in Acts 1:8, "And ye shall be witnesses." In order to be a true witness as we ought, we have to be "endued with power." What is this power? Why were the disciples instructed in A.D. 33 to "wait" (Acts 1:4) and in Luke 24:49 to "tarry"? We read in John 16:7, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The disciples were waiting for a critical event—for Christ to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not yet given. We read in John 7:39, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given [why?]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The Holy Spirit had not been given. Thus, they were instructed to "tarry," to "wait." Jesus promised in John 16:7, "I will send" (future tense at that juncture). On "the day of Pentecost" (Acts 2:1), "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). Christ sent the Holy Ghost, just as He had promised. The reason behind this was to fulfill a typical prophecy.

The Day of Pentecost

Under the Old Testament, on the Day of Passover, the Israelites were told to bring a lamb "without blemish" (Exodus 12:5). To understand what that was a type of, consider the words of the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:19, which reads, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." This lamb was a representation of He who was to come, our sacrifice for sins, Jesus Christ. Israel was to have a spotless lamb (Exodus 12:5), then they were to slay it (Exodus 12:6) and apply the blood (Exodus 12:7). Exodus 12:11 says, "It is the LORD'S passover." When the death angel went throughout all Egypt to smite the firstborn, whenever he saw the blood applied, he passed over that home (Exodus 12:27). Although there was death throughout the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:29-30), there was no death amongst the Hebrews because the lamb's blood had been applied. Therefore, the death angel passed over. That certainly was an Old Testament occurrence, but it serves as a type. This Passover lamb was their salvation from death. We also have a Passover lamb. Christ is our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), and to fulfill the types, He was crucified at the time of Passover (John 13:1).

In John 19:30, Jesus said, "It is finished." The rest of that verse says that "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." Then, John 19:31 tells us, "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation [or one rendering says 'preparation for the passover'], that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,)." To fulfill prophecy, Christ (our Passover lamb) was crucified at Passover. Fifty days later was the Feast of Pentecost. The word "Pentecost" in the Greek actually means "fifty." We read in Leviticus 23:15-16: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh

sabbath shall ye number fifty days." To have "seven sabbaths" would require seven weeks. Seven weeks times seven sabbaths (seven times seven) is forty-nine, and then it said clearly, "Even unto the morrow after" (or the day after), which brings you up to "fifty days." Then, Leviticus 23:17 reads, "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD." This Day of Pentecost became known as the Feast of First Fruits as it was fifty days after Passover and was a celebration of the Feast of the First Fruits.

That happened spiritually as well. Christ was our Passover, and fifty days after our Passover Lamb was slain, there was an ingathering of first fruits on this Day of Pentecost. Look at what happened after Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:41 reads, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." There were the "firstfruits" in this new economy, this New Testament dispensation: three thousand first fruits. But it was not over yet.

Peter and others began at "the third hour of the day [9 a.m.]" (Acts 2:15). We might refer to it as the morning service, but Acts 3:1 reads, "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." The Jewish day began at 6 a.m. so the ninth hour was 3 p.m. It was the same day. Acts 4:4 tells us, "Howbeit [Peter preached after the man at the gate Beautiful was healed] many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." There was a gathering of more first fruits: three thousand and now five thousand. When the Holy Ghost came, they were indeed, as Luke 24:49 said, "endued with power." Thank God, since the Holy Ghost was given on that Day of Pentecost, there is no longer any need to "tarry," or to "wait." There are those who sing the old song, "Send the Power Down." However, Christ sent it down in A.D. 33. It is just a matter of you and me getting tapped into it, but the power is here. There is no longer any need to "tarry," or to "wait."

Another very important type is that Moses and the children of Israel left Egyptian bondage on Passover (Exodus 12:51), and fifty days later, Moses received the Tables of Stone on Mount Sinai (Exodus 12:1, 6; 19:1). On Passover, our sacrifice for sin was made to deliver us from the bondage of sin. Fifty days later, He sent the Holy Spirit to write His "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25) "with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

We find it was a tremendous power. Jesus, speaking in Acts 1:5 and 8, said: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence . . . But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost . . ." Christ equated receiving "power" to being "baptized with the Holy Ghost." There is much confusion in the realms of religion concerning what this baptism actually is. What constitutes this baptism? What occurs in this baptism? Let us let the Spirit of God, as Isaiah 34:16 says, "mate" the Scriptures up and clarify what He was talking about. When Peter went down to Cornelius' house, it is recorded that when "the Holy Ghost fell on them" (Acts 11:15), he "remembered" the words of Christ spoken and recorded in Acts 1:5. In Acts, Chapter 11, Peter was responding to the brethren's enquiry concerning what occurred at Cornelius' house. Peter related in Acts 11:15-18: "And as I began to speak [relating what occurred at Cornelius' house], the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning [on the Day of Pentecost]. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said [quoting Acts 1:5], John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us [that gift was not tongues, but it was the *Holy Ghost*], who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Being "baptized with the Holy Ghost" is actually the power to receive and to live in "newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

The baptism with the Holy Ghost provided life. The gift they were given was life. How do we know that to be true? He said you will be witnesses unto me, and the best witness to have is "newness of life" (Romans 6:4). In Romans 6:23, Paul said, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The gift is life, but through what agency do we receive this life? Romans 8:2 tells us, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The agency to bring this life to man is the Spirit of life. Romans 8:10 reads, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life." The Spirit is the power of life. As Peter related what occurred at Cornelius' house, he revealed that the angel told Cornelius, "Call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house *SHALL BE SAVED*" (Acts 11:13-14). So, this experience of "baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:16) is actually being "saved" (Acts 11:14), or "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). Respectfully, it is not some supposed second work of grace, nor some jibber jabber in a supposedly unknown tongue. It is the power of a new life, a spiritual life.

Being Filled With the Holy Ghost Brings Power, Guidance, and Direction

The New Testament and morning-time brethren were successful because they were "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Romans 15:13 tells us it is "the power of the Holy Ghost." This "power" was the "power" of life. They could enter "a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20). Also, Jesus promised the disciples, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you" (John 16:13). We read in Acts 2:4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues [or 'languages'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*], as the Spirit gave them utterance." They were successful because not only did they possess the Spirit of God, but they were also under His guidance, His direction. One rendering says, "As the Spirit prompted their utterance." Another rendering says, "As the Spirit gave them words to utter."

The morning-time church realized that the New Testament dispensation is a Holy Ghost dispensation. Second Corinthians 3:6 reads, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." What were the reasons they were successful? Just as in our text, Ezekiel did not presume to operate in his own strength, or in the flesh. He knew the task was beyond him. Ezekiel 2:2 states, "And the spirit entered into me." That was where his reliance, strength, and guidance came from. **Ezekiel 3:12** tells us, "**Then the spirit took me up.**" **Ezekiel 3:14** says, "**So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away.**" That is the reason he was so successful. In Acts 2:4 we see the antitype and why the morning-time brethren were so successful. They spoke "as the Spirit gave them utterance."

A great move was being accomplished in Samaria, but in Acts 8:26, we find Philip was called away from Samaria to "go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert." Acts 8:29 says, "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." There was a caravan of chariots coming through, and in one chariot was an Ethiopian eunuch (a Jewish proselyte) who was reading Isaiah, Chapter 53. He did not understand what he was reading, but he was an honest heart, a ripe candidate for salvation. The Spirit of God told Philip to "join thyself to this chariot." Philip did not have to go to every chariot in the caravan, asking, "Do you want to be saved?" The Holy Spirit knew exactly which chariot to go to and which man to speak to. He divinely directed Philip to the one who was ready; that is why Philip was successful. Likewise, that is why the morning-time brethren were successful.

In Acts, Chapter 10, Peter had been on the rooftop in Joppa, waiting for the meal to be prepared. Acts 11:5 tells us he was "in the city of Joppa praying," and in "a trance," he saw "a vision." A sheet was let down three times with all manner of unclean and creeping things. Peter

was told to rise and eat, but he said, "Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth" (Acts 11:8). God told him in verse 9, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." This was done "three times" (verse 10). Then Acts 10:19-20 reads: "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." The reason the Gospel was successfully taken to Cornelius and the Gentiles was because Peter had "an ear" to "hear what the Spirit saith" (Revelation 2:17). He followed the Spirit.

In Antioch, there was a host of different brethren with differing gifts and abilities. In Acts 13:2-4 we read: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia." Paul's first missionary journey was a successful venture because he was "sent forth by the Holy Ghost." It was not because he took a notion (as Peter did in John 21:3 after the Crucifixion when he said, "I go a fishing," and the disciples said, "We also go with thee"). Paul was content in Antioch, but the Spirit of God said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul." This is why their ministry was so successful. Acts 16:6, concerning Paul's second missionary journey, states, "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia [one province in Asia Minor] and the region of Galatia [another province of Asia Minor], and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." The Spirit of God would not permit them to go any further east. He closed off that avenue. They could have overridden that, saying: "But Jesus said, go ye into all the world, and Asia is part of the world. They need the Gospel." However, they did not do that because they were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost." We could reference many other Scriptures, but the lesson is, they were so effective because they followed the divine direction of the Holy Spirit.

We need to understand, this is the Holy Ghost dispensation. Someone may say, "It is *always* right to tell people the truth." No, it is not always right to tell people the truth. Someone may say, "It is *always* right to preach the Gospel." No, it is not always right to preach the Gospel. These Scriptures say the brethren were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." The Spirit of God knows the mind of God, and God had a purpose, a plan. Silas and Paul could have overridden that with their own human way, going through the motions, and if we are not careful, we can do the same thing. When it comes time for song service, we could say: "Well, I sing this special really well; so I think I will just sing it tonight. People always seem to like it." What does the Holy Ghost say? It is the same when the preacher brings a message. He cannot just say: "Well, that is a good message. I will preach it tonight. It has to be led of the Spirit of God."

Thank God, the morning-time brethren listened, and that is why they were effective. We are understanding and enjoying the truth today because of this move right here in Acts, Chapter 16. Verse 6 tells us they "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." They could not go any further east. Acts 16:7 states, "After they were come to Mysia [Mysia was to the west, and the Spirit did not hinder them from moving west], they assayed to go to Bithynia [to the north]: but the Spirit suffered them not." He would not let them go north. Oh, what keenness they had to hear what the Spirit saith! That is why they were so eminently successful. We need to have keen ears to hear because that is where the success lies. The Holy Spirit shut down the east, north, and south. They were "perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:8). Acts 16:9-10 reads: "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia [Macedonia is in the west, in the beginning of what we would call the European continent], and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia."

If you read on in the Book of Acts, you see there they met Lydia, the seller of purple. They brought the truth to her and to those with her. They went on to Philippi and became eventually

incarcerated in the Philippian jail, but ultimately the jailer and his family were saved. A congregation was raised up in Philippi, and there was great success in Macedonia—all because of the guidance of the Spirit of God. That is one avenue which made them so eminently successful. Acts 2:4, speaking of the morning-time brethren, tells us, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

As we have clearly seen in the cases of Philip, Peter, and Paul, the brethren knew *who* they were to speak to and *where* to go to do it. Mark 16:15 commands us, "Go ye into all the world." That is the Great Commission, but how do you know where to go? How do you know whom to approach? How do you know whom to speak to? Though the commission is to "all the world," the guidance of the Holy Ghost is needed. That made Ezekiel successful; that made the morning-time church successful; and that is what will make you and me successful in our day as well. God's measurement of success is not the same as man's measurement of success. We read in Ezekiel 2:7, "And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious." Ezekiel 2:5 reads, "And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them." Verse 7 says, ". . . whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." One rendering says, "Whether they hear or refuse to hear." Why was it considered effective? Because verse 5 says, "And they . . . shall know that there hath been a prophet among them." God was faithful to them, and Ezekiel was faithful to God; hence, he was effective and faithful to the people.

Isaiah 55:10-11 reads: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." God's Word is effective, whether people *accept* or *refuse* the message because it presents man with opportunity, with a choice, and it also satisfies the faithfulness of God. Lamentations 3:23 tells us, "Great is thy faithfulness."

God is faithful. He had a faithful man in the Prophet Ezekiel. Before Ezekiel spoke, God told him that people would not receive him. Yet Ezekiel was faithful, and God honored that. In the morning time of the Gospel Day, God had a faithful ministry, and because of that, it did an effective work. We find in Acts 17:6, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." (It was already upside down, but they were really turning it right side up.) They were effective because of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Acts 19:10 states, "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

Ezekiel was eminently successful because of his faithfulness to his call and to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Notice, this message to old Israel came about at the very commencement of his prophetic calling. In the first chapter, the Lord appeared to Ezekiel, gave him visions, and his prophetic ministry commenced. In the second chapter, he received a commission to go forth with a message to a specific people. This commencement of his public ministry is a type of the commencement of the Gospel Day, of how they received the Holy Spirit, and how they were to follow His guidance, His direction. The successfulness of this New Testament dispensation is not in the letter only, but it is in the Spirit as well (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The commencement of Ezekiel's public ministry is a type of the commencement of the Gospel Day.

In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." We must learn personally, as Ezekiel and Paul learned, to have "an ear" to "hear what

the Spirit saith." Let Him give the guidance, let Him bring the direction. He has the same immutable nature as Christ, of whom it is said that He is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). What He could do in by-gone days, He can do yet today. We can be an effective people if we are a Spirit-led people.

The Great Need to First Be Equipped

Ezekiel was instructed in **Ezekiel 2:8**, "**But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.**" One truth this reveals is, before we can effectively speak, we have to be equipped. Speaking without being equipped is counterproductive; "your good" can then "be evil spoken of" (Romans 14:16). You can "have a zeal . . . but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2), and it can work to the contrary. Before he ever spoke, Ezekiel was instructed to "**open thy mouth.**" God was saying, "I want you to take in what I give you and make it a part of you first." We cannot export what we do not have. The only way the Word is effective is if we export, or put out, what God has put in. If we are not in possession of it, we cannot export it. For example, you can come to me and say, "Brother Borders, I need you to write me a check for a million dollars." Well, I could not do that because I do not have a million dollars to write a check for. I cannot put it out because nobody ever put it in. It is the same way with the truth. You cannot put out what you do not possess.

**To be a
successful
LEADER, you
must first
learn to
FOLLOW.**

God told Ezekiel first he had to be equipped. This is why young men who receive a call to the ministry need to sit for a time under a seasoned pastor. They need to watch that pastor, listen to his preaching, see how he handles the congregation, see how he deals with problems, work with him, and be schooled, as it were. Why? So when the time comes for him to be sent, he will be equipped. Many times, young men are failures because they are really not equipped when they go. The Lord did not want Ezekiel to fail, so He wanted to equip him. That is why He said, "**Open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.**" Before you can ever lead, you have to learn to follow. If you never learn to follow, you will never be a successful leader. No army ever started a man out as a general, regardless of his qualifications. When you go into the military, the first thing you go through is basic training. Just like everybody else who is going to come out as a private, you go through the same training. After that, your skills may move and advance you quickly, but you have to start by being equipped with the basics. So it was with Ezekiel. He had to be equipped with the basics.

Ezekiel first had to take it in himself ("**eat that I give thee**"). It was the same with the morning-time brethren, and it is the same with us yet today. We must take it in and make it part of us first. It is like people who try to tell you how to raise your children, yet they have none of their own, or when people try to tell you how to handle your finances, but they cannot handle their own. It is ineffective. We read in 2 Timothy 2:6, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." He must first have taken it in and experienced it himself. What we do not take in, we cannot put out. That was the first thing God told Ezekiel.

Let us consider this reality in the morning time. Were they successful in the morning time initially? After Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, we read in Acts 2:37, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He instructed them in Acts 2:41, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." That was certainly effective! Acts 2:47 states: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." These

morning-time brethren were successful, and it got better than that.

After the man at the gate Beautiful was healed and Peter preached, Acts 4:4 states, "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." We have gone from three thousand and have added five thousand. What else? Acts 2:47 says that "the Lord added to the church," and Acts 6:1 tells us, "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied" That beats adding all to pieces. Now we have gone from adding to multiplying. Then, we read in Acts 17:6, "And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." They were making such an impact that they were turning "the world upside down," according to the charge.

Acts 19:10 states, "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus." We have been at it a lot longer than two years, and we have not been nearly as successful. They got it to all of Asia. They were certainly effective! Why were they so successful? Why was Ezekiel successful? It comes back to **Ezekiel 2:8**, which says, "**Eat that I give thee.**" What did he eat? **Ezekiel 2:9-10** reads: "**And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein** [several renderings say 'scroll' instead of roll]; **And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without.**"

We see that type of expression in Revelation 5:1, which states, "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals." *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says, "A scroll having been written within and outside." What is this "scroll," or this "**book**"? **Ezekiel 3:1** reads, "**Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll** [again, several renderings say 'scroll'], **and go speak unto the house of Israel.**" Here, Ezekiel was told to "**eat**" and "**go speak.**" Then, in **verse 3** we read: "**Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll** [or scroll] **that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.**" What is this a reference to? What is this scroll that is so sweet, that it is like "**honey for sweetness**"? We read in Psalm 119:103, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" This "**roll of a book**," or this scroll, is the Word of God. It is "**my words.**"

Jeremiah 15:16 reads, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." We read in Revelation 10:8-10: "And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter." When we hear the Word of God (the "**book**," or the scroll), when God reveals truth to us, when the Spirit of God enlightens "the eyes of [our] understanding" (Ephesians 1:18), what a sweet thing it is to behold precious truth, to get understanding! It is like the "**sweetness**" of "**honey**" when it is in our "**mouth**" and we are taking it in. But then, when we have to go out in a hostile world and stand for these truths, it can be "bitter" in the "belly." It can be just a little different when we have to stand alone and put these truths into practice. The grace of God is still sufficient, but it is not as sweet when you are putting it out to a hostile world as when you took it in.

The Way Into the Church Is by the Way of the Word of God

If the "**roll of a book**" (**Ezekiel 2:9**) is the Word of God, what does Zechariah 5:1 mean by "a flying roll"? Speaking of the Lord, Psalm 18:10 says, "And he rode upon a cherub [the cherub

and the living creatures are the same; Ezekiel 10:15], and did fly." God and His Word are conveyed and transmitted by the saints. That is why it is referred to as "a flying roll." The **"roll"** is the Word of God, but the Word of God gets out through God's people, the saints. There is a very interesting truth portrayed in Zechariah 5:2, which says: "And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits." (Remember, Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is pure." Every word incorporated within the sacred canon has a purpose and conveys a truth.) Why did Zechariah relate these measurements as such? The modern measurement is 30 feet by 15 feet. If you read 1 Kings, Chapter 6, you will find these are the same measurements as the porch of Solomon's temple.

We read in 1 Kings 6:2-3: "And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits. And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; and ten cubits was the breadth thereof." The measurement for Solomon's Porch is the same as that which we find for this "flying roll." This reveals a typical truth. If you do not come by the Word, you will not get into the house. This was the porch of the temple. The priest had to come by way of the porch to get into Solomon's temple to perform his sacred duties. There was no other way into "the temple of the house."

To understand what the "temple of the house" is, turn to 1 Timothy 3:15, which tells us "the house of God" is "the church of the living God." That Old Testament temple is a type of the church. Today, we are the "priests" (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). Just as the priest could not get into that "house," or into the temple to perform his priestly function without coming by the way of "the porch," you cannot get in the church without coming by the way of the Word. Without the Word, your foolish heart is darkened, and you do not have an understanding or right to enjoy the benefits of priesthood. It takes the light of the Word to help people to see the way, to gain entrance. You cannot come in without the Word.

The name *Ezekiel*, according to *Cruden's Concordance*, means "the strength of God." Strength and success come from the Word, from the message. That is where the strength, or the power, lies. People today want to bring divorcements. They attempt to divorce God's Word from God's Spirit, to divorce God's Word from their living; but you cannot do that. That is why Jesus said, "What [not who] therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). God has put some things together. In Psalm 85:10 we read that "mercy and truth . . . have kissed each other." They have an intimate relationship. When you receive mercy, the next thing God wants to lead you to is truth. They work together, in correlation, in harmony.

Strength and success come from the Word. Psalm 119:28 reads, "My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word." God strengthens us through the Word. That is why the enemy fights in every way to keep us out of the worship services. He will do everything he can to separate people from the Word because he knows the strength is in the Word. He will work to hinder you from being in the service and from Bible study. You can sit down to read a magazine or a novel, and you can read into the wee hours and never get tired. However, get your Bible out and start studying, and you will notice the sandman comes around. Why is that? The enemy knows there is power and strength there. Thus, he wants to separate God's people from their source of strength.

After Moses stepped off the stage of action, look at what the Lord told Joshua. (Keep in mind, Acts 10:34 tells us, "God is no respecter of persons." The principles that lie behind what He spoke to Joshua are just as true for you and me today.) Joshua 1:7-8 states: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper [Where is spiritual prosperity found? 'Observe to do.'] whithersoever thou goest. This

book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night [not just a couple times a week, but 'day and night'], that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then [when you have meditated and God has enlightened your understanding and you do what God has shown you, then you will have success] thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Ezekiel has been off the stage of action for centuries. These prophecies were penned in the proximity of 595 B.C. Yet, here we are, some twenty-six hundred plus years later, studying his writings. Why? Because he was successful. He observed to do, and that is where success, spiritual prosperity, and effectiveness lies. I repeat, the enemy understands there is strength in the Word of God. That is why he works to hinder us in every manner possible from hearing the preached Word and from getting into the study of the Word and from reading the Word. Psalm 138:2-3 says: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." He strengthens us with "strength in my soul" with "thy word." The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." Not only "the power of God unto salvation" initially, but it is also "the power of God" to maintain our experience perpetually. The power is in the Gospel, in the Word.

In the prior segment, we found the Spirit brings "power" to us, but what does He use to bring this power? It is the Word! This is why Ezekiel was effective. It is also why the morning-time church was so effective. Notice the Lord's particular instructions to the prophet in **Ezekiel 3:4**, which reads, "**And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel,** [God told Ezekiel exactly *whom* he was to speak to. God can still direct us to *whom* we need to speak to yet today.] **and speak with my words unto them.**" There is another truth we need to get hold of if we are to be effective and successful as Ezekiel and the morning-time brethren were. We read in Ezekiel 3:17, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." Ezekiel was to "hear the word at my mouth." What is the lesson? Pay close attention because this is a truth that is often passed over. There are sixty-six books in this Bible. I could preach from anywhere in this Bible, and it would be Bible, but that does not mean it would be "**my words**" from "my mouth." It does not mean that it would be that which is appropriate and of divine guidance for that time and for that audience. This is why a lot of our witnessing, testifying, and even sometimes preaching is ineffective. It may be from the Bible, it may be the truth, but it is not "**my words**" from "my mouth" for the current audience, current hour, or the current need.

God's Plan for Men to Hear the Word Is Through Human Instrumentality

Ezekiel was effective because he obeyed the command to "hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17). Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 6:12, stating, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." The effectiveness, the success, truly lies where it was in Ezekiel's day and in the morning time. First Thessalonians 2:13 tells us, "For this cause [Paul was writing 'unto the church of the Thessalonians' (1 Thessalonians 1:1), or the congregation of the Thessalonians in Thessalonica] also thank we God without ceasing [why was Paul thanking God?], because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men." We are living in a day when people not only disparage the message, but they also disparage the messenger. When truth is preached that might be contrary to what they think or what they want, they say, "That is just the preacher's idea." The reason these Thessalonians were so commendable was when the Word of God came, they took it as the

Word of God and not as the word of a man. If you attend a worship service and all you are hearing from is a man, you are in serious spiritual trouble. You are in the wrong place, because when you hear God's man, you are hearing a man who has received the Word at God's mouth and who is telling you what God wants to tell you. The Thessalonians understood and accepted that. That is why they were successful and why it was effective.

God's plan for men to hear the Word of God is to use human instrumentality. That is God's ordained avenue. First Corinthians 1:21 says, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [It is not foolish preaching, but the foolishness of preaching. Why? Because it is foolish to the unsaved, to the unregenerate, to the natural man.] to save them that believe." The preaching is not just to save the lost, but it is the preaching of the Word of God that keeps the believer saved. For that to be effective, when the preaching comes forth, you must receive it as the Word of God, not as the word of men. We have got to get past this feeling: "Well, that is the preacher's idea. That is just how Brother So-and-So feels about it."

It was effective in Thessalonica because 1 Thessalonians 2:13 tells us, "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us [human instrumentality], ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." When you believe it is the Word of God and not the word of men, that enables it to "effectually" work. The word *effectually*, in the Greek, is the word "*energeo*." It is the word from which our English word *energy* is derived. It means "to be active, efficient." What made the Word of God efficient? First, there was a faithful man who preached it. In this instance, it was Paul. Second, the people received it in the proper manner: that it was the Word of God, not Paul's word. Paul explained what enabled it to be so efficient and effective in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, writing, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak." Speak what? What "we were allowed of God." I repeat, for it truly to be "**my words**" that come from "my mouth," it has to be that which the Holy Ghost inspires for the present hour, the current need, and the current audience.

Paul operated in such a manner. That is why he said "as we were allowed of God" (verse 4). Sometimes I have wanted to preach certain things. I am sure every preacher or pastor has experienced that. Maybe they have studied and come into the service prepared to preach along certain lines, but God would not allow it. God changed the service. God changed the message, and for it to be effective, for it to be "my words from my mouth," they had to lay aside what they thought and bring another line of thought. Jude explained this in his Epistle. Verse 3 reads, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude was ready to write another direction (about "the common salvation"), but then the Spirit of God moved on his mind. Thus, he wrote and exhorted that they "earnestly contend," and God took his mind and his letter in a whole different direction. We can only be efficient and effective if we speak as He allows. Certainly, that is true with the ministry in the pulpit, the Sunday school teacher in the class, and it is also very true of our personal witnessing.

We may desire to say certain things, tell people certain truths, but the Holy Ghost may not want us to say that because it is not the need of the hour. It is not what is expedient. It may be something lawful, it may be the truth, it may be the Bible, but it may not be Spirit-led. You may try to win people by bringing them the Bible, bringing them truth, that they are in no position to receive. For example, the Halloween season is one of the most devilish times of the year. It is Satan's high day. But do not go out and say to people that you are witnessing to: "Halloween is full of the devil. You should have nothing to do with it!" That may be true, but that is "not expedient" (1 Corinthians 10:23); that is not the real issue.

One time I heard about a man who had a cigarette in his hand, and a brother came up to him and said, "You keep using them cigarettes, you are going to split hell wide open." So, the man just flicked it away and said, "Am I going to Heaven now?" The cigarettes are just an indicator of a deeper problem. Getting rid of the symptoms does not get rid of the disease. All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. We have to recognize the reason Ezekiel and the morning-time brethren were effective and efficient was because they spoke what was allowed of God. They spoke as the Spirit gave utterance. The Spirit and the Word agree; they work in harmony (1 John 5:7-8). Otherwise, the Word used alone can damage and do a deadly work.

We read in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." That does not mean we go contrary to the Word. It does not mean we ignore the Word because, according to Ephesians 6:17, "the sword" is "of the Spirit." The Spirit and the Word work in unison, in harmony, in tandem. People can take a Bible and whip and cut people all to pieces. That is not being in divine order at all! That is not giving people "**my words**" at "my mouth" at all. They are giving people their thoughts and what they feel others need to know. That is not effective. No doubt, we have all done that in our zealous youth, but it leads to ineffectiveness, unsuccessfulness, and offence. We read in Romans 7:6, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

Again, I am not discounting or disregarding the Word of God, but it must be under the Holy Ghost's direction. Jesus said to the devil in Matthew 4:4, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth." Not "proceeded" (past tense) but "proceedeth" (present and continual tense). Effectiveness and success come only when God gives or inspires it. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." I want you to look at that beyond the conventional thought. We certainly realize that collectively all Scripture is divinely inspired. Let us look beyond what is incorporated in the sacred Scriptures and look at it more practically. You can read in the Word of God that "I am the Lord that healeth thee," that Jesus healed "all manner of sickness and disease." That is the Word of God. But until the Spirit of God inspires it for personal application to your heart, you cannot lay hold to it and make it practical and perform. It must come by inspiration. How many times have you heard somebody testify and say, "I was reading my Bible and studying, and I must have read this verse a thousand times, but suddenly today it just leaped out on the page; it was lit up like a neon sign, and it was just what I needed"? What was that? Inspiration. When it is inspiration, then it applies to you, your need, your situation.

The only way all Scripture is given is "by inspiration," and if inspiration does not give it, you cannot take it. I can read where it says you can take up any deadly thing and drink any deadly thing, and it will not harm you (Mark 16:18). That does not mean I can just drink a can of arsenic and say, "Well, the Bible says it will not hurt me." That is foolishness! It has to be inspired by God to be effective. Not just collectively in the Word, but individually by inspiration. This is why the morning-time brethren were successful. When persecution came in after the martyrdom of Stephen (predominantly through Saul of Tarsus), Acts 8:4 tells us, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." They did not preach their ideas, their feelings, or their thoughts, but they preached the Word under divine direction. If we desire to be spiritually successful, we must operate in the same manner. The morning-time church was effective, Ezekiel was effective, and we will be effective if we follow the same principles. We must make sure it is coming by "inspiration" (2 Timothy 3:16) and "allowed of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). A Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people conveying a divinely-ordered, divinely-inspired message will have effect.

The Effect of a Divinely-Inspired Message Is a Spiritual Earthquake

We find in Isaiah 55:10-11: "For as the rain cometh down [God sends the rain], and the snow [God sends the snow] from heaven [it is of God], and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it [what goes forth 'out of my mouth' are words] shall not return unto me void, but it [that which goes forth 'out of my mouth'—divinely spoken] shall [notice the positive emphasis] accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Divine direction is what makes it effective, efficient, successful. It worked this way in our text. The message was effective because Ezekiel got the word from God's mouth. **Ezekiel 3:12** reads, "**Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing** [the *Septuagint* says 'the voice as of a great earthquake'], saying, **Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.**"

An earthquake is exactly what happened in the morning time. Look at Revelation, Chapter 8, which begins a series. (There are seven distinct series in the Revelation, and each begins at approximately the commencement of this Gospel Day and carries us through the Consummation.) Series number three (the trumpet series) has its prophetic time setting at the commencement of the Gospel Day (A.D. 33). We read in Revelation 8:5, "And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, [The fire represents 'the Holy Ghost' (Acts 2:4), and the altar is Christ (Hebrews 13:8 and 10). The 'fire of the altar' is speaking about the Spirit of Christ. What did He do with the Spirit of Christ?] and cast it into the earth." Second Corinthians 4:7 tells us what the earth is, saying, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." We are seeing a symbolic description of the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 33. He "cast it into the earth," and the Holy Ghost came into those "earthen vessels" on the Day of Pentecost. They came out of that upper room, and a spiritual earthquake took place. Things were shaken up. Men said, "And how hear we every man in our own tongue [these men were Galileans], wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:8). In other words, "How do we all hear the Word and the mighty works of God in our own language wherein we were born?"

When Peter preached, three thousand were saved, and later five thousand were saved. That was quite an upheaval! That was quite an earthquake! Revelation 8:5 reads, "And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar [the Spirit of Christ], and cast it into [not onto] the earth [or into those earthen vessels]: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake." That earthquake commenced right there in A.D. 33. When the message is divinely directed and a divinely-inspired preacher heralds the message under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, it causes an effect.

The effect here in Ezekiel and the effect in the morning time was an earthquake, or a rearranging of positions. When the message comes from Christ and the Holy Ghost anoints it, it will be effective; it will cause an earthquake. According to **Ezekiel 3:12**, when this "**great rushing**" (or great earthquake) came, it says, "**Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.**" People will see Christ in His glory. What is "**the glory of the LORD**"? Hebrews 1:1-3 tells us: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners [speaking of the Old Testament dispensation] spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son [Jesus Christ], whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory" "**The glory of the LORD**" is His Son, Jesus Christ. **Ezekiel 3:12** says, "**Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.**" What is "**his place**"? What did John see? Where did John see him? Revelation 1:13 states, "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man." In Matthew 16:13 Jesus said, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man, am?" The "Son of man" is Christ. Where was He? Right in the midst

of the candlesticks. Revelation 1:20 tells you the "candlesticks" are "the seven churches," or the church through the seven periods that comprise this Gospel Day. "**His place**" is right in the midst of the church. When an effective ministry, under the anointing of the Spirit, sounds forth the Word from God's mouth, it will reveal Christ, "**the glory of the LORD.**" It will show people "**his place,**" the Church of the Living God, where they need to come to see and enjoy the presence of Christ and hear the truth.

In **Ezekiel 3:13** we read, "**I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.**" We already found that the "**great rushing**" is a spiritual earthquake that took place in Ezekiel's day and also took place in the morning time of the Gospel Day. What caused that? **Verse 13** says, "**The wings . . . touched one another.**" We previously found "**the living creatures**" are a picture of the redeemed. When it says that their "**wings . . . touched one another,**" it is saying they were in unity; they were in harmony. There is great power in unity. That is why the devil is always working to foster division. When we have unity, it produces effectiveness. **Verse 13** also talks about "**the noise of the wheels.**" We found in the first chapter that "**the wheels**" represent the message. Wheels are circular, denoting the completeness, the entirety, the fullness of the message—the full Gospel.

"**The noise of the wheels**" lets us know the Word, or the message, was with them. Then, **verse 12** says that "**the spirit took me up.**" Here we see the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God all correlating and working together. The Spirit, working through a people with the Word of God, working in harmony, produced "**a great rushing**" (**verses 12-13**), or the *Septuagint* says "the earthquake." It did so in Ezekiel's day and serves as a type of what they experienced at the earlier portion of the morning time.

Someone may say, "It seems there is a lot of repetition in these prophecies and types." I would be the first to agree: indeed, there is. The Lord is desirous to emphasize, thus driving these vital truths home to us. He knows that man is a forgetful creature and that man learns by repetition. There is intentionally much repetition both in prophecy and in the Revelation. The sad fact is, even with all that and all of God's efforts, many still miss it.

The lesson of the latter portion of Ezekiel, Chapter 2, and also of Chapter 3 brings a severe contrast to the earlier portion of Chapter 2, which deals with the rebellious house of the children of Israel. It is typical of what transpired in the morning time when "He came unto his own [the Jewish nation], and his own received him not" (John 1:11). They were rebellious and full of unbelief, but that did not hinder the success and effectiveness of the morning-time ministry. Neither did it hinder Ezekiel. Our lesson brings in type a portrayal of a severe contrast between the failure and ultimate rejection of old Israel and the spiritual success of the morning-time church. Also, it reveals that which is necessary to be effective and have success yet today. It contrasts the tragic consequences of old Israel, of their unbelief and rebellion, with the utter necessity of taking in the Word, making it a part of us, and of allowing the Spirit to use us to convey the message and the success it brings. The Word, operating under the inspiration of the Spirit, will still provide strength, success, and effectiveness. The questions we must honestly address are these: Are we being as effective and successful as the Lord desires? Are we following the route to success as revealed in our text? If not, the good news is we can pray and ask the Lord to help us. He desires for the truth to be handled in an efficient and effective manner. It was in Ezekiel's day, it was in the morning time, and it may yet be today as well if we will meet the conditions set forth in the lesson.

NOTES:

CHAPTER TEN

A PROPHETIC PORTRAYAL OF APOSTASY

Ezekiel 5:5 Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.

6 And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.

7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you;

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

11 Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

12 A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

16 When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread:

17 So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee: and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.

In this unique writing, through prophecy, Ezekiel dealt with at least a duality of truths that we must recognize in order to rightly divide this portion of God's eternal Word. One prominent vein of truth was the literal circumstances of his day. Israel being "a rebellious nation" (Ezekiel 2:3) is one aspect. Throughout this writing, Ezekiel dealt with Israel's rebellious state and the consequences that rebellion was going to bring upon them. Ezekiel 7:1-3 reads: "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the LORD."

These are indeed serious, sobering words, but there is another aspect to this prophetic book. The latter portion of the introductory verse to the Book of Ezekiel tells us, "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1). This was not a vision of God personified because we read in 1 John 4:12, "No man hath seen God at any time." This was penned by John (A.D. 100), many years subsequent to Ezekiel's prophecy (received somewhere in the proximity of 595 B.C.). Ezekiel's visions were *of* God (or of divine origin). Through the vehicle of these visions (and the types incorporated within his writings) spiritual truths are revealed. The Lord, through Ezekiel, was dealing with something more than the local and literal aspect for the time

then present. This prophetic book was not penned and preserved merely because of its historical merit but because of the spiritual truths it contains by typology and symbolism. These truths are representative of New Testament realities.

We read in 1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things [the preceding ten verses speak of things that transpired under the Old Testament dispensation] happened unto them for ensamples." The word "ensamples" in the Greek is *tupos*. It means "types." *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* renders it, "These things occurred to them typically." Another rendering offers it as, "These things by way of type were happening to them." Another version says, "As shadows of things to come." The *Amplified Bible* renders it as, "by way of a figure." *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a "type" as, "A person, a thing, or an event that represents or symbolizes another, especially another, that is to come." Although these Old Testament events were literal occurrences, they stand as a spiritual type, or representation of an event that was to come. One scholar wrote Old Testament historical types are the "mystical sense of Scriptures whereby things acted or done in the Old Testament prefigured things acted in the New Testament time." Those Old Testament occurrences serve as a figure, a representation, of New Testament realities.

There was a prophetic scheme to Ezekiel's inspired writings. Through the form of symbolism, incorporated in his visions and the typology through the historical and prophetic types, he took us through the major epochs of this Gospel Day, or this Christian dispensation. It is our burden to deal with the prophetic passages that accent and correlate with the major segments of the Gospel Day.

A Portrayal of Apostasy

Ezekiel, Chapter 5, contains a portrayal of types (as did Chapters 2 and 3). Keep in mind, we are attempting to stay with the prophetic scheme that parallels the Gospel Day. The prophet proclaimed in **Ezekiel 5:5-6: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: . . . And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness."** **Ezekiel 5:17** states, "**So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts.**" These verses are a clear prophetic portrayal of apostasy. We are coming in prophetic sequence from the morning time (A.D. 33), the time when the church was instituted and the living creatures made their appearance, to when the Jewish nation judged themselves unworthy and Paul said, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). This is a change in the prophetic scene. What does "**Jerusalem**" (**verse 5**) represent? Hebrews 12:22-23 tells us: "But ye are come [present tense, it was a reality when this Epistle was written in A.D. 63-69] unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church." All these denote different facets of the one-and-selfsame church. These different expressions denote different aspects of the church, or the roles that it fills.

Let me share this illustration. To my parents, I was a son; to my children, I am a father; to my grandchildren, I am a grandfather; to my great-grandchildren, I am a great-grandfather; to my congregation, I am a pastor. There is only one of me, but I fill different roles. Likewise, there is only one church (Ephesians 4:4 says "one body"), but different expressions are used to denote different roles, facets, aspects. I did not treat my parents the same way I treat my children. I do not treat my grandchildren the same way I treated my children. They are different positions, different roles.

These expressions ("mount Sion," "city of the living God," "heavenly Jerusalem," "innumerable company of angels," and "general assembly") are all different expressions denoting the "church." "**Jerusalem**" represents the church. The word "**Jerusalem**" means "city of peace," and it is where the Prince of Peace (Jesus Christ) dwells; He is right in the midst of the church.

In the depiction in our text, something has occurred to "**Jerusalem.**" **Ezekiel 5:6** says they "**changed my judgments into wickedness . . . they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.**" Something tragic has occurred. Isaiah prophesied of it in Isaiah 1:21-23, stating: "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: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."

"The faithful city" ("**Jerusalem**") had become "an harlot" (untrue, unfaithful, rebellious, and lewd). In our text, the Prophet Ezekiel was describing an apostasy, a time when God's Word was discounted, disobeyed, and denied. When **verse 5** says, "**This is Jerusalem,**" typically, it is a picture of the conditions with which the New Testament church would contend. Tremendous "**judgments**" were coming on the people in Ezekiel's day because of their spiritual state, because of what they did with the truth God had blessed them with in their day. That serves as a type because this also happened following the morning time of the Gospel Day. Sadly, the morning glory of the Gospel Day was short-lived. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, [Many times, when you go to a hospital or some other place, they will ask, 'What faith are you?' There is only one: 'the faith' (Ephesians 4:5). Paul cautioned that some shall depart from *the* faith.] giving heed to seducing spirits."

When someone who is in "the faith" (in the truth) departs, it is because another spirit has taken hold of them. They "depart from the faith" because they are "giving heed to seducing spirits." Then, they begin to formulate "doctrines of devils." Because their spiritual condition and position have changed, they have to concoct doctrines to match their position. When people want to live in sin and yet proclaim to be saved, that is where the "you sin, I sin, we all sin more or less" doctrine comes from. They need to try to justify how they are living. Thus, they concoct "doctrines of devils" to substantiate how they are living.

Paul cautioned against this. He said it would happen in the "latter times," not something out at the end of the age. The "latter times" commenced in A.D. 33. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached in Acts 2:16-17: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [quoting Joel 2:28]; And it shall come to pass in the last days." The last days commenced Biblically in A.D. 33. When Paul said, "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith," he was talking about something that was going to work rather imminently in a more insidious manner, raising up foes from within. Did that take place? Paul prophesied in Acts 20:28-30: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves [the elders of the church' (Acts 20:17), because most apostasy starts in the pulpit], and to all the flock [the saints], over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God [that is who the flock is], 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 [Right among Church of God congregations; verse 28. Apostasy does not come from without; apostasy arrives from within.] shall men arise [when this apostasy occurred, something arose; Revelation 13:1], speaking perverse things [several renderings offer it as 'distort the truth,' or as 'deviant doctrines'], to draw away disciples after them." Did it happen exactly as Paul prophesied?

We read in Galatians 1:6-7, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that would trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." They were changing, turning, twisting, and wresting, just as the Scriptures said that they would. We must recognize, God knows the end from the beginning. Isaiah 42:9 reads, "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new

things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." Then, Isaiah 46:10 says, "Declaring the end from the beginning." These things did not occur because God said so. God said so because He knew they would occur. They did not *have* to occur, but He knew they *would* occur.

We read in Hebrews 6:1-6: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection [or completion]; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once [past tense] enlightened, and have tasted [past tense] of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers [past tense] of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted [past tense] the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away [the Greek word is *parapipto*, which means 'apostasy'], to renew them again."

Why is it impossible for someone who has come under the spirit of apostasy to renew themselves? It is not because God is not willing, but it is impossible because they still think they are new. That is part of the deception. You cannot help anyone who does not think they need any help. As long as they feel they are doing fine and everything is wonderful, they are under that deception; you cannot help them. Here were people who were "once enlightened," who had "tasted of the heavenly gift," "tasted the good word of God," but they fell away (or apostatized). This is why we need "to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" (Hebrews 2:1). The same spirit of apostasy that worked in the morning time is yet working today.

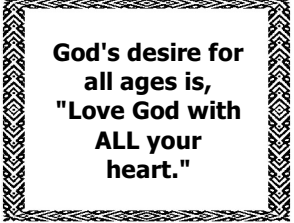
We find in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [speaking of the Second Advent] shall not come, except there come a falling away first." The words "falling away" in this passage in the Greek is *apostasia*. It means "apostasy, a defection from truth." This is what Paul was accused of. It was not true in his case, but it gives a great example of what the word means. Acts 21:21 states, "And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses." That word "forsake" literally means "thou teaches apostasy." The Interlinear Greek reads "apostasy you teach." That is exactly what was happening in the latter portion of the morning time. Apostasy was not true in Paul's case, but apostasy began to be taught.

The First Earmark of Apostasy—An Apostasy of Love

Our text typically portrays the morning-time apostasy. Second Thessalonians 2:3 tells us, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the Second Advent] shall not come, except there come a falling away [again the Greek word *apostasia*; an apostasy comes first]." Why did it occur? Why does it occur yet today in many places and many cases? Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish [why did this condition become so prevalent and pronounced?]; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

We can see the terrible consequences. God sent them a delusion, and the religious system produced by that apostasy is still under a delusion today. What was the cause? Verse 10 tells us, "They received not the love of the truth." That word "love" in the Greek is the word *agape*. It is not an emotion, not a feeling, but a commitment to action. The first earmark of apostasy is an apostasy of love. That is where it all commences. People do not initially apostatize on other avenues. We have seen it in our day. It begins with "the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). This waxing is a process. It begins within the heart and works out into their lives. People who once held Biblical standards of holiness have abandoned those standards, become engrossed

in worldliness, picked up many worldly practices and habits, but it did not start on the outside. It started on the inside. It started when their love was being impacted, when their heart was affected. Everything springs forth from the heart. Verse 10 says, "They received not the love," or a commitment to action. They failed to stay true to God's Word and commit to continue to live in a manner pleasing before God. Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."



**God's desire for
all ages is,
"Love God with
ALL your
heart."**

It comes back to the heart. This is why the words of the wise man are recorded in Proverbs 4:23, which state, "Keep [another rendering says 'guard'] thy heart with all diligence [why?]; for out of it are the issues of life." This is not talking about the biological pump organ in our chest but the seat of our affections. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). This love is to be in our heart. That is where real spirituality resides. When Jesus was questioned concerning the great commandment, what did He say? Matthew 22:36-38 says: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5. This has been God's command, will, and desire for all ages: love God with all your heart.

We find in 2 Thessalonians 2:10, "They received not the love [*agape*]," or that commitment. The enemy is ever working to find access. Thus, we must keep our heart perfect towards God. We must keep our heart in a position where we love and are committed to the truth. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." We have to keep our love keen, keep it with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. If we do not, if we do not guard it, if we become lean, if we fail to keep pace with the light God shows us, we leave ourselves an open prey as those did in the second portion of the Gospel Day (A.D. 270-530), which our text typifies.

In physics, there is a law of cause and effect. Likewise, there is one spiritually. When one gets lean in their soul (cause), and their heart becomes affected, they fail to have the love of the truth (effect). Jesus said in Matthew 24:12, "And because iniquity shall abound" Second Thessalonians 2:3 and 10 tell us "a falling away first" occurred "because they received not the love of the truth." Second Thessalonians 2:7 reads, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (the *Amplified Bible* renders it as "rebellion against constituted authority"). *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* offers it as "the secret of lawlessness." It started in their hearts because of their lack of love, or their lack of commitment. They did not "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." When that takes place, seducing spirits begin to work. Whenever there is a chink in the armor of God, the enemy is right there. He will find that vulnerable spot.

Their love was not right, and that made them prey for seducing spirits. That became "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). There was a "rebellion against constituted authority." Was it working in the morning time? When John came off the isle of Patmos (around A.D. 100), he saw the very conditions he had prophesied of in the Book of Revelation taking place. He then penned in 3 John 9, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, [The name *Diotrephes* means 'nourished by Jupiter, or Jupiter's foster child.' Jupiter was a heathen, pagan god.] who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not."

Can you imagine that? Here was John, that beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast, the last of the original twelve, the only one still living. The Emperor Domitian had tried to boil him in oil, but the oil would not boil him. He was sent to the isle of Patmos where God gave him the Revelation. He wrote the Gospel of John, three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation (five books of the Bible). Yet, Diotrephes presumed to be preeminent over John and would not receive him. He had a spirit of lawlessness against constituted authority, and he is an example of the spirit that

had begun to work, giving rise to a religious system based on preeminence. First John 4:1 states, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." The "spirits" pick up bodies and work through bodies ("false prophets"). The morning-time apostasy had a cause (the condition of the heart—receiving not a love of the truth and then imbibing a seducing spirit), but it also had an effect. It produced a seducing people (1 John 2:26) who formulated doctrines of devils, who raised up a religious system contrary to God's eternal Word.

"She Hath Changed My Judgments Into Wickedness"

We read in 3 John 10, "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." Two earmarks of the religious system that would rise up as a result of apostasy were *preeminence* and *excommunication*. This took place because of "the mystery of iniquity"—a spirit of lawlessness and rebellion against God's constituted authority. John was an Apostle. We do not read anywhere where Diotrephes was ever called to be an Apostle. Yet, he rebelled against constituted authority. He had a seducing spirit that had given him a false sense of preeminence; he thought he was preeminent over John. All this occurred because Diotrephes did not have a "love of the truth."

Again, Matthew 24:12 states, "And because iniquity [or that spirit of lawlessness, rebellion against constituted authority] shall abound, the love [*agape*, that commitment] of many shall wax cold." That Scripture also has a reference, more prophetically, to the evening time, but the principal action was also true in the morning time. When a person or a people become lean in their experience, allowing their hearts to not be as they ought, they fail to have "the love of the truth." He did not say that they received not a *knowledge* of the truth. They had a knowledge of the truth. There are many people all about us yet today who have had a knowledge of the truth. He did not say they did not have an *understanding* of the truth. For a time, they may have even lived the truth, but where they were lacking and what was their undoing was, they did not have the *love* (the commitment) to the truth.

Whenever people get lean in their experience and fail to have "the love of the truth," they become prey for "seducing spirits" (1 Timothy 4:1). When that happens, they "depart from the faith." Jude wrote in Jude 19, "These be they who separate themselves, [Why do people separate from where truth is? There is a reason. Again, go back to physics—the law of cause and effect.] sensual, having not the Spirit." The *Amplified Bible* makes it a little clearer, stating, "These who are agitators, setting up distinctions and causing divisions; merely sensual creatures, carnal, worldly minded people, devoid of the Holy Spirit, and destitute of any higher spiritual life." That is what causes people to separate and to depart from the faith.

When people become lean in their experience, their heart becomes affected; their love becomes impacted. Therefore, they become a prey for seducing spirits, spirits that cause people to operate in a sensual (carnal), worldly minded manner. When they become lean in their soul and "love not the truth," another spirit takes hold of them. They no longer have the Holy Spirit. This is what John said happened when he wrote, "Little children, it is the last time [he wrote that in A.D. 100]: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, [That is future tense. They were hearing that back then, just as false preachers are preaching it today, that antichrist would come. But look at what John said.] even now [A.D. 100] are there many antichrists [plural]" (1 John 2:18).

False religion teaches that it will be a personal antichrist, that he will be a political leader, and that he will be an atheist. What does the Bible say? First John 2:19 says, "They went out from us, [These 'antichrists' were Church of God people, people who had sat under the truth. In

Acts 20:30 Paul said, 'Also of your own selves shall men arise.' Who? Church of God people. Antichrists are not atheists or political leaders.] 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."

Paul was writing of people who were "of us," in the sense that at one time they were in our midst. However, they did not have "the love of the truth." Their heart was not as it ought. Another spirit picked them up (a seducing spirit), and they departed from the faith and went out from us. This is what was typically portrayed in our text. **Ezekiel 5:6** reads, "**And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness.**" Psalm 119:43 tells us, "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments." "**My judgments**" are "the word of truth." Psalm 119:160 reads, "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." "Thy righteous judgments" are "thy word." Again, **Ezekiel 5:6** states, "**And she hath changed my judgments [or my word] into wickedness.**" Paul talked about that in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, stating: "For the time will come [and it has] when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; [Do you know what kind of ears itch? Dirty ears.] And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

People have turned away from the truth of God and now are following "fables." Jude revealed what kind of "fables" they are following in Jude 4, saying, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [loose living]." They are using the grace of God as an excuse for loose living. Preachers do it yet today, saying: "You are under grace; so God understands. No one is perfect. You sin, I sin, we all sin, but when God looks down, He does not see your sin. He sees the grace of God no matter how you live." That is a lie from the pits of hell, and it is deceiving souls! False preachers have turned the "grace" (which is a strength—the power to keep you from sin) into a license for loose living.

Ezekiel 5:6 says, "**And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness.**" Why did they do that? David made it expressly clear in Psalm 50:16-17. It reads: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." They have refused to take divine instruction. They have a spirit of lawlessness. They despise government (not civil government, but church government). Peter warned of this in 2 Peter 2:1-2, saying: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious [‘that will destroy or ruin’; *Thorndike-Barnhart Dictionary*] ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

What condition are they in? Second Peter 2:10 says, "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [*The New Analytical Lexicon* says 'constituted authority'; not civil authority, but church government]. Presumptuous are they [just as Diotrefes], selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." This is the result of apostasy, of not receiving a "love of the truth," of not having their heart in the right position. Seducing spirits took hold of them, they began to depart from truth, and they began to formulate doctrines of devils. They cast God's Word (the truth) behind them, replacing it with "fables" and turning the "grace of God" into a license for loose living. Because of this *cause*, there was (and still is yet today) an *effect*.

Ezekiel 5:11 reads, "**Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations.**" Re-

member, this is a historical type. The literal occurrence, according to Ezekiel 2:5, was that the children of Israel were "a rebellious house," a rebellious nation. **"They have refused my judgments" (Ezekiel 5:6)**, and they **"defiled my sanctuary" (verse 11)**. Any time a people gets in a position where they will not take the truth of God's Word, the only thing left is defilement because it is God's Word that keeps us pure, that enables us to maintain a holiness experience. When people refuse the Word, refuse His **"judgments,"** there is nothing left but defilement. It became very pronounced in the morning-time apostasy.

Jeremiah 7:30 reads, "For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it." That is exactly what happened in the literal, historical aspect. The people defiled the sanctuary by bringing idols into the temple of God. Second Kings 17:12 tells us, "For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing." This was the literal picture that occurred in the annals of the Old Testament, but it is typical of a spiritual picture. As we proceed in our study, we will look closer at the condition, the cause, and what it produced (a religious system). There was a cause, and there was an effect. Old Israel was in a condition, which was the cause, and it produced a terrible effect. Likewise, in the morning time, there was a cause, and it produced an effect.

Pestilence, Famine, and the Sword

Ezekiel 5:12 reads, **"A third apart of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword."** Here is a three-fold effect: **"pestilence," "famine,"** and **"sword."** This was spoken of in Ezekiel's day. There was a literal occurrence that fulfilled that prophecy, but there also was a typical fulfillment. Looking at this Gospel Day (this Christian dispensation), we find the results of an apostasy were a **"pestilence,"** a **"famine,"** and a **"sword,"** just as Ezekiel prophesied. The words of **Ezekiel 5:17**, **"So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts,"** reveal some effects of apostasy.

Certainly, there was one aspect in Ezekiel's day that had a literal application, but we are viewing it typically, representing a New Testament reality. We read in Amos 8:9, "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression speaking of this Gospel Day], saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun [That is brilliant light. That is what they had in the morning time. The woman, according to Revelation 12:1, was 'clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.' All of God's luminary agents were functioning in the morning-time church. The morning-time church came in as 'the light of the world'; Matthew 5:14.] to go down at noon [that should be the zenith of the day, when the sun is at its brightest, but instead of brilliance and brightness, a spiritual eclipse, darkness, was going to take place], and I will darken the earth in the clear day."

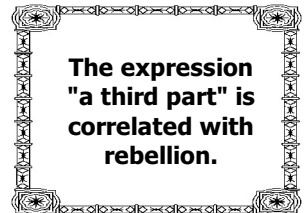
The outgrowth of this morning-time apostasy was the Dark Ages. Certainly, that was a collective prophecy, but anytime that people (or an individual) refuse to "walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7), Jesus warned in John 12:35, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." God gives us light ("understanding"; Psalm 119:130) so we can incorporate it into our lives and live better. Whenever any individual or people fail to incorporate that understanding into their living, "darkness" will come upon them. Amos 8:11 tells us, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." The people did not want the "words of the LORD." They **"changed" the "judgments into wickedness" (verse 6)**. They had **"not walked in my statutes,"** nor **"kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments" (verse 7)**. Because they did not have a "love of the truth [thy word'; John 17:17]," God sent them

a delusion. The system that came up out of apostasy is still deluded today. They think they are right, but they are wrong. He said in **Ezekiel 5:17**, "**So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts.**" What are the "**evil beasts**"? Acts 20:30 tells us, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things." What arose? Go to Revelation 13:1, which states, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea."

What is the lesson? What is this beast that rose up? Paul said in Acts 20:30, it was "men." Second Peter 2:1 states, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you." Second Peter 2:10 and 12 tell us: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled But these [these false prophets, false teachers who walk after the flesh], as natural brute beasts . . ." The "beasts" were these men. In Jude's Epistle (verse 4), Jude wrote, "For there are certain men crept in unawares." Then he said in verse 10, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts." The "**beasts**" are men who are operating on a carnal, beastly, unregenerate level.

As a result of this apostasy, three things occurred: "**pestilence**," "**famine**," and "**sword**" (**Ezekiel 5:12**). When people do not want the Word of God, God will cause a "**famine**," just as He did in that dark age. This is why we must "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1). Hebrews 2:3 reads, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation." We must be diligent; we must be on our guard. Ecclesiastes 1:9 says, "There is no new thing under the sun." We study these occurrences in the Gospel Day because they worked in that time, but the same spirits are working in our time to do the same thing—carry people away from truth, move people away from a solid experience and into a fallen, apostate state. We must "give the more earnest heed," give no "place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27), and have a "love of the truth." This is the only prevention and protection against the spirits of apostasy.

Notice in **verse 12**, the expression "**third part**" is frequently accented, as it is in Revelation 8:8-12, which states: "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the *third part* of the sea became blood; And the *third part* of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the *third part* of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the *third part* of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the *third part* of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the *third part* of the sun was smitten, and the *third part* of the moon, and the *third part* of the stars; so as the *third part* of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a *third part* of it."



What does the emphasis on the "**third part**" represent? Second Samuel 18:2, talking about Absalom's rebellion, reads: "And David sent forth a *third part* of the people under the hand of Joab, and a *third part* under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a *third part* under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also." The expression "a third part" was the result of Absalom's rebellion; thus, it is correlated with rebellion. We read in 2 Kings 11:1, "And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal." Again, we are seeing a picture of rebellion. What was the result of that? Second Kings 11:4-6 states: "And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son. And he commanded

them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; A *third part* of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house; And a *third part* shall be at the gate of Sur; and a *third part* at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down."

In these Scriptures, the result of someone's rebellion is correlated with a "**third part.**" Ezekiel, talking about the rebellious house of old Israel, said in Ezekiel 5:2, "Thou shalt burn with fire a *third part* in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a *third part*, and smite about it with a knife: and a *third part* thou shalt scatter in the wind." Every time the expression "third part" is mentioned, it is the result of disobedience. An apostasy is certainly a result of disobedience or rebellion.

Ezekiel 5:12 tells us, "**A third part** [In essence, conveying the thought of those who are disobedient and rebellious to the truth. The cause was those who '**changed my judgments into wickedness**' (verse 6), or apostasy. Here is the effect.] **of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine . . . I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.**" The three things mentioned—"pestilence," "famine," and "sword"—are not merely historical, but are also typical (serving as a type). **Ezekiel 5:16-17** reads, "**When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, . . . So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee.**" The spiritual cause (both in Ezekiel's day and the typical truth concerning the Gospel Day) is apostasy—a defection from truth; it is people who profess, and practice religion but will not take God's Word, who will not take instruction. The spiritual cause is apostasy, and behind it there is a spirit working. It is "seducing spirits" (1 Timothy 4:1).

Revelation, Chapter 6, contains the seal series. Verses 5-6 state: "And when he [the Lamb'; Revelation 6:1, which is Jesus; John 1:29] had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast [or living creature] say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts [again, living creatures] say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." What do the seven seals throughout the Revelation represent? We read in Ephesians 1:13, "In whom ye also trusted [speaking of 'Christ'; verse 12], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." The Holy Spirit is the seal ("the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed"; Ephesians 4:30).

Revelation 5:1 states, "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals." At that juncture, it was a closed book, which caused John to grieve. He said in Revelation 5:4-5, "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book . . . And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David [I Jesus'; Revelation 22:16], hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

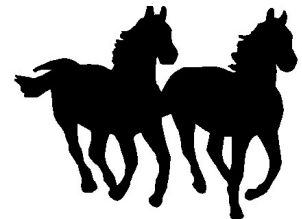
When Revelation 6:1 tells us that "the Lamb opened one of the seals," it is a symbolic expression of Christ loosing the Holy Spirit to open men's understanding. He prophesied of that in John 16:7 and 13, saying, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [the Holy Ghost'; John 14:26] will not come unto you. . . . Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." What is "truth"? John 17:17 says, "Thy Word is truth." After Christ's Resurrection, prior to His Ascension when He appeared to the brethren, Luke 24:45 says, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Christ looses the seal (the Holy Spirit) to open people's understanding of the Scriptures (of the truth). Ephesians 1:17-18 tells us it is through "the spirit" that we gain "understanding."

Christ loosed the Holy Spirit again in the second period (A.D. 270-530), which was a transitional period. They had been enjoying the brilliance of the morning light, but something happened, and the earth was darkened in the clear day (Amos 8:9). An apostasy began to work, and out of that apostasy came a dark age. Notice, again in Revelation 6:5, which states, "And when he [Christ] had opened the third seal [loosed the Holy Spirit the third time to open men's understanding], . . . I beheld [John was receiving a vision; Revelation 9:17], and lo a black horse." What does a "horse" represent, symbolically speaking? Keep in mind, we are dealing in imagery that was common when this was received on the isle of Patmos (A.D. 96). Zechariah 10:3 speaks of the "goodly horse in the battle." A "horse" was an instrument of warfare. People did not have tanks and planes as articles of warfare as we have today. A horse denoted militancy; that is one reason horses are employed both in Zechariah and in the Revelation.

To see what else horses denote (besides militancy), go to Zechariah 6:1-5, which states: "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes [Zechariah also was receiving a vision], and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains [Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, representing the Old Testament and the New Testament]; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses [corresponding with the horses mentioned in Revelation, Chapter 6]; and in the fourth chariot grised and bay horses [corresponding to the 'pale horse'; Revelation 6:8]. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens [religious spirits]."

"Heavens" denote "heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6), or an ecclesiastical realm. These "four spirits" were the different spirits working in the ecclesiastical realm throughout the ages of time. These horses denote militancy (letting us know every religious spirit is militant) and conquest (letting us know they are out to conquer men's souls). These spirits gave rise to religious systems that are on a conquest to conquer the souls of men and women. These horses represent their "spirits" (Zechariah 6:5).

In Revelation 6:5 John saw a "black horse." Zechariah 6:6 reads, "The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country." Moving "north" is moving into a colder climate, a cooler atmosphere, showing the move of apostasy, a move away from truth, away from the fire. When the church was instituted on the Day of Pentecost, the four living creatures came out of the fire (Ezekiel 1:4-5). Revelation 8:7, speaking of the "first angel," shows they had a message of "hail and fire." However, Zechariah 6:8 tells us, "Behold, these [the 'black horses'; verse 6] that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit." It is a portrayal of a spirit of apostasy, of a people who would not take instruction and who cast God's Word behind them (Psalm 50:16-17), "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4), people who have taken hold of a seducing spirit (1 Timothy 4:1). Revelation 16:14 says, "For they are spirits of devils." Out of that apostasy came "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). This is what brought in the Dark Ages. The coloration of the black horse denotes a spirit—a spirit that produced darkness.



Black horses moving north are a picture of the spirit of apostasy.

Jesus said in John 12:35: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light [why?], lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." The word "Babylon" means confusion. When you "knoweth not whither" you are going, you are confused. The product of the spirit of darkness is confusion. Darkness produced Babylon (false religion). The Holy Spirit is the avenue the Divine uses to bring light. When you quiet Him, it leads into darkness. This is exactly what people did in this period (A.D. 270-530): they "quieted my [God's] spirit." Thus, this "black horse" (Revelation 6:5) represents the spirit of apostasy.

A Consuming Famine and Evil Beasts

When the spirit of apostasy became the prevailing condition, what happened? Revelation 6:5 speaks of "he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." The "balances" belong in God's hands alone. This is a picture of an usurper. "He that sat on him" shows the human representation this spirit gave rise to. A rider is sitting on a horse. When the horse conveys the rider, it is elevating and causing that rider to be raised up. This is a picture of this spirit (the spirit of apostasy) and the human system it gave rise to.

The balances belong in God's hands, but men took the balances that belonged to God. We read in Proverbs 16:2, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits." Proverbs 16:11 states, "A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work." In Daniel, Chapter 5, when Belshazzar was having that drunken feast, he crossed the line when he sent for the sacred temple vessels to be brought in. Daniel 5:5-6 states: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand [not a whole hand, just fingers], and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall . . . Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

When Daniel came, part of the interpretation of the writing was, "Thou art weighed in the balances [God weighed Belshazzar], and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). The true balances belong in God's hands, but there arose a religious system that took the balances into their own hands. We read in Hosea 12:7, "He is a merchant." That is exactly what Babylon is. Talking about Babylon, Revelation 18:3 reads, "For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." They make merchandise out of the souls of men. Back in Hosea 12:7, we read, "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress."

These balances are not true balances, but deceitful, deceptive balances. That spirit gave rise to a religious system where penance for sins is acceptable and paying the priest enough money will (supposedly) free your loved one out of purgatory. Those are "balances of deceit." There is no truth in it whatsoever. The spirit of apostasy gave rise to the religious system that took the balances into their own hands. Hosea said, "He loveth to oppress," and there was no greater oppression in the history of the Gospel Day than during the Dark Ages. The saints had to resort to hiding in the catacombs and caves, going underground because of the terrible oppression.

Part of the oppression the people experienced was the Word given at a starvation rate. Revelation 6:6 describes it as, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny." *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says, "A chenix of wheat for a denarius, and three chenixes of barley for a denarius." The "penny," or the Greek denarius, was the ordinary wage of a laborer for one day. Matthew 20:2 confirms this, saying, "And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day"

"A measure of wheat" (or a "chenix" in the Greek) was the usual daily allowance of food for one man. The rate was so exorbitant, one man had to work all day to buy enough food for himself, not allowing for his wife or his children. How could a man feed his wife and children, if he worked all day only to make enough to barely sustain himself? It was a starvation rate. This spirit of apostasy and the system it produced placed an undue and unfair burden upon men; it made merchandise of them.

Ezekiel 5:12 says, "A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee." **Ezekiel 5:17** states, "So will I send upon you famine." What is this "famine"? (Remember, we are dealing with symbolism.) What was being

measured out at a starvation rate? We read in Amos 8:9, "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of this Gospel Day], saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon [noon ought to be the brightest part of the day], and I will darken the earth [a dark age, a spiritual eclipse] in a clear day." What was the cause of this dark age? Amos 8:11 reads, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD."

In the following period, the zenith of the Dark Ages (A.D. 530-1530), no trumpet was sounded; no public message was heralded. The Bible was shut and chained to the pulpit. The common man could not get a Bible, but if he could get one, he could not read it because it was written in Latin. It was a dark age because the prevailing condition was many people would not take the Word. They would not walk in the light. A seducing spirit had taken hold of them, and the outgrowth was a dark age and a spiritual famine. This apostasy produced the Dark Ages.

Ezekiel 5:17 says, "**So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts.**" The results of apostasy gave rise to a spiritual famine and produced both the papal and Protestant beasts. We read in Amos 8:12, "And they shall wander from sea to sea." What did this apostasy actually produce? Revelation 8:8 tells us, "And the second angel [the Greek word is *aggelos*, meaning 'a messenger,' symbolizing a ministry; Revelation 22:8-9 and Galatians 4:13-14] sounded [the ministry that sounded in this second period (A.D. 270-530), the transitional time known as the Smyrnan age], and as it were a great mountain ['the bride, the Lamb's wife,' or the church; Revelation 21:9-10] burning with fire was cast into the sea." When something on fire is cast into water, two things occur: (1) the fire is extinguished; and (2) as it sinks beneath the level of the sea, it is no longer in view. For 1260 years (A.D. 270-1880), there was no visible church. They were underground. It was in the sixth-seal period (1880) when she (the visible church) came out of the wilderness.

The sea this mountain was cast into represents "the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20), and the apex of wickedness is found in Psalm 50:16-17, which tells us "the wicked" are those who profess, practice, and preach without a real possession. They will not take God's instruction, casting His Word behind them. It is those who will not take instruction (a picture of apostasy). The "sea" is a density, or a mass of water. According to Revelation 17:15, this sea represents "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." This "sea" represents wicked people. They are wicked because a seducing spirit, a spirit of a devil, has gotten hold of them to the place where they will not take instruction. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All scripture is given . . . for instruction," but they would not take that. They cast the Word behind them, and that seducing spirit began to develop doctrines of devils.

Much of the morning-time church (that "great mountain burning with fire") was "cast into the sea" (Revelation 8:8). It was cast into the hands of people. Revelation 13:1 tells us out of that "sea" (the sea of apostasy) rose up "a beast." It rose up out of the minds of apostates, men and women who had been seduced by a spirit, who had departed from the faith, who had turned the grace of God into licentiousness (or lasciviousness), people who had "**changed my judgments into wickedness**" (**Ezekiel 5:6**). Out of those minds came this religious system. When Revelation 13:4 states, "And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast," that lets us know it was a system of worship.

Revelation 13:1 tells us John "saw a beast" Study how the term "beast" is used in the Scriptures. The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:1-3: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying [they do not deny His existence; they deny His lordship; Titus 1:16] the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious [*Thorndike's Dictionary* says the word 'pernicious' means 'that will destroy or ruin'] ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness

shall they with feigned words make merchandise." Remember, we read in Hosea 12:7, "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand," and he "waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (Revelation 18:3). This particular system we are speaking of is one of the richest systems in the world. Their riches were built on the blood of the souls of men.

Second Peter 2:10 and 12 tell us: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [not civil government, but God's government; *The New Analytical Lexicon* says 'they despised constituted authority']. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities But these [false prophets, false teachers, those who walk chiefly after the flesh], as natural brute beasts" These "beasts" are those who operate on a natural, unregenerate level.

Jude, verse 4, reads, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 10 states, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts." Verse 4 tells us these "beasts" are "men." The "beasts" in the Revelation represent organizations and systems men have devised in their flesh, systems with no divine origin, which came out of the minds of men.

John gave identifying factors of what this particular system is. We read in Revelation 13:1, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw [Revelation 9:17 lets us know that God used the panorama of the sky to give John this 'vision of all'; Isaiah 29:11] a beast rise up out of the sea [the same 'sea' that mountain went into in Revelation 8:8; the outgrowth of apostasy was that it produced a beast], having seven heads and ten horns." Revelation 12:3 introduces these "seven heads and ten horns," speaking of the "great red dragon," saying, "And there appeared another wonder [the Greek word is "sign," which *Webster* defines as 'a symbol'] in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns."

What do the "heads" represent? Isaiah 9:6 states, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder." The head is on the shoulder. Thus, the head represents the government. Christ is "the head of . . . the church" (Colossians 1:18). History tells us Rome in its pagan form (illustrated by the dragon in Revelation 12:3) had seven distinct different heads, or types of government (see chart).

In the pagan era, there were seven crowns on the seven heads (Revelation 12:3). The political (or the civil) power rested on the different heads of government Rome had in its pagan form throughout its history. Revelation 13:1 says there are "seven heads and ten horns," but the crowns have moved; instead of being on the heads, they are now on the horns. Daniel 8:20 tells us what the horns represent, stating, "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings [one rendering says 'kingdoms']." These ten horns represent kingdoms. The famous historian, Machiardi, wrote that the Roman empire was comprised of ten minor kingdoms (see chart). The "seven heads and ten horns" stand as an identifying factor that this dragon and this beast both represent something Roman.

The seven distinct forms, or heads, of Roman government:

- Regal power
- Consular
- Decemvirate
- Military tribunes
- Triumvirate
- Imperial
- Patrician

The ten minor kingdoms Rome dissolved into:

- Anglo-Saxons
- Burgundians
- Franks
- Huns
- Heruli
- Lombards
- Ostrogoths
- Sueves
- Vandals
- Visigoths

Apostasy Produced the System of Roman Catholicism

Revelation 13:18 says, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast [the beast introduced in Revelation 13:1]: for it is the number of a man [singular; one man best exemplifies this particular beast]; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." Let me just digress momentarily to tell you that the number has nothing to do with the mark. Out in religion, they have the "number" as the mark of the beast. The mark and the number are two separate things. Revelation 13:16 reads, "And he causeth *all*, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in [not *on*, but *in*] their right hand, or in their foreheads." Yet, verse 18 says this number "is the number of *a* man" (one man). During the period that verse 16 is talking about, it said "*all*" received this mark. However, Revelation 3:18 says that *only* "a man" has this number. They are two totally distinct and separate things.

The following question enters people's minds: what is the mark? The "mark" was "in their right hand" (Revelation 13:16). What kind of mark was that? When Paul went up to Jerusalem and met the brethren, we read in Galatians 2:9, "And when James, Cephas [or Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship." When the Scripture talks about the "mark in their right hand," it means people being accepted into fellowship. But the religious system (spoken of in Revelation, Chapter 13) worked in that era, causing all ("both small and great, rich and poor") "to receive a mark in their right hand," or in their foreheads." What is in your forehead? It is your mind. In Ezekiel's first encounter with that rebellious house (Israel), God told him in Ezekiel 3:8-9: "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead." Were they going to have a head-butting contest? No, God was telling Ezekiel, "I am going to set your mind to where it will be like an adamant, harder than flint, so that they will not move you or change your mind."

"The mark" in their foreheads is the indoctrination people receive in their minds. Once that indoctrination is in the mind, then they reach out with the hand of fellowship. That is the way it worked in the sectarian era. You had to go to their schools, get their degrees, and get their mark (their indoctrination in your mind), or they would not accept your fellowship. That has nothing to do with the number but with all who received the mark in that Protestant era.

We are talking about the beast in this papal era, and only "*a* man" (Revelation 13:18) has this number ("Six hundred, three-score and six," or 666). The "seven heads and ten horns" denote this beast must be something Roman, but Rome in what form? It is best exemplified by "*a* man" who bears the number 666. For many years, when the new Pope was coronated (or installed), a triple crown was placed upon him with the inscription Vicarius Filii Dei, which is Latin for "Vicar of the Son of God." It was not until the Arabs in the tenth century devised a separate numerical system that numbers separate from letters. For the first ten centuries A.D., letters also served as numerical expressions. For example, in Roman numerals, V equals five; I equals one; and C equals 100. If you give a numerical expression to the Latin inscription Vicarius Filii Dei, you get 666 (see chart). That is the number of a man.

Now, we know this beast was not only something Roman, but it lets us know what form of Romanism it was.

V.	5	F.	0
I.	1	I.	1
C.	100	L.	50
A.	0	I.	1
R.	0	I.	1
I.	1	D.	500
U.	5	E.	0
S.	0	I.	1
Total	112	Total	554
Grand Total (112 + 554)		666	

It was the system of Roman Catholicism. Bear in mind, we are talking about religious systems. We read in Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." (We are not against people, but we are against systems that are contrary to the sound teachings of God's eternal Word and are duping, deceiving, and damning the souls of men.) That is why we must speak the truth. If men and women are ever going to get an understanding of the truth, it must be sounded forth.

Revelation 8:8 tells of "a great mountain burning with fire" being "cast into the sea." This occurred when a wicked people, people who would not take instruction (God's Word), "casteth my words behind" them (Psalm 50:17). They still wanted to profess, practice, and preach, but they were overcome with a seducing spirit, a spirit of devils. Then, out of those minds rose a system of religion. As a result, there was a dark age, the zenith of which was from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530. We read in Isaiah 63:18, "The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while." In the scheme of the Gospel Day, it was "a little while." The morning glory only truly lived and shone in its brilliance from A.D. 33 (the Day of Pentecost when the church was instituted) to A.D. 270.

Then, from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530 was the one thousand two hundred and sixty years spoken of in Revelation 13:5, which reads, "And there was given unto him [the papal beast] a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." Forty-two months times thirty days to a Jewish calendar month equals one thousand two hundred sixty days. Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 both give the delineation of prophetic time: "each day for a year." Therefore, twelve hundred and sixty days equal twelve hundred and sixty years. From A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530 is one thousand two hundred and sixty years.

Out of this two-thousand-year Gospel Day, 1260 years of it (the lion's share) was under the power of apostasy and papalism. We read in Isaiah 63:18, "The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary." **Ezekiel 5:11** says, **"Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity."** The truth became trodden down. Revelation 11:2 states, "But the court which is without the temple [the temple represents the church; 2 Corinthians 6:16] leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles [or the uncircumcised, unsaved; this is symbolically portraying papalism]: and the holy city [the church] shall they tread [down] under foot forty and two months [a thousand two hundred and sixty years; A.D. 270-1530]."

The Sharp Sword With Two Edges

Let us give some consideration to what Ezekiel was referring to when he spoke of this **"sword" (verse 17)**. To properly understand this, we must go "here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:13). Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, records seven letters the Lord gave to John to give to seven different congregations in Asia Minor. These seven letters correspond with the seven periods that comprise the Gospel Day. These seven letters were not merely for the time then present, nor were they merely for the local congregation to whom they were addressed (although certainly there was an application that was both local and literal); but they also serve symbolically to represent major spiritual conditions that were working in these different periods of the Gospel Day. When we come to the third letter in Revelation 2:12 (the Pergamene letter, representing A.D. 530-1530), we see symbols employed that help us to understand what we are studying in Ezekiel.

In Revelation, there are many different attributes used to describe Christ's appearance. In each of the seven letters, Christ identified Himself by a different attribute, and each attribute

represents what would be needful for the particular age under consideration. Notice the attribute in Revelation 2:12-16. It states: "And to the angel [All seven letters were written to the angel, or the pastor. Why? First, he is the watchman on the wall. He is the one who is to receive the Word from God's mouth and bring it to the people. Second, he is the one who 'must give account'; Hebrews 13:17. Not one person in the congregation has to give an account for the congregation, but the pastor is held accountable by God. Also, the pastor is the only one who has the authority to deal with it. It is not the place of anyone in a congregation to correct anyone else in the congregation. That is the pastor's role.] of the church in Pergamos write;

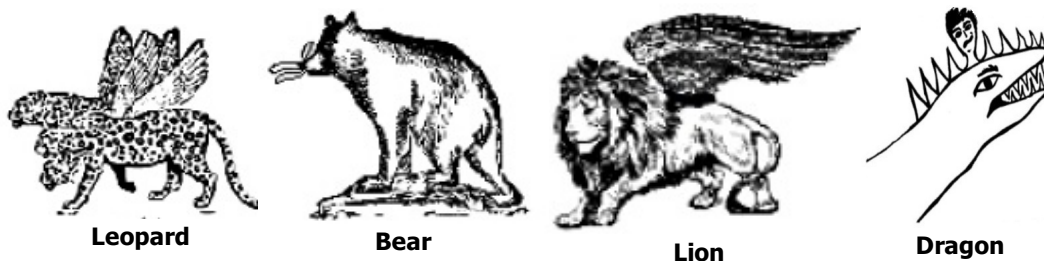
"These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: [The man of sin, the son of perdition, is referred to as sitting on 'Satan's seat' in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. It shows the 'man of sin' (verse 3) as one that 'sitteth.'] 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 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 hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

There is a host of truths in this Epistle worthy of consideration, but let us lift a few pertinent to our particular study. First, why did Christ pick Pergamos to represent this period of time (A.D. 530-1530), commonly known as the Dark Ages? Pergamos was famous for its amphitheater in which was a den of wild beasts. This is a perfect picture of the predominant system in this period. This period portrays a rising of the papal beast. Revelation 13:1 reads, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up." It was no accident God chose Pergamos with its amphitheater of wild beasts to represent this age of papalism, this age of the beast. The actual Greek word employed in Revelation 13:1 for the word "beast" is the word *therion*, which means "wild beast." Also, history tells us that around 200 B.C. the people of Pergamos deposed their king, took over the city, and set up a family of Italian kings to rule. That is clear symbolism of Roman Catholicism setting up the popes to rule in Rome, Italy.

Pergamos was a known producer of opium. Opium distorts your mental thinking, a similarity to the effect of false religion's teaching. Roman Catholicism distorts men's minds with an opiate of religion. Karl Marx (who developed Marxism) said, "Religion is just an opiate of the people." He had part of that right: *false* religion is an opiate. Their judgment is clouded, they cannot think clearly, and they are under the influence of an outside source. That is exactly what happened with the rise of this beast. It served as an opiate to the minds of the people. False religion is one of the worst plagues on mankind.

Jesus said in Revelation 2:13, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." When we look at this papal beast, Revelation 13:2 reads, "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 [paganism] gave him his power, and his seat." The description "like unto a leopard" takes us back to the four beasts mentioned in Daniel, Chapter 7. These four beasts represent four kings (kingdoms; Daniel 7:17), the four empires that brought us prophetically from the day of Nebuchadnezzar (or Daniel) up to when the stone, Jesus Christ, was cut out of the mountain without hands (Daniel 2:34) and smote those kingdoms and set up the kingdom that would be forever: the Kingdom of God (Daniel 2:44). This papal beast is composed of the attributes, characteristics, and spirits of all the previous pagan powers that posed as an opposition to the people of God in all ages. Revelation 13:2 describes the appearance of this beast, portraying its attributes and nature:

- "like unto a leopard" (representing the Grecian empire; Daniel 7:6)
- "the feet of a bear" (representing the Medo-Persian Empire; Daniel 7:5)
- "the mouth of a lion" (representing the Babylonian Empire; Daniel 7:4)
- the ten-horned "dragon" (symbolizing the pagan Roman Empire; Daniel 7:7)



Leopard

Bear

Lion

Dragon

Notice, the dragon (Roman paganism) gave him his power and his seat. Revelation 2:13 tells us "where Satan's seat is." In Revelation 16:10, one of the evening-time vials is "poured out." The angels began to pour out their judgment. It says, "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness." The beast (Roman Catholicism) is full of darkness. It has never had any light, and it does not have any light yet today.

Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 reads, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the Second Advent] shall not come, except there come a falling away [the Greek word *apostasia* is the word from which our English word 'apostasy' is derived; it means 'a defection from truth'] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition [who is that?]; 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." Here is where Satan's seat is: "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Both *Matthew Henry's Commentary* and *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown's Commentary* state that one of the blasphemous titles ascribed in Latin was the words "Dominus Deus Noster Papa" (the English translation is "Our Lord God the Pope").

That is just what Paul was prophesying about in the second Thessalonian Epistle. God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). He knew what was going to occur. Look at what Paul said would take place in 2 Thessalonians 2:8: "And then shall that Wicked [those who cast God's Word behind them; Psalm 50:16-17] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." This has nothing to do with Christ's Second Coming. The Lord said that He would "consume [the 'Wicked'] with the spirit of his mouth" and "destroy with the brightness of his coming." How did He come? Revelation 2:16 reads, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." He was going to come through His Word. That is why the enemy does not want people in worship services yet today, because God comes to people through His Word.

When we read that He "shall consume with the spirit of his mouth," this is speaking of the Word under the anointing of the Holy Spirit; that is how He was going to come. Remember, Christ introduced Himself to this age in Revelation 2:12 as "he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." Look how He appeared to John in Revelation 1:16, which reads, "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword [the word of God; Hebrews 4:12]." Thus, what was going out of His mouth was "the word of God." This was how He was going to deal with this false system of worship: by the Word of God. That is how He deals with falsity yet today. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." What does truth make you free from? Everything that is false. What is the truth? John 17:17 tells us, "Thy word is truth." What makes people free from falsity is the truth. Jesus said in Revelation 2:16, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." This Scripture and 2 Thessalonians 2:8 are both

speaking of the same thing, at the same time period. In essence, Jesus was telling them: "You need to repent of this condition. If you do not, I am going to fight against you with the Word."

However, they did not repent, and in A.D. 1530, a man by the name of Martin Luther came along. He had been studying the Book of Romans for quite a while. Luther traveled to Rome and ascended the supposed sacred stairs (called the *Scala Sancta* in Latin). These are reportedly the same stairs Jesus ascended when going into Pilate's judgment hall, but that is one of those "fables" (2 Timothy 4:4). As Luther was ascending those stairs, God spoke to his heart and revealed to him the truth of Romans 1:17, which says, "The just shall live by faith." The light of revelation enabled him to see that it was not by penance, sacraments, the Eucharist, nor by rites and rituals, but by faith. Luther took that "sword" and laid a deadly wound to the papal beast, breaking the exclusive power of Romanism, or the Dark Ages. We read in Revelation 13:3, "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death." This papal beast was wounded. Revelation 13:14 tells us it was a "wound by a sword." God gave them a space to repent, but they did not repent. They have never repented. They have never taught true, Biblical repentance and do not teach repentance yet today. Therefore, God turned the truth loose.

Apostasy's Lingering Effects

As we look at this type in Ezekiel, we need to understand, it is not just showing us the cause of apostasy in Ezekiel's day, but it is also showing us the long-range effects. Not only do we see "**the sword**" mentioned here, but **Ezekiel 5:17** also speaks of "**evil beasts**" in the plural. This apostasy has affected the remainder of the Gospel Day. We have not fully recovered from it yet. The effects of this apostasy still linger today. It was the ultimate cause for not only papalism, but for Protestantism as well. It necessitated the need for the evening-time truths and the evening-time message.

Let me give you one Scripture and see if paganism and papalism still affect us today. Jeremiah 10:1-5 states: "Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen [learning 'not the way of the heathen' is pertinent to our day as well], and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs ['the way of the heathen'] of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good."

What does it sound like Jeremiah is describing? I realize it may have a more localized application in Jeremiah's day, but what is the principle behind it? Verse 2 warns, "Learn not the way of the heathen," and then verse 3 tells us, "The customs of the people are vain." There are only two kinds of religion, according to James 1:26-27—"vain" and "pure." What was the custom in Jeremiah's day? The heathen cut a tree out of the forest, decorated it with silver and gold, and fastened it with nails and hammers so it would not move. They made sure that the tree stood upright. Jeremiah was describing in great detail exactly what people today call a Christmas tree. As supposed Christians, are we affected by this apostasy? Do people bring in Christmas trees, decorate them, and put them on a stand or a platform to hold them in place so they will stand upright? I am just using this text to prove to you that the results of that apostasy are still with us today. Many people think we are past it all, but we are not. We are still dealing with it and preaching against the effects of it yet today.

When 2 Thessalonians 2:4 refers to "Satan's seat," how do we know that is talking about the papacy and the popes of Rome? Revelation 13:2 talks about the beast getting his power, his seat,

and his authority from the dragon. The seat of Satan symbolizes authority or one who has control. The popes certainly have control. They excommunicate and denounce people. When the Pope speaks from what is known as *ex cathedra* (Latin that means "from his seat"), he is supposedly infallible. That is a "lying wonder" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The *Amplified Bible* version makes it a little clearer, saying, "With all sorts of pretended miracles and signs and delusive marvels, all of them lying wonders."

What are some of the "lying wonders"? First Timothy 4:7 says to "refuse profane and old wives' fables." Let us look again at some of these "doctrines of devils." In 1 Timothy 4:1-2 we read: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith [why?], giving heed to seducing spirits, and [what will they produce?] doctrines of devils [then he gave an explanation of what some of those doctrines of devils are]; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." One of those "doctrines of devils" is "forbidding to marry" (verse 3). Roman Catholicism still has their doctrine of celibacy: the priests and the nuns are not allowed to marry. The Bible says that is "doctrines of devils." It has led to all types of abuse over the centuries.

Another doctrine of devils is "commanding to abstain from meats" (verse 3). For years, Catholicism would not allow the people to eat meat on Friday. They would eat fish instead. Yet, when Jesus asked in Luke 24:41, "Have ye here any *meat*?" verse 42 says, "And they gave him a piece of a broiled *fish*." Fish is meat. Catholicism still has their Lent season, and the people give up things for Lent. I still believe a good cleansing would get rid of "lint." When I take my suits to the dry cleaners, I do not want them to come out with lint on them. If they have been cleaned, they are lint-free. What are some of the "old wives' fables" 1 Timothy 4:7 speaks of? Roman Catholicism is filled with them. They teach the bodily ascension of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They say that although she died, although the Bible says we return to the dust (Ecclesiastes 12:7), they believe she bodily ascended into Heaven. That is a "fable." They teach the perpetual virginity of Mary. They deny that she had any children subsequent to Christ (Matthew 13:55-56). They teach she forever remained a virgin, that although married, she practiced celibacy. That is a doctrine contrary to the Scriptures. There is no truth in that. They teach that Saint Christopher is the patron saint of travel. That is why you will see little Christopher statues on vehicle dashboards. These are "old wives' fables." All these come from "Satan's seat."

We find in Revelation 2:14, "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." Study the doctrine of Balaam. In his writings, Jude wrote of those who "ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (verse 11). Balaam was motivated by greed. If you read Numbers, Chapter 22, you will find Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel, but initially he would not do it. However, when Balak's servants came with more offerings, more riches, Balaam went with them, and tried to curse Israel. Yet every time he opened his mouth to curse them, God turned it into a blessing. Finally, when he was unsuccessful in cursing them, he told Balak to have his people intermarry with Israel, thus causing them to follow false gods. Balaam knew that when that happened, God would not bless Israel anymore. Because of that, Israel sacrificed things offered to idols, and that is exactly what happened during this dark age.

If you visit Roman Catholic sanctuaries, you will see statues and idols all around. I want you to see the lesson here. When it talks about "ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward," this is a portrait of Catholicism. Roman Catholicism is one of the richest, supposedly Christian organizations in the world. They point to their gain as favor with God, but true godliness is not measured by earthly gain. Revelation 2:6 warns of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. This was a sect started by a man named "Nicolas . . . a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts 6:5), but he became

caught up in a false teaching that endorsed loose sexual morality. The combination of both of these erroneous doctrines—the doctrine of Balaam (greed and offering things sacrificed to idols) and the doctrine of Nicolas (loose sexual morality)—has been incorporated in papalism. Revelation 2:16 says, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth," and we see in Revelation 13:3 that the beast received a "deadly wound." Revelation 13:14 says it was a "wound by a sword." Once again, it is necessary to mention that, as Ephesians 6:12 says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." We are not against people, but against spirits and systems contrary to the sound teachings of God's Word.

The False System of Protestantism Came "Up Out of the Earth"

In **verse 17**, Ezekiel not only talked about "**famine**" and "**the sword**," but he also talked about "**pestilence**." When we think of "**pestilence**," we must also recognize **verse 17** speaks of "**evil beasts**." (Keep in mind, this text in typical language not only shows the cause, or apostasy in the second period of time in a pronounced, prolific manner, but it is also shows the effects that have rippled throughout the entirety of the Gospel Day.) That apostasy not only gave rise to a papal beast, but it continued to work. The results were more than one beast. We read of "another beast coming up out of the earth" (Revelation 13:11). The Hebrew word for "**pestilence**" (**verse 12**) is *deber*. It comes from the root word *dabar*, and it means "in the sense of destroying." The beast Revelation 13:11 refers to came "up out of the earth." Earth represents man.

Earth Represents Man

Man is dust of the earth (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

"This treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7)

"Our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved" (2 Corinthians 5:1)

The question may arise, If that which came up out of the sea came up out of the minds of men, why does this beast in Revelation 13:11 come "up out of the earth"? Why does the Scripture distinguish between the two? It is because the earth is two-thirds water, and the move in A.D. 270-530 that gave rise to the papal beast was universally a much more massive move than the beast which came "up out of the earth" in A.D. 1530. They both came up out of the minds of men, but what gave rise to the Dark Ages was an all-encompassing move. "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life." (Revelation 13:8). Throughout the entirety of the Dark Ages (1260 years), the cry was, "Be Catholic or die!" It was a massive move. That is why it is represented by the sea.

The beast that came out of the earth also came out of the minds of men, but it was not as massive a move as Catholicism. The one power (papalism) was consolidated as the sea. The Protestant system is divided as the land. We read in Revelation 11:7, "And when they [The antecedent reverts to verse 3: 'two witnesses.' These are the Word and the Spirit; Matthew 4:14 and Hebrews 10:15] shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascended out of the bottomless pit shall make war." Revelation 11:7 portrays the beast as coming out of the bottomless pit. Yet, Revelation 13:11 says it came "out of the earth." Some might feel that is contradictory, but you have to correlate them. "The earth" represents coming out of the minds of men, and we can understand what the bottomless pit is by reading 1 Corinthians 3:11, which states, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Christ (the Word) is the only Bible foundation. This earthen beast is a religious system that came up out of the minds of men, creating a system comprised of various denominations with no Bible foundation, no basis in the truth.

Much more could be said about each of these texts, but I am simply trying to give an over-

view to correlate with the type in our lesson. Revelation 9:1-11 states: "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts [remember, we are studying where Ezekiel said part of the judgment would be '**pestilence**'] upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

"And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon."

Let us consider this Revelation passage in light of our study. The types set forth in this portion of the Book of Ezekiel lets us know the long-term effects, or outgrowth, of that morning-time apostasy. It gave rise to the first beast (the papal beast, Roman Catholicism). Now, we see another beast has arisen, and it came from a bottomless pit. Something bottomless obviously has no foundation. The only Bible foundation is "Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). He is "the Word" (John 1:1). The Word is what the true church is built upon. When this angel fell (Revelation 9:1), something else came up. Revelation 9:2 says when "he opened the bottomless pit; . . . there arose a smoke out of the pit." Then, verse 3 lets us know, "There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." First, the bottomless pit was opened (the condition was produced) by a fallen angel, depicting a fallen ministry. Out of the minds of this fallen ministry (false teachers and preachers, represented by the earthen beast) arose a system, comprised of various religious organizations.

Revelation 9:7 tells us the "faces" of these locusts "were as the faces of men." This is talking about the rise of the religious system of Protestantism and its many denominational leaders. We need to clearly understand Protestantism is no more a Christian system than papalism was, and papalism was never a Christian system any more than paganism was. All were produced by the devil. Revelation 16:13 reads, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism], and out of the mouth of the beast [papalism], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Protestantism]." They are the "spirits of devils" (Revelation 16:14). Every one of these religious systems was produced by a devilish spirit. They were produced to be one of Satan's "devices." That is why Paul warned in 2 Corinthians 2:11 to not be "ignorant of [Satan's] devices [thought-out plans and schemes]." The enemy has used many thought-out plans and schemes throughout this Christian dispensation, and he is still using them today. That is why we need to know the truth—understand how these systems occurred and what gave rise to them. Why did they develop? What spirit produced them? In understanding that, we can beware and not fall prey to those spirits.

When Revelation 9:7 tells us these "locusts" had "faces . . . the faces of men," it is letting us know that men head up these systems. However, Ephesians 5:23 lets us know Christ is the head

of the church. Locusts are a plague, and there is no worse plague on earth today than false preachers and men who are supposedly standing for the Gospel but who are in reality the devil's angels. Revelation 9:9 states, "And they had breastplates [it is good to be reminded that these are symbolic expressions], as it were breastplates of iron." Iron comes up out of the earth. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:14 that we are to have "the breastplate of righteousness," but they had breastplates that come up out of the earth.

To further understand what these locusts represent, we need to go into prophecy. We read in Nahum 3:17, "Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away." They cannot stand light. That is why people sometimes visit a worship service or two, but they do not come back. They cannot stand the light. Nahum said, "Thy crowned are as the locusts." Locusts are a symbolic picture of mighty men, of leaders.

There are two gatherings described in Revelation, Chapter 19. There are those who gather together and partake of "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). That is where people eat "the true sayings of God." Then, there is another gathering spoken of in Revelation 19:18. Notice what the diet of the second gathering is: the "flesh of kings," the "flesh of captains," the "flesh of mighty men," the "flesh of horses," and the "flesh of all men." That is exactly what they eat in false religion: things that appeal and make provision for the "flesh." The reason they teach a sin-more-or-less doctrine is that they want to live a sin-more-or-less life. The reason they teach you cannot live holy is that they do not want to live holy. People in sectarianism do not eat "the true sayings of God" because it is not being sounded out there. The teachings they take in are what come from man. (Again, we are not speaking against people, but we are dealing with a religious system promoted by a spirit that is not right.)

A Pestilence of Locusts, Fowls, and Scorpions

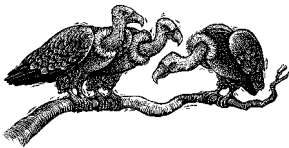
In Exodus 10:13-15, we read of a plague of locusts upon old Egypt. It states: "And Moses stretched forth his rod [a type of the Word] over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened." Now, the sun did not quit shining (the light was still there), but the locusts got between the people and the light, creating darkness. That is exactly what false religion does. It gets between people and the light and prevents them from seeing the light, or the truth.

These locusts completely saturated the sky right in the midst of the day, causing darkness. The locusts in Revelation, Chapter 9, are a picture of a false ministry that rose out of a bottomless pit. Their teachings have no Bible basis, no Bible foundation, no foundation in the truth. Nowhere in the Bible can you read, "Join the church of your choice." Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church [singular]." For there to be a choice, there has to be two, but Jesus built only one. That false doctrine came up out of the bottomless pit; it came from the locusts.

How does a false ministry obscure the light? Let me give you an example of how this occurs. There have been funeral occasions where a true man of God preached God's Word, and God deals with the people in that funeral audience. Often, there are those in attendance from the realms of false religion, and God's man is preaching the truth about the need to live a holy, sinless life. Religious individuals are stirred in their hearts. God sends conviction through the Holy Spirit. What do they do? They go back to their ministers in false religion (locusts), who pick up that seed, saying, "Nobody can live that way." Jesus spoke of that very thing in Matthew, Chapter 13, when

He spoke of the wayside ground. The wise man spoke about it when he said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man [the way of religion], but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

In Matthew 13:3-4 we read: "And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up." The fowls are false ministers. In verse 19, Jesus expounded on that parable, saying, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom [that is what the seed is], and understandeth [or *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* actually says 'consider'] it not, then cometh the wicked *one*, [Notice, the word '*one*' is in italics. That means it is not in the original text, because He was not talking about '*one*' but about those who are wicked, those who will not take the truth; Psalm 50:16-17. Christ was explaining what He saw earlier, and in Matthew 13:4 He called them 'fowls' in the plural.] and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side [the way of religion]."

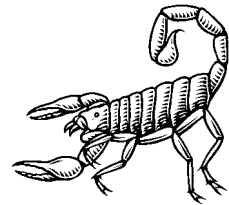


Fowls

To understand what those fowls are, go to Revelation 18:2, which states, "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Those fowls are false prophets, false teachers, who come and devour that seed which Luke 8:11 says "is the word of God." Not only do false

ministers obscure the light, but they devour anything that has any light. When they are done passing through, there is nothing left.

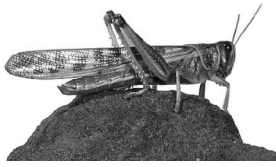
I want you to see the "**pestilence**" our text is speaking of typically. Revelation 9:3 tells us, "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power." What are these "scorpions" a symbolic picture of? We previously studied it in Ezekiel 2:3, which says, "And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me." Then, Ezekiel 2:6 reads, "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words [scorpions do not speak; they do not have words, but people who have this spirit do], though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."



Scorpion

Ezekiel was talking about the rebellious children of Israel. "Scorpions" represent rebellion because a scorpion has a sting in its tail; it can bring death. Likewise, rebellion in its end brings death. False religion (these locusts) had tails like scorpions. Their teaching brings death to mankind. The assemblies of the fallen ministry are like a deadly poison. If the dear people who sit in those positions continue to sit under that, being fed poison, eventually they become as rebellious as what they are being fed. They ultimately develop the same foul, ugly spirit as their leaders. That is why the message of our day is to "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4).

The locusts in Revelation, Chapter 9, are ministers with a rebellious spirit. They have the power to be scorpions to the people who sit under them. If they are rebelling against truth, before long, the people to whom they are ministering will rebel against truth. Every denomination came about because of someone's rebellion. Galatians 5:19-20 states: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, [Is adultery godly? Does it encourage holiness? Is adultery sin? Certainly so!] fornication [that is sin], uncleanness [that is sin], lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred [all these are sin], variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies." *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* does not say "heresies" here, but it says "sects." Sectism is a work of the flesh. Every sectarian organization came up out of the earth, out of the bottomless pit. They have no Bible base, no Bible foundation, for they came out of the fleshly minds of rebellious men.



Locust

Look again at Revelation 9:3, which reads, "And there came out [out of the bottomless pit] of the smoke locusts." How do we know they were rebellious? Verse 8 says that "they had hair as the hair of women." Yet, verse 7 says they had the "faces of men." There is a Biblical distinction between a man's hair and a woman's hair (1 Corinthians 11:14-15). A man is not supposed to have long hair. When Paul wrote, "Doth not even nature itself" (1 Corinthians 11:14), he was not talking about physical nature, but the nature spoken of in 2 Peter 1:4. We are to be "partakers of the divine nature." That is the nature that whispers to you, "You need to get your hair cut." Physical nature does not tell a man that. Physical nature will let it grow all the way down the back, but divine nature tells men to keep it short.

Conversely, 1 Corinthians 11:15 reads, "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her." Just as a man is to keep his hair short, a woman's hair is to be long. Back in the 1960s, what came in, taking the culture by storm? It was long hair on men and short hair on women. That is a picture of rebellion. When Revelation 9:8 says that they had hair like women, it is saying they were rebellious and out of divine order. Sectism is out of divine order. It is a product of rebellious people. God never ordained sectarian religion. It was a product of the fleshly minds of rebellious men.

Revelation 9:7 reveals on their heads were as it were "crowns like gold." Notice they were "like gold." It was not actual gold. It was not real purity. Crowns of gold denote victory, purity, and reigning power. Romans 5:17 says we "reign in life," but these crowns were "like gold." They were fool's gold, cheap imitations. They looked real, but they were not real. Sectarian preaching may look like it is Bible preaching, but it is not really the Bible. I was not raised in the truth; I was raised in a worldly home. I remember going to Woolworth's ten cent store to buy a gold ring or a gold bracelet, which only cost about ten cents. It looked like gold, but in two days, my hand was green. It was not gold at all, just a cheap imitation. Gold does not sell for ten cents.

False religion has only a cheap imitation. Joel 2:2 called this era "A day of darkness and of gloominess," talking about this cloudy day. Revelation 9:10 reads, "And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails." The end result (the "tails") is a sting and death. The latter end of these denominations becomes more poisonous and more deadly than when they started. Today, they ordain homosexuals, perform same-sex marriages, and support the LGBTQ/T community. Would you have ever thought they would have fallen that far? That is what a bottomless pit does. There is no limit. There is no bottom. It just keeps falling and falling, and about the time you think it cannot get any lower, they get lower.

The end of those who have a real experience of salvation down in Protestantism, if they stay there, ultimately will be spiritual death. This is why the call is to "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins" (Revelation 18:4). Romans 6:23 tells us "the wages of sin is death." False religion is a plague to mankind. It was bad enough when false religion opened the bottomless pit, but worse than that was when the locusts (all the captives and leaders of all these man-made denominational organizations) came up out of that pit, getting between people and light, producing more darkness.

We found the word "**pestilence**" (**Ezekiel 5:12**) in the Hebrew means "in the sense of destroying." Now, look at this king of sectism. Revelation 9:11 says, "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." In the Hebrew tongue, the name *Abaddon* means "destruction." It is here spoken of in the Hebrew, and it is not only referring to the particular instance of being destroyed, but it is also revealing the religious system that brings the destruction. Psalm 88:11 tells us, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in

destruction?" Faithfulness and destruction are diametrically opposed. When Revelation 9:11 says "is Abaddon," it reveals this "king" (or the rule of sectism in one's life) brings "destruction." This is not only for time, but also for eternity.

Revelation 9:11 also says, "In the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." That is a present participle of the Greek verb, which means "to destroy." Literally, it means "the destroyer." Whenever one comes under the rule of sectism (whether it be in name, doctrine, practice, operation, or spirit), it will ultimately destroy him; it will culminate in utter destruction of his soul. Revelation 9:5 tells us they will be "tormented." False religion is the greatest plague ever foisted upon mankind. It does not provide victory, but rather it leads its subjects to destruction.

The Long-Range Effects of Apostasy

I want you to see by the help of God's eternal Word that our lesson text is teaching the long-range effects of apostasy—the papal beast, the Protestant beast, and the many locusts (or denominational organizations) led by men who have so perverted the Gospel of Christ. When a people veer off the path of rectitude and right and allow another spirit to overtake them, there is no telling where that may lead. There is no telling how far, how long, and how devastating the consequences of disobedience, rebellion, and not walking in light may be. **Ezekiel 5:12** says, "**I will scatter a third part into all the winds,**" showing the far-reaching effects. Ephesians 4:14 tell us what "**the winds**" represent, stating, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Those "**winds**" are the "wind of doctrine" men have developed through sectarian religion. They are doctrines of devils.

We read in Ezekiel 13:10-12: "Because, even because they have seduced my people [it went from 'seducing spirits' (1 Timothy 4:1) to 'them that seduce you' (1 John 2:26)], saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall [the wall represents 'salvation'; Isaiah 26:1], and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation therefore shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD."

This "untempered mortar" is a picture of the false teachings that cannot keep an experience of salvation together. When truth comes along, it reveals that "mortar" for what it truly is, and it collapses. We read in Ezekiel 12:13-15: "My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries."

Ezekiel was giving a long-range view. Papalism rose first, but then there was another beast. It was so multiplied in its representation that it is likened to locusts with different faces, representing different denominations, or different organizations. God's people were scattered in those various winds. Ezekiel 34:12 says, "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." There was a dark age, but

following that dark day was what is known as a dark and cloudy day, a mixture of light and darkness, of truth and error. The spirit of apostasy is both a deceitful and deadly spirit. It is still working today. Ecclesiastes 1:9 says, "There is no new thing under the sun." We could say, "The thing that has been [apostasy in the morning time], it is that which shall be [we are facing an apostasy in the evening time in which we live]."

There was a terrible defection from truth in the morning time when people would not take instruction, cast God's Word behind them, and denied the Lord God. That same spirit is working in our day and is raising up congregations, ministers, fellowships, and organizations that are no more Christian than Roman Catholicism. They are developed by men, headed by men, and backed by an apostate spirit. What the church has faced in bygone days, we still have to contend with today. Just as it produced horrific consequences in the past, it will today, if given vent to. We must do as Malachi 2:15 and 16 admonishes, "Take heed to your spirit." If we do not have a "love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10) as we ought, we can give vent to this terrible spirit. Many have done this in bygone days and, sadly, many are yet today. This is why we need to "take heed." We may not understand all the truths of God's Word, but we need to make sure we have a right spirit so when God's Word does come, we do not allow rebellious attitudes to arise, for that is what the enemy is ever wanting to produce.

As we walk in the light, or understanding, as truth progresses, God will reveal things to us we might not have understood previously. When He reveals it to us, 1 John 1:7 tells us to walk in it, to progress and advance in it, but the enemy will be right there to work on us, trying to get us to take a rebellious stance and say, "I am not doing that; I will not live that way." If you do not immediately take heed to your spirit, then the enemy can come right in and one of those spirits of devils can take you over. It has happened in too many cases, but it does not need to. Thank God, there is victory over it! God has sent His Word to bring us greater victory and to bring us closer to Him. This is not to hinder us, not to hurt us, but we have to take heed to our spirit and walk in what God shows us. He will enlighten us as we go further; He will reveal those truths to us in a greater way.

I trust we can see what Ezekiel was portraying typically and see the antitype (the New Testament reality)—the cause of apostasy and its long-ranging effects: "**famine,**" "**the sword,**" "**pestilence,**" and "**beasts.**" When the enemy tempts us, we need to realize the effects can be long-ranging. It will not just affect us today, but it will affect others in the future. This lesson on apostasy should serve as a sober warning! That is why we need to "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" (Hebrews 2:1), be diligent, and be those who have a "love of the truth."

NOTES:

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A TYPICAL AND VISIONARY PORTRAYAL OF THE DARK AGES

Ezekiel 7:21 And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it.

22 My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

23 Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled.

Ezekiel 8:1 And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me.

2 Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

3 And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

9 And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

10 So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

11 And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

13 He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.

14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

17 Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

In no way can we exhaust the host of truths contained in this lengthy portion of prophetic text. Yet, as we consider this text, we must be reminded of Proverbs 30:5, where the wise man said, "Every word of God is pure." There are no superfluous, or non-essential, words incorporated within God's eternal Word. "Every word" incorporated in the sacred canon by divine design has significance and conveys truth. Since every Scripture "is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16), there are no nonessential words or passages. Our burden is to consider the vision and view the typical truths of this text in the prophetic scheme that portrays a sequence of events, revealing the truth in type concerning the Gospel Day, or this Christian dispensation.

There are at least two aspects to the prophecies of Ezekiel (as there are with most prophetic writings): (1) the local, literal, or historical aspect, which is certainly worthy of merit in its own right; and (2) the spiritual, symbolic, or typical aspect, which causes a prophecy to reach beyond when it was penned and have relevance throughout the entirety of this Christian dispensation. We feel burdened to consider this second perspective in these studies. This aspect of prophetic writing is not novel to only Ezekiel's writings. Old Testament writings were not penned and preserved for merely their historic merit but also because of the typical truths they portray as well (1 Corinthians 10:11). We can gain great benefit from these Old Testament Scriptures.

God is a God of "order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). From the smallest molecular structure to the vastest galaxies, everything God does is "in order." Through the form of visions and types, these Scriptures reveal what would transpire throughout the ages. Many events of this Gospel Day (at this juncture and time in which we live, A.D. 2023) are historical, but "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). In this evening time, we are facing the same foes the church faced throughout the various periods of the Gospel Day—the dragon, the beast, and the image. The difference is, we are facing those same foes amalgamating altogether for one last thrust against the church. What has occurred throughout the Gospel Day is what lies ahead of us as well (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Thus, it behooves us to study these prophetic writings.

People Failing to Walk in the Light Produced Darkness

Our text speaks of a dark time. In this particular portion, we will study the segment of this Gospel Day predominantly from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530, a time when no trumpet (or message) was publicly sounded. The book was shut, as it were, and a beast ruled the landscape. Man rule became the order of the day. Jesus told what would give rise to such things. He said in John 12:35: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." We are not always going to have the opportunity to walk in the light. When people are presented with light ("understanding"; Psalm 119:130), God gives a space of time (Revelation 2:21) to walk in that light. Light continues to progress and advance, like a spotlight on a stage, and if people do not advance

with the light, it will outstrip them, leaving them in darkness.

The prevailing condition in that period of time (A.D. 530-1530) was darkness because the people were blinded. They failed to walk in the light, and darkness came upon them; thus, they were blind to their spiritual condition. They fell under a terrible deception, and people are still falling prey to that deception today. It is a condition where people "knoweth not." Darkness came in, both in Ezekiel's day as well as the noontime of this Gospel Day. We read in Amos 8:9, "And it shall come to pass in that day [an expression referring to the Gospel Day], saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon [when it ought to have been the brightest, a spiritual eclipse occurred], and I will darken the earth in the clear day." Amos was not talking about a natural phenomenon or a natural event when he spoke of the "earth" being darkened. "Earth" represents man (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 5:1).

Ezekiel 8:12 reads, "**Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house do in the dark?**" Ezekiel was talking about the minds and hearts of men being darkened in this period (typifying the Dark Ages), and anyone who refuses light indeed has a terrible darkness yet today. In the Scriptures, what are light and darkness? Psalm 119:130 contains a common Hebrew teaching style known as *parallelism*. It reads, "The entrance of thy words giveth light [the second portion of the couplet defines what light is]; it giveth understanding." When people say, "I saw the light," they mean, "I have gained understanding." Light is understanding. What is darkness? We read

PARALLELISM: where a truth is stated in the first part of the verse and then restated in the second portion of the verse, explaining and expanding upon the first portion.

in Psalm 82:5, "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness." Darkness is failing to walk in understanding. Darkness, or no understanding, is how the enemy holds people. He does not want people to understand; so he holds them in darkness. He is the prince of darkness. If people understood, the enemy would lose his hold on honest hearts.

Notice, these people were a little peculiar. Psalm 82:5 says, "They know not, neither *will* they understand." They were willingly ignorant, and there are people like that yet today. They say, "If I do not know that, I am not responsible; if I do not go to the worship services and I do not hear, then I am not responsible." When people are willingly ignorant, they will be held accountable for what they could have understood. I have heard of people missing worship services, and when they heard the pastor had preached something they did not care for, something they were not measured to, they said, "I am not responsible; I was not there." Oh, yes, if you could have been there, you are responsible. Second Peter 3:5 talks about such people, saying, "For this they willingly are ignorant of . . ." Hosea 4:6 speaks of such a people when it says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge."

Being "willingly ignorant" does not lessen the responsibility. When Psalm 82:5 talks about "darkness," it depicts people who refuse to understand, who are "willingly ignorant." Isaiah 2:2 speaks about "the mountain of the LORD'S house [or the church]" being "in the top of the mountains." Yet, a terrible work was wrought through apostasy, and that "mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea" (Revelation 8:8). The "sea" represents "wicked" people (Isaiah 57:20), and Psalm 50:16-17 says God considers the height of wickedness to be people who will not take "instruction," who cast God's "words behind" them. They will not take the light, and they will not walk in the light. Because of that, a seducing spirit takes hold of them (1 Timothy 4:1). Revelation 16:13-14 says they are "spirits of devils." Out of those minds comes "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1) and organizations of men to foster those doctrines. All this comes from darkened minds.

We read in 1 John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time [written in A.D. 100, after John came off the isle of Patmos]: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come [there was a teaching then that antichrist—in the singular—would come, just as false religion teaches today], even now [A.D. 100] are there many antichrists [plural]; whereby we know that it is the last time." Where did these "antichrists" come from? Were they civic or political leaders (as sectarian religion teaches today)? First John 2:19 says, "They went out from us [they were Church of God people], 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." Why did they go out? Romans 1:21 tells us, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." That is what produced the Dark Ages.

Romans 1:22-23 states: "Professing themselves to be wise [Roman Catholicism has, no doubt, one of the most educated clergies of any organization in supposed Christendom], they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." If you go into any facility of Roman Catholicism, you will find images of men. They refer to them as "the saints." They light candles and say prayers to them, but the Bible lets us know in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." We are not to pray to saints or Mary. That is changing "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Romans 1:23).

Ephesians 4:18 speaks of those foolish, "darkened" hearts, saying, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." When an individual will not walk in the light, their understanding becomes "darkened." That is why you can look at people who once sat under the truth, and you wonder how they could do what they do having known what they once knew, what they once sat under, what they once testified to. Even that which they did understand became darkness to them.

Spiritual Darkness Produced a False Religious System

If you do not walk in the light when you have the light, darkness comes upon you. Ephesians 4:19 reads, "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness [or loose living], to work all uncleanness with greediness." That describes exactly what occurred during this dark age. Their "understanding" was "darkened," and a religious system rose up. This "great mountain burning with fire [representing the morning-time church] was cast into the sea" (Revelation 8:8). It fell out of the hands of God and into the hands of men. Revelation 13:1 tells us that "up out of the sea" (out of the minds of apostate men) came this "beast" (the religious system known as Roman Catholicism). Again, bear in mind, as Ephesians 6:12 says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." We are not against people. We love all men everywhere. But we are speaking about a system that is contrary to God's eternal Word, a system that is duping, deceiving, and damning multiplied millions of people. The truth needs to be heralded.

A religious system rose up, according to Revelation 13:1, which says, "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." We identified those in a previous segment, showing they were factors identifying it as something Roman. Revelation 13:18 says the number "is the number of a man," and one man best exemplifies that system: the office of the Pope of Rome. This system began because of the spiritual condition Paul described in Acts 20:30, when he said, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Did this occur? Is this what our text is speaking of in typical, visionary language?

Our text, talking about the judgment that would come through for the condition, reads in

Ezekiel 7:21-24: "And I will give it into the hands of the strangers . . . for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it. My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses." The move God was going to make would cause heathenism, or paganism, to become predominant. Again, **verse 21** says, **"And I will give it into the hands of the strangers and to the wicked."** We have already identified **"the wicked"** as those who hate instruction, who cast God's Word behind them (Psalm 50:16-17). Who are **"the strangers"**? **Verse 22** says, **"The robbers shall enter into it, and defile it."** Where does this take place? Jesus said in John 10:1, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold [the church], but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." John 10:9 tells us Jesus is "the door." The only acceptable mode of entry to an experience of salvation, or to the church, is through Jesus Christ. He is also described as the Word (John 1:1, 14, 17). The only way we are going to come in is by meeting the conditions of God's Word.

Men, trying to get in, supposedly make other avenues. It is just as the account in Genesis, Chapter 11, when people attempted to build a tower to Heaven. God had already made a way to Heaven, but men decided to make their own way to Heaven. Genesis 11:3-4 reads: "And they said one to another, [You do not read about them saying anything to God or getting any direction from God. This was men conversing with one another.] Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, [Only God can make a stone, and He intended the Stone, Jesus Christ, to be the foundation of the church. However, the men in Genesis had brick for stone: a cheap, man-made substitute.] and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name." When God confounded their language, Genesis 11:9 says, "Therefore is the name of it called Babel." The *Septuagint* says, "Therefore is the name of it called Confusion." When they all began to speak something different (causing confusion), that is a type of false religion.

Again, John 10:1 tells us those who "climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." The other ways men have devised—penance, sacrifice, Eucharist, rites, rituals, and catechisms—are robbing men of their souls. We read in John 10:3 and 5: "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out [God calls His own sheep by name and leads them out of man-made systems] And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." The **"strangers"** and **"robbers"** in our text are the same as those portrayed in John, Chapter 10. They are a picture of those who "climbeth up some other way," just as they did at the Tower of Babel, trying to make a name for themselves, trying to make a man-made way to Heaven, a way other than God's way. In Ezekiel, because of the spiritual conditions, God was going to give them over to **"robbers,"** to **"strangers . . . and to the wicked,"** especially during this dark age.

To see if the Dark Ages are what is being typified by this text, look at **Ezekiel 8:12**, which states, **"Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark."** These people were **"in the dark,"** representing typically a people in the Dark Ages. This text reveals the conditions apostasy produced and how we can have a clear vision of those conditions. During this time, the beast produced a "kingdom . . . full of darkness." Revelation 16:10 tells us, "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness." That system is "full of darkness." It was produced by darkened minds and darkened hearts—this is what ruled the religious landscape for that period of time. It became a dark age. **Ezekiel 8:2** says, **"Then I beheld [remember, Ezekiel was receiving a vision], and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the**

colour of amber."

Ezekiel was receiving a fresh vision of Christ. We see this description introduced in Ezekiel 1:26, which reads, "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." To understand who this "man" on the "throne" is, let us consider Hebrews 8:1, which reads, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest [Hebrews 3:1 says the 'High Priest of our profession' is 'Christ Jesus'], who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

"Christ Jesus" is the Man who is on this throne. Ezekiel received a vision of Christ in descriptive terms. Ezekiel 1:27 states, "And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about." Ezekiel 1:28 tells who all this represents, saying: "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD." Who is "the glory of the LORD" personified? Hebrews 1:2-3 says: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the *brightness of his glory* . . ." His Son is Jesus Christ. The morning-time church began with a clear vision of Christ and His position. They saw Christ "high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:1), exalted in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). They had a clear vision of Christ and the church in the morning time.

Christ and the Truth Do Not Change

Beginning in **Ezekiel 8:3** are Scriptures that typically represent the Dark Ages. **Verse 3** speaks of "**looketh toward the north.**" This is where the spirit of apostasy led (Zechariah 6:6-8). However, **Ezekiel 8:2** says God was faithful to His people. They still had a vision of Christ. It reads, "**Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.**" This is the same description received in Ezekiel, Chapter 1, representing the morning time. It reveals the truth of Hebrews 13:8, which says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." The landscape was changing; a beast had arisen, and a dark age had commenced. Bibles were shut to the public (to the common man, as they were written in Latin), spiritual darkness ruled the world, and the people's understanding was darkened. Yet, Ezekiel (God's man) was receiving a clear vision, seeing the same description of Christ, which represents the morning time. This reveals that Christ does not change and typifies the truth that in the midst of a dark age, the Lord was faithful to give His people a fresh vision of Christ.

What an encouraging picture! During a dark time, when darkness was the predominant spiritual condition, there were still saints (although in the catacombs and caves) who were being fed by the Word and the Spirit (Revelation 11:3). They were writing on catacomb walls the words Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:9, stating, "The word of God is not bound." They had a fresh vision of Christ, and we need that fresh vision of Christ yet today. Christ does not change. He is the Word (John 1:1, 14, and 17). Psalm 119:89 tells us, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." Isaiah 40:8 reads, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

The first truth revealed is, Christ and truth do not change. People change, and systems change; out of those darkened minds, many things were changed. First Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed

to seducing spirits." When people refused to walk in light, another spirit took hold of them, and out of that came changes—"doctrines of devils." However, the lesson is the first thing Ezekiel saw in this chapter was a fresh vision of Christ, reinforcing the truth that Christ does not change and He is the Word. Although, out of those darkened minds, many things have been propounded, that does not alter the truth and His Word.

A Clear Vision of False Religion

The next truth revealed is a fresh vision of Christ and His Word enables a clear vision of false religion. We need that fresh vision because false religion is most deceptive and deceitful. It takes a clear vision to see it for what it is. We read in **Ezekiel 8:5-7**: "**Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes . . . He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? . . . And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked . . .**" God wants us to look and understand these truths. Why is it necessary to have a clear vision? We read in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Having a fresh and clear vision is essential! We are living in a day when there is indeed vision trouble. Christ said in Revelation 3:18 (representing the day and time in which you and I live), "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." This seventh-and-final letter corresponds with our period of time, a day when the enemy is working to keep the people of God from having a clear vision.

If we do not see what is working, we can become easy prey for it. We need to get our eyes anointed and receive a fresh, clear vision so that we are "not ignorant of [Satan's] devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Once Ezekiel received this fresh vision of Christ, **Ezekiel 8:3** tells us, "**And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up.**" If we are ever going to get an understanding of how things really are and see conditions as the Lord sees them, we need to be moved by the Spirit. Too many people do not see things as God sees them. I have heard people (whose unsaved family members started attending services in sectarian religion) say, "Well, at least they are going to church somewhere." That would be like somebody drinking a glass of water with arsenic, and you saying, "Oh, well, at least they are drinking something." I do not think you would take that attitude. Yet, false religion is much worse than arsenic! Arsenic can only kill the body, but false religion kills the soul. People do not see false religion as God sees it. He sees it as deceitful, deceptive, and deadly!

James said there are only two types of religion: "pure" and "vain" (James 1:26-27). Jesus described only two ways: the "narrow" way or the "broad" way (Matthew 7:13-14); a "good tree" or a "corrupt tree" (Matthew 7:17); gathering together or scattering abroad (Matthew 12:30); you are for Him or against Him (Matthew 12:30). Men have a multiplicity of supposed positions, but the simplicity that is in Christ is that there are just two ways. The street that runs down through Babylon (Revelation 11:8) is the broad way, and it leads to destruction. Revelation 9:11 says that "they had a king over them . . . the angel of the bottomless pit." His Hebrew name "Abaddon" means "destruction," and the Greek name "Apollyon" means "destroyer." False religion is the worst plague humanity has ever had to endure. Once God's people receive a fresh vision of Christ, once our eyes are anointed, we will get in a fresh position, and the Spirit will be able to enlighten the eyes of our understanding. That is His role.

Ephesians 1:17-18 reads, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." It is the Spirit who enables us to have the enlightenment of our understanding, enabling us to see things as God sees them. Revelation 1:10-11 states, "I was in

the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega." Revelation 22:13 uses the same expression, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega." Revelation 22:16 tells us that is "I Jesus." John did not hear the voice of Christ until he was "in the Spirit." Too many people leave worship services without truly receiving the benefits God intended for them because they were never "in the Spirit." They have every other thing in the world on their minds. They are thinking about what they are going to do after service, where they are going to go, and what they are going to eat. Before you can ever hear the voice of Christ, you must be "in the Spirit." John did not just get "in the Spirit" on Sunday, but he was "in the Spirit" every day of the week. That is why God could use him. He lived and walked in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Revelation 4:1-2 tells us, "After this I looked [John was receiving a 'vision' as well; Revelation 9:17], and, behold, a door was opened [when Ezekiel listened to the Lord and was told to '**dig now in the wall**' (Ezekiel 8:8), he said '**behold a door**'; likewise, the revelator saw 'a door'] in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet [the voice of Christ; Revelation 1:10-11] talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set." John began to see a vision, began to receive understanding, began to see things because he was "in the Spirit."

Truth does not come by the avenue of *education*, but by the avenue of *revelation* through the Spirit of God. This is how John received understanding concerning Babylon (false religion). Revelation 17:1 reads, "And there came one of the seven angels [the Greek word is *aggelos*, which means 'a messenger'; Revelation 1:20 reveals that the angels represent the ministry of the church throughout the seven periods of the Gospel Day] 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." Who is this? Revelation 17:5 states, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON." Revelation 17:3 reads, "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw." To see takes a combination of a ministry with the message and the Holy Spirit enlightening the eyes of your understanding when that message is sounded forth. Without the Spirit of God, you will not see it no matter how well it is preached. The only way John received an understanding of Babylon was by the angel (the ministry) with a message and the Spirit of God enlightening the eyes of his understanding.

Revelation 21:9 tells us, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels." Again, God's ordained manner of giving people a clear vision of Babylon and the church is the ministry with a message. How do we know that? Revelation 18:1-2 says: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven [he had a divine call], having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory [a true, God-called ministry brings light, or understanding, to people]. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." A ministry sounding forth the message is how "the earth was lightened." That brought light, or understanding, to the people to the place where Revelation 18:4 reads, "And I heard another voice from heaven." What voice was that? The preacher preaches the message, and God uses the ministry to bring understanding to people's minds. Then, the Holy Spirit takes that message and gives a personal application, saying, "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4).

Ezekiel 8:3 tells us, "**The spirit lifted me up.**" The "**spirit**" is the One who brought Ezekiel "**in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north.**" Ezekiel did not physically go anywhere any more than Christ did in Matthew, Chapter 4, or John did in Revelation. They were carried away by the Spirit in their minds. After Jesus had been baptized by John and anointed by the Holy Spirit, Matthew 3:16 reads, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." Acts 10:38

states, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power."

Once Jesus received that anointing by the Holy Ghost, He was ready to commence His public ministry. However, before His ministry began, Matthew 4:1 says, "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." The Spirit led him. Speaking of the temptations and the enemy, Matthew 4:5-6 states, "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Verse 5 says that "the devil taketh him." The devil did not physically take Jesus anywhere. He was in "the wilderness" when this began (verse 1), and He was in the wilderness when this concluded (Mark 1:13). The enemy drew Jesus away in His mind.

James 1:14 speaks of temptation, stating, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust [a better rendering in the Greek says 'desire'], and enticed." The enemy draws us away in our minds. Back in Matthew 4:8, we read, "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world." Physically, there was no high mountain where someone could see all the kingdoms of the world. Satan drew Jesus away in His mind. It was the same with John. We read in Revelation 4:1-2: "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. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." John was drawn away in his mind. Being in the Spirit is vital to receiving a revelation of God's truth, or seeing spiritual conditions as they are.

The Importance of Anointed Eyes

Ezekiel was receiving "**visions**." He was "**brought**" by "**the spirit**" in the form of "**the visions**" (**Ezekiel 8:3**). He literally was never transferred or traveled anywhere, but he was taken in his mind just as others have been in the Scriptures when they were in a "**vision**" or when the Spirit moved upon them. **Ezekiel 8:4** talks about "**according to the vision**," and in **verse 17**, the Lord said, "**Hast thou seen this, O son of man?**" Ezekiel was receiving a vision. We read in **Ezekiel 8:5**, "**Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes.**" Ezekiel was going to see some things. **Ezekiel 8:6** says, "**He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do?**" **Ezekiel 8:7** says that "**and when I looked.**" **Ezekiel 8:10** states, "**So I went in and saw.**" **Ezekiel 8:12** says, "**Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen.**" If we are to truly see conditions as they were in past periods of the Gospel Day (and certainly as we face them today), we have to have our eyes anointed. We have to have a fresh vision. We have to see what Christ desires that we see because there have been predominant conditions throughout various portions of the Gospel Day that we are still suffering the residual effects from yet today.

We continue to be affected by what was produced through the morning-time apostasy and the Dark Ages. We need to see what transpired in the past, its lingering effects, and what we face yet today. We must have our eyes anointed—the eyes of our understanding enlightened. We cannot look at the Word as just a dead letter, but we must let the Spirit give it life, giving us insight so we can see what God desires we see. When Jesus gave the seven prophetic parables in Matthew, Chapter 13, He said to His disciples in verse 16, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see." If you have an eye that can see, if you have a vision that can see the truth, you are blessed. We live in a world that is blind to even the most rudimentary, fundamental basics of truth. Our society has so deteriorated and is so blind that they call "good evil" (Isaiah 5:20); they have set darkness for light. Matthew 13:16-17 states: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear [not literal eyes or ears, but the spiritual ability to see truth so that when you hear, you can perceive]. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired

to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

We are more blessed than any people throughout the annals of time. Paul concluded the Roman Epistle in Romans 16:25-27, saying: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you [that is what God wants to do because the enemy is out to move us away from truth as he has to many in bygone days] according to my gospel, and the preaching [that is how He establishes you] of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

Thank God, we live in a day when "the mystery of God should be finished [or the Greek says 'completed']" (Revelation 10:7). That which has been "kept secret since the world began" is now being "made manifest." That is necessary, not merely so we can understand the historical narrative (though there is a certain amount of importance to that because those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it), but also because "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The same spirits that produced these religious systems throughout the various portions of the Gospel Day are working yet today. Revelation 16:13-14 tells us: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs [they are being uncovered and exposed in the day and time in which we live] come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism], and out of the mouth of the beast [papalism], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Protestantism]. For they are the spirits of devils [what are they trying to do?], 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."

These spirits are working "to gather" people against the truth. They are gathering people, amalgamating and consolidating their forces to work against the cause of Christ. Thus, it is needful to have anointed eyes, enlightened eyes, so we can see as God wants us to see. If we do not have anointed eyes, spiritual conditions can work all around us, but we will not see them. It is vital we be in the Spirit so as these truths come forth, God can give understanding as to what has worked, why it worked, what produced it, and how it is working today. Why? So we are not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11) and fall prey to these spirits and systems. Revelation 20:9 shows us "the camp of the saints" is "compassed," and certainly we are surrounded by false religion. They are ever working to make inroads.

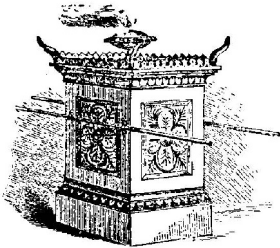
The enemy will use false religion in any possible way to make inroads into the lives of the saints. Thus, we not only need to be saved, but we must also "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth [thy word is truth; John 17:17], and the truth shall make you free." The only thing that can make and keep us free from falsity is an understanding of truth. The only way we understand it is through the Spirit taking the preaching of the Word and enlightening our understanding. Sometimes, when it comes to prophecies, people take a laid-back attitude, saying, "Well, he is just hung up on prophecy; that is what he likes, and it is just not that important." It is vitally important! God would not have had it penned and preserved throughout the annals of time if it were not very important. It is needful we understand it, for if we do not, we can be ripe prey for the enemy through these spirits and systems.

Ezekiel, Chapter 8, shows a terrible progression. Several times in this chapter, the Lord told Ezekiel he would see "**greater abominations**" (verses 6, 13, and 15). This teaches the progressive nature of darkness is to advance, degenerate, and deteriorate. In that day of change, it was necessary Ezekiel received a fresh vision of the truth that Christ and His Word do not change (Hebrews 13:8). This description conveyed in **Ezekiel 8:2** is the same description found in Ezekiel 1:27, when Ezekiel saw a period of time, representing the morning time. Psalm 119:89 tells

us, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." Men may think they are changing God's Word, but God's Word is unchangeable. That is the first truth revealed in this portion of the vision. People change, and systems change. Out of darkened minds came forth man-made systems that are constantly changing, but Christ and truth do not change.

A fresh vision of Christ brings a clear vision of false religion. We read in **Ezekiel 8:5**: "**Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold.**" Ezekiel received a vision of the true conditions. It takes a divine vision to see things as God sees them. That is why He said in Revelation 3:18, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." God wants us to see these truths. He wants us to have a clear vision and see how abominable false religion is to Him.

"The Image of Jealousy"



Brazen Altar

Ezekiel 8:3 states, "**And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem,** [Again, the Spirit did not physically convey Ezekiel anywhere except through the spirit in his mind. In the vision, he was brought 'to Jerusalem.'] **to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.**" Notice the particular phrase, "**that looketh toward the north.**" **Verse 5** also speaks of "**toward the north.**" We recognize this description speaks of a literal "**door of the inner gate**" (**verse 3**), or "**gate of the altar**" (**verse 5**). Concerning this, one scholar wrote, "This gate leading from the outer to inner court, the court of the priests, is called in Ezekiel 8:5 the gate of the altar because it was from this site that the priests approached the brazen altar." Under the Levitical priesthood, the brazen altar was where the priests offered the sin offering. Under the old economy, God ordered the priests to place the sacrifices on the brazen altar located in the outer court of the Old Testament tabernacle. Right at this "**gate,**" the place where the priests were to offer the sacrifices God intended, there was "**the seat of the image of jealousy**" (**verse 3**).

Let us get the typical picture of this vision. The thought of "**toward the north**" represents Babylon; Babylon was a north country. Jeremiah 6:22-23 tells us: "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roar-eth like the sea; and they ride upon horses." The sea represents the wicked (Isaiah 57:20), and the wicked are those who hate God's instruction, casting His words behind them (Psalm 50:16-17). This "sea" is a picture of apostates who would no longer take the instruction from God's Word, who cast God's Word behind them, and were overcome with "seducing spirits" (1 Timothy 4:1), or "spirits of devils" (Revelation 16:13-14). Because of that, they began to formulate doctrines of devils and a system to support those doctrines. Thus, a beast (or a religious system) came up out of that sea (Revelation 13:1), or out of the minds of those men (Acts 20:30).

Jeremiah said, "They ride upon horses." Zechariah 6:2-5 states: "In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses [these correspond with the same coloration found in Revelation, Chapter 6]. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens [or heavenly places; they are religious spirits; these horses represent different religious spirits that would work throughout this Christian dispensation]." Notice, Zechariah 6:6 speaks of "the black

horses." The coloration of the horses denotes the condition. Black denotes darkness.

Let us look at some Scriptures to substantiate this. Jude 13, speaking of these apostates and what they would do, reads, "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Blackness represents darkness. Coming back to Zechariah 6:6, we read, "The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country." This spirit (represented by a black horse) gave rise to this beast (the religious system described in Revelation 13:1-2). How was that accomplished? We see in Zechariah 6:8, "Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit." This system was produced by a spirit of apostasy. People were overcome by that spirit because they no longer listened to the Spirit of God; they refused instruction (God's Word), and they cast God's Word behind them. Thus, they quieted God's Spirit, and another spirit took hold of them and seduced them. That gave rise to this religious system.

Ezekiel 26:7 tells us, "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north." Again, "the north" represents Babylon. This "beast" that came "up out of the sea" in Revelation 13:1 is considered Babylon. The word "Babylon" means confusion. What produced this religious confusion? First Corinthians 14:33 tells us, "God is not the author of confusion." Prophecy told us it would occur. It did not occur because God said so, but He said so because He knew it would occur. It was never God's will for apostasy, for a dark age, but He knows "the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10). Since He knew what the conditions would be, He prophesied and warned of them.

Understanding the cause of this—"These . . . have quieted my spirit" (Zechariah 6:8)—ought to cause a solemnity to strike our hearts. It is dangerous and deadly! The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the triune Godhead; He is God the Spirit. When we disregard or disobey the Spirit, we are disregarding or disobeying God. Does the Holy Spirit hold the full force and authority of God? When Ananias deceptively contrived to sell a property and hold back a part of the price, Acts 5:3 says Ananias lied "to the Holy Ghost," and verse 4 lets us know he "lied . . . unto God." The Holy Ghost is God. We need to be cautious in our individual lives to do as Revelation says seven times over: "he that hath an ear, let him hear." That word "hear" means heed, obey what the "Spirit saith," because what produced these terrible conditions throughout the Gospel Day began with a people who quieted God's Spirit. They picked up a spirit to where they would not listen to the Spirit of God, and that led to terrible darkness! It will do the same yet today.

In our text, the priests (divinely-ordered men) were to offer a sacrifice, but they brought in **"the image of jealousy" (verse 3)**. Too many times, we forget that God is a jealous God. When He gave Moses the commandments on Mount Sinai, He said in Exodus 20:5, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." Exodus 34:14 reads, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." God told His people in Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Today, we are not overcome with statues made of stone or wood as some in bygone days have been or even as some religious organizations are today. Yet, if we are not cautious, we can set other things before God, such as our family, home, job, or any number of things. God is just as jealous. We need to make certain He is in the first place. Matthew 6:33 tells us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." He must be first and foremost.

Israel had done a terrible thing in Ezekiel's day. Right in the exact place where the priests were to offer the God-ordained sacrifices, they set up **"the image of jealousy" (verse 3)**. The *Amplified Bible* says, "idol-image." They brought an idol, an **"image,"** into the sacred place, revealing they had been moved to a position of idolatry. In the place where the sacrifices of God were ordered to be, in the position where the priests were to observe those sacrifices, there was an **"image."** Ezekiel 11:12 reads, "And ye shall know that I am the LORD: for ye have not walked

in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you." In Ezekiel's day, Israel was reduced to paganism and heathenism. Yet, they tried to tie it in with worship of God. They had brought that idol into the sacred place, adding insult to injury, as it were. That occurred in Ezekiel's day and also in this dark age.

When you read of the rise of this beast (previously identified as symbolizing Roman Catholicism), Revelation 13:2 reads, "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 [referring to the four heathen empires in Daniel, Chapter 7, and letting us know the heathenism of the previous opposing forces to God's people were all rolled into this one beast]: and the dragon [paganism] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Much of the power in Roman Catholicism today is still the power of heathenism. Their sanctuaries are filled with statues, or idols. People light candles and pray to them. That is idolatry. There is no other word for it! God never ordained His people to bow down before a statue and pray. That is idolatry! First John 5:21 admonishes, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Out of this sea (Revelation 13:1) came a system that put on a Christian garb, representing itself as a supposed-Christian system (which it never has been, is not, and never will be), but underneath, it is the dragon (paganism). Revelation 13:4 says, "And they worshipped the dragon [paganism] which gave power unto the beast." When they quieted God's Spirit and cast His words behind them, they went into spiritual darkness. If we do not walk in the light as He is in the light, He will give us a space to repent, but in that space of time, if we do not walk (advance) in the understanding He gives us, then darkness comes upon us, and our spirit changes. Another spirit took hold here. They began to formulate doctrines of devils. Then a system arose that attempted to dress paganism in Christian garb. There is nothing Christian about Roman Catholicism. Everything about it is pagan. We will study more in the following segments, but the title "Pontifex Maximus" (which the popes of Rome assumed for the centuries) was the same title given to the pagan Roman emperors. Many of the doctrines propounded by Romanism go back to paganistic history. The concept of nuns goes back to the pagan practices of the vestal virgins of antiquity. The rosary can be traced back to the pre-Christian era when pagans used prayer beads.

Consider another illustration of this truth. In 1 Samuel, Chapters 3-4, Eli the priest would not restrain his sons. God told Eli He was going to bring judgment. When the Philistines came against Israel, Israel brought out the ark of God, thinking it would defend them. However, the Philistines took the ark and placed it in the temple of their god Dagon (1 Samuel 5:1-2). Dagon had the head of a man and the body of a fish. The Philistine priests would hollow out the head of a fish, put its open head on their head, and let the body stream down their backs. This is exactly what the supposed fisherman's cap, used by Roman Catholicism, looks like today. The cap that the Pope and many other prelates wear (the fish with the open mouth) has its origin in the priests of Dagon back in the days of Samuel. It all comes from paganism.



When men's foolish minds become darkened, there is no depth of depravity that a man or an organization can sink to. Jeremiah 6:22-23 reads: "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy." If you study history, many Catholic nuns bore children out of wedlock with the priests and the monks. Often, these babies were placed in lime pits and destroyed. How cruel! Spiritual darkness is a terrible thing.

"Behold the Wicked Abominations That They Do Here"

We read in **Ezekiel 8:7**, "**And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.**" The "**wall**" represents "salvation" (Isaiah 26:1), but Ezekiel saw "**a hole in the wall.**" God was revealing to Ezekiel what people were going to do regarding salvation. He instructed in **verse 8**, "**Son of man, dig now in the wall.**" Only when Ezekiel "**had digged in the wall**" did he behold "**a door**," letting us know truth does not lie on the surface. Thus, we are admonished in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [if you do not study, it is too easy to get off track and not be rightly dividing] the word of truth." God told the prophet to "**dig now.**" He showed him the "**hole**," the place where he was supposed to "**dig**," but God did not "**dig**" it for Ezekiel. God may impress you where to study, but He is not going to do it for you.

Superficial experiences and superficial knowledge only are dangerous and deadly. Jesus gave seven prophetic parables (representing the seven periods of the Gospel Day), saying in Matthew 13:5, "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up [why?], because they had no *deepness* of earth." We need some "deepness," some "depth." Mark, relating the same account, said in Mark 4:5, "And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no *depth* of earth." To truly see things as God desires, we have to have some "*depth*" to our experience and our knowledge.

Notice, as we look further in **verse 8**, God said, "**Dig now in the wall.**" Once you are in salvation ("**the wall**"), you are to begin to "**dig.**" Then, it says, "**behold a door.**" John 10:9 tells us Jesus is "the door." In reality, you cannot dig up the truth. Truth has to be revealed, and it is revealed when we exert the effort the Scriptures admonish through studying. Ezekiel did not see the "**door**" until he dug. Until he put works with his faith (James 2:26), he did not see anything. But once he put works with his faith, he beheld a "**door**" (a mode of access or entrance). Once the "**door**" was revealed and Ezekiel was able to go in, **verse 9** reads, "**And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.**" Once Ezekiel exerted the effort and obeyed the admonition, then God gave the revelation.

Next, we begin to see the revelation Ezekiel received. **Ezekiel 8:10** states, "**So I went in** [Notice, Ezekiel was obedient every step of the way. What he heard, what he was instructed to do, he did.] **and saw** [remember, he was getting a vision]; **and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.**" Every one of these "**creeping things, and abominable beasts**" was forbidden by the Levitical law. They were unlawful. (Read Leviticus 11:41-44.) Yet, these were "**upon the wall.**" People were trying to make unlawful things part of salvation. That is exactly what this religious system of the Dark Ages did. It took unlawful things, things "**abominable**" to God, and put them right in with what constituted salvation.

Ezekiel 8:10 lets us know Ezekiel saw "**idols.**" Concerning idols, Leviticus 26:1 tells us, "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God." The commandment is clear, yet **Ezekiel 8:10** says the "**idols**" were "**pourtrayed upon the wall.**" The people put the "**idols**" right on the "**wall**," or typically they made room for them in what was supposed to be salvation. What they were doing was contrary to God's law.

Let us look at a few examples. First Timothy 4:1-2 reads: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith [there is the apostasy that gave rise to all of this], giving heed to seducing spirits [what was the outgrowth of that?], and doctrines of devils; [Notice, there is a semicolon there. That is the summation; then, Paul went on to define

it.] Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." Having illegitimate children and throwing babies in lime pits and murdering them is something people do who have had "their conscience seared." What about the pedophile priests abusing and misusing young boys, and then if it is found out, they are merely transferred to another parish so the same thing can be done to another group of young boys? The men who participate in that, sanction it, and cover that up have consciences that are "seared."

Roman Catholicism has its doctrine of celibacy ("forbidding to marry"). Roman Catholicism has put things right **"upon the wall,"** things that are **"abominable"** and foreign to God, things that are the complete opposite of what the Scriptures teach. What do the Scriptures teach about marriage? What did God say in the Book of Beginnings? Genesis 2:18 says, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." God made the woman. He instituted and ordained marriage. He is the One who presented the first bride to the man. What does the New Testament say about marriage? First Corinthians 7:2 reads, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife." Yet, Roman Catholicism forbids their priests and nuns from marriage. They have put that right **"upon the wall"** of salvation. God says that is a "doctrine of devils," and it has fostered all kinds of abuse through the ages. Paul wrote that if a man does not have a wife, he is more prone to sexual impurity. What is the clear implication of 1 Corinthians 7:2? Marriage helps ones to avoid sexual impurity.

First Timothy 4:3 speaks of "commanding to abstain from meats." For years the Catholics would not eat meat on Friday, supposedly because that was the day of Christ's Crucifixion. However, that is a fallacy; Christ was not crucified on Friday. Matthew 12:40 says He would be in the grave three days and three nights. You cannot get three days and three nights from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. He was not crucified on Friday. In addition to that, fish is meat. John 21:3-6 supports that. When Jesus asked the disciples, "Children, have ye any meat?" and they answered, "No," Jesus said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." What were they going to find? Meat. What was the meat? Verse 6 tells us, "They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." Luke 24:41 records Christ asking, "Have ye here any meat?" and verse 42 tells us, "And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish." He must have considered "fish" to be "meat."

Let us continue reading 1 Timothy 4:3-5, which says: "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." God does not care what you eat as long as you pray over it and are thankful for it. There are no dietary requirements in the New Testament. Those who try to impose them are using "doctrines of devils" to do so. They are trying to put these "doctrines" right **"upon the wall,"** or typically making room for them in what is supposed to be salvation.

I hope you can begin to see that these doctrines are totally contrary to the law of God. This reveals the kind of spirit behind the raising up of this system being typified in our text. A spirit of lawlessness is what gave rise to this system of papalism in the Dark Ages. Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 tells us: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the day of Christ's Second Advent; verse 2] shall not come, except there come a falling away [the Greek word is *apostasia*, which means 'an apostasy, a defection from truth'] 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, shewing himself that he is God." This is a picture of the office of the popes of Rome.

"The mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7) and apostasy gave rise to the beast. "The mystery of iniquity" in *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* is "the secret of lawlessness." Another

rendering says, "The secret power of lawlessness." The *Amplified Bible* says, "The mystery of lawlessness, that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority." That principle of rebellion against constituted authority caused the people to refuse instruction and cast God's Word behind them. It still works today. People can listen to a God-called pastor preach God's Word under the anointing of the Spirit, yet while he is preaching, they raise up in their minds and say: "That is how he feels. My thoughts are as good as his thoughts. My ideas are as good as his ideas. God talks to me just as He talks to him." Korah, Dathan, and Abiram thought that when they rose up against Moses. Their end was not so good (Numbers, Chapter 16).

Whenever people fail to continue to "walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7), quieting God's Spirit, casting God's Word aside, and refusing to "hear what the Spirit saith" (Revelation 3:22), seducing spirits (a spirit of lawlessness) take them over. In the place of God's Word, other spirits begin to produce "doctrines of devils" and give rise to false systems of religion. It worked that way in Ezekiel's day in our text, and it serves as the type of what occurred in this Gospel Day as well. John said in Revelation 13:1, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up." This beast was men. We read in Acts 20:30, "Also of your own selves shall *men arise*, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This is what produced the religious system of Roman Catholicism.

We must ask ourselves, Do I have a fresh vision of Christ? In **Ezekiel 8:2**, Ezekiel received a fresh vision that Christ (in this time which typified the Dark Ages) was no different from what He was in the morning period of the Gospel Day. The same description was used, letting us know Christ changes not. We also must ask, Have I attempted to change an unchangeable Christ? That is what many in false religion have attempted to do. That is a deception. Ask yourself, Is my experience and my understanding shallow, or do I dig? Am I walking in the light and hearing what the Spirit wants to teach me? We need to have a "love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10), and we also need to "hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104, 128). Every false way is every teaching, doctrine, organization, and system contrary to God's eternal Word. These false ways are duping, deceiving, and damning souls.

If things are not as they ought to be in your experience, I encourage you to pray. Just as Ezekiel was given a fresh vision of Christ, we must have a fresh vision of Christ. We are living in a time when such deceptive spirits are loose, people who would have you believe God has changed His mind about truth, about Biblical standards. But God's "word" is "For ever . . . settled" (Psalm 119:89). God is immutable; He is unchangeable. He said in Malachi 3:6, "For I am the LORD, I change not." Yet, we are living in a day when people are taking the truth and acting like it was a rubber band, so to speak. Their attitude is, "Let us just see if we can stretch it and make it go out as far as it can, taking in areas that it should never take in." Yet, like a rubber band, when you turn loose of it, it goes right back to where it was. Truth is just as God put it. His Word does not change, and He does not change. We need a fresh vision of Christ. We need to dig deeper into the Word. We need to study so that we do not have a shallow experience or shallow knowledge. The Spirit of God wants to take us into "the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). We need to love the truth.

It is necessary to study these things because "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). We are still facing the workings of this religious system today. There are yet millions of people embroiled in this system who are under these deceptions, these falsities, who think these "doctrines" are truth. We need to know the truth of God's Word so we can be free (from falsity) and also be a help to those who are bound by that system. We must understand what is being typified in Ezekiel, Chapter 8, because the Dark Ages have had a lasting effect on the Gospel Day. Out of 2023 years of New Testament time, the beastly system of Roman Catholicism dominated for 1260 years. Although today it may not be the predominant force it was in the Dark Ages, it

is still a dominant force.

Previously, we discussed the false doctrines of forbidding to marry (celibacy), abstaining from meats, Mary being a perpetual virgin, and the bodily assumption of Mary. There are many more we could enumerate (constituting a study in themselves), but one thing Catholicism has revered for many years is a chair in Saint Peter's Basilica. It is called the "Chair of Saint Peter." Yet, inscribed on this chair are the twelve labors of Hercules, a mythical god. The Catholic worship services and practices are full of bodily exercise. When the people walk into their sanctuary, they are to genuflect (touch one knee to the floor in worship), and many make the sign of the cross. Their works of penance are outward works of exercise. Some, even the late John Paul II, believed in what is called "flagellation" (whipping or flogging as a religious practice for the mortification of the flesh). The belief is because you are a sinful creature, you either must beat yourself or have someone else beat you on the back. That is all part of fables.

We are not against people (Ephesians 6:12), but we are against religious systems that are contrary to the sound teachings of God's eternal Word, systems that are duping, deceiving, and damning multiplied millions of people who are trusting in a false refuge, a false security. We read in Isaiah 28:15, "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." People in false religion are trusting and hiding in falsehoods, in teachings that are not based in truth but are lies. It is costing multiplied millions their never-dying souls. When **Ezekiel 8:10** describes "**every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts**" (unlawful things under the Levitical law; Leviticus 11:29-31, 41-43), it reveals the people were engaging in unlawful practices; a spirit of lawlessness had overcome them. Second Thessalonians 2:3 says the outgrowth of the spirit of lawlessness was "that man of sin . . . the son of perdition." When they changed spirits and the spirit of lawlessness became predominant, "**abominable beasts**," "**idols**," and paganistic practices took place.

"Seventy Men of the Ancients"

Ezekiel 8:11-12 states: "**And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man [the 'seventy men'] his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark?**" The "**seventy men**" alludes to the seventy leaders in Exodus, Chapter 24. After the children of Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage, God enabled Moses to choose seventy leaders who received a vision of God's majesty when they came out of Egyptian bondage. They were admitted to a position where they saw the glory of God and received His secret counsel and the confirmation of His covenant. We read in Exodus 24:8-11: "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, [Aaron (the high priest) was Moses' brother, and Nadab and Abihu (priests) were Aaron's sons] and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone [the Hebrew says 'a work of clear sapphire,' which was a heavenly blue color; it is the same color found in Ezekiel, Chapter 1, when Ezekiel received a vision, representing Christ and His throne in the morning time], and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink."

When they "saw the God of Israel," they did not see Him personally. When Moses said in

Exodus 33:18, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," God answered in Exodus 33:20, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." That was in 1491 B.C. (subsequent to what they saw in Exodus, Chapter 24). Then, 1 John 4:12 (written in A.D. 100, close to 1600 years after the fact) reads, "No man hath seen God at any time." What is Exodus 24:10 referring to when it says, "They saw the God of Israel"? Let us consider God. First John 1:5 tells us, "God is light." He is such a light that 1 Timothy 6:15-16 reads, "Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." When they saw God, if they did not see Him personified, then what did they see?

We read in Numbers 12:7-8: "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold." The word "similitude" in Hebrew is the word *temunah*, and it means "a shape." They saw a shape, and then they saw "a sapphire stone [heavenly purity] . . . the body of heaven in his clearness" (Exodus 24:10). These seventy men were especially honored men. After the Exodus from Egypt's bondage, these men were privileged to see a heavenly vision in its clearness of God's similitude (or shape), His glory, and His light as a symbol of the confirmation of the covenant. These seventy men were the leaders of the children of Israel (Exodus 24:9). Psalm 25:14 tells us, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." That is exactly what God did. When Moses offered the blood, this vision confirmed God's covenant. God's majesty appeared, and they were admitted to His position of secret counsel to receive a confirmation of the covenant.

In **Ezekiel 8:11-12**, we read that these "**seventy men of the ancients**" are now "**in the dark.**" They went from the body of heaven in its clearness, seeing the similitude of God who is light (light unapproachable), and receiving a confirmation of the covenant to become creatures of darkness. What a sobering and chilling warning! People can go from light to darkness. Jesus warned in John 12:35: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk [advance, progress, and keep pace with] while ye have the light [why?], lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." These whose foolish minds have been darkened literally "knoweth not." They are under such a darkness and deception that they think they are going to Heaven because of their rites, rituals, performances, and practices. However, Jesus said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

The "**seventy**" elders are portrayed in our text as usurpers, men who are engaged in idolatry. Notice the progression of darkness. Some may feel darkness cannot worsen, but our text reveals it does. In **verse 9**, Ezekiel was told to "**behold the wicked abominations that they do here.**" Then, **verse 13** says to "**turn thee yet again and thou shalt see *greater* abominations.**" **Verse 15** says to "**turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see *greater* abominations than these.**" From these verses, we see there is a terrible progression to darkness.

Speaking of these "**seventy men,**" **Ezekiel 8:11** says that "**every man**" had "**his censer in his hand.**" Under the Levitical law, only the sons of Aaron (the Levitical priests) were allowed to offer incense. Numbers 16:40 states, "To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD." In 2 Chronicles, Chapter 26, King Uzziah was out of his position when he presumed to go into the temple and perform a priestly function of offering incense with a censer. We read in 2 Chronicles 26:16-20: "But when he [Uzziah; verse 1] was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction [anytime someone's heart gets lifted up beyond where it should be, destruction is at hand]: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him [there were some bold men back then], and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood

Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him."

King Uzziah was "smitten" with "leprosy" because of his trespass of usurping a position that did not belong to him. You can read also of Korah and others who usurped proper authority, thinking they all could offer incense. What happened? Numbers 16:35 tells us, "And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense." These Scriptures portray men who got out of divine order (out of the position God wanted them to fulfill), who became usurpers (trying to take on that which was not their role), and who did things contrary to the law. Remember, we see both in the lesson Ezekiel received for his day as well as that which typifies the Dark Ages a picture of people who were out of divine order and became usurpers. Second Thessalonians 2:7 in the *Amplified Bible* tells us, "For the mystery of lawlessness (that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority) is already at work." It is a picture of a people who were dominated by a spirit of lawlessness.

The religious system that raised up in the Gospel Day is a system of usurpers. After returning from the isle of Patmos, John (the last living of the original Twelve Apostles) saw the terrible conditions actually taking place. So, he sounded an alarm, writing in 3 John 9-10: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes [the name *Diotrephes* means 'nourished by Jupiter,' or 'Jupiter's foster child'; these were pagan gods], who loveth to have the preeminence [there is the usurping] among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

In A.D. 100, the seeds were being sown for this religious system that would dominate the Dark Ages. Here we read of *preeminence* and *excommunication*, two of the major teachings that prop up that system. Third John 9 speaks of those "who loveth to have the preeminence." The Greek word for "preeminence" is *proteuo*. It means "fond of being first," or "ambitions of distinction." The Bible speaks in tones that are the opposite of that, such as we see in Romans 12:3, which reads, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

One who has a preeminent spirit is thinking of himself as being first. Yet, Philippians 2:3 tells us, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." This spirit of lawlessness raises right up in the face of such Biblical precepts and desires to be first, as 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, which says: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the Second Advent] shall not come, except there come a falling away [the Greek word *apostasia* means apostasy, which means 'a defection from truth'] 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, shewing himself that he is God."

We previously found this "man of sin" is in the singular, and there is one man who best exemplifies this position: the office of the popes of Rome. Second Thessalonians 2:4 talks about one man "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God," but Revelation 2:13 calls it "Satan's seat." Revelation 13:1 tells us this system has "the name of blasphemy." We read in Rev-

elation 13:5-6: "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." Does this system engage in blaspheming? One writing offers the Latin expression, "Dominus Deus Noster Papa." The English interpretation of that is, "Our Lord God the Pope." That is blasphemy!

The Pope has been revered with such titles as: King of the World, Holy Father, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Viceregent of the Son of God. In the thirteenth century, this claim was made: "The bishop of Rome is a supreme lord of the universe." When Johann Tetzel came to Germany in the sixteenth century, selling indulgences, he said: "The Lord God omnipotent has ceased to reign. He has resigned all power to the Pope." Pope Pius, the eleventh, made this claim, "I am God on earth." That is blasphemy. This is a blasphemous system. The entire system is built on preeminence, the Pope as being the Supreme Pontiff or the Latin Pontifex Maximus (the same expression and title used by the pagan rulers of Rome). They have a very well-defined hierarchical system: parish priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and then the Pope. This system is built on blasphemy, preeminence, and the usurping of constituted authority.

There are many more expressions and quotes we could bring, but let us see another type and antitype of the **"seventy"** (**verse 11**). Not only did these **"seventy men"** portray the leaders, or **"the ancients"** and elders of old **"Israel,"** but Luke 9:1-2 tells us: "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." We read in Luke 10:1, "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy ['disciples'; Luke 9:1] also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come." These usurpers pictured in our text, men who typify what occurred in the New Testament Dark Ages, purport and profess to be the disciples of Christ, but they are not. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 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." What are their works? Verse 13 describes them as "deceitful workers." They deal in deceit.

"Women Weeping for Tammuz"

As we progress in our text, the Lord said in **Ezekiel 8:13**, **"Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do."** When Ezekiel dug **"in the wall"** (beneath the surface), he saw **"a door."** Ezekiel went through the **"door"** and saw what people were doing to **"the wall"** (which represents "salvation"; Isaiah 26:1). They were putting all kinds of unlawful things into it. That was horrendous enough. Then, these **"seventy men"** (letting us know it was a massive move because these **"seventy"** leaders represent the people of Israel), who were usurpers, took **"every man his censor in his [own] hand."** Although they had censers, which should have produced some light, they were still in the dark. The Lord told Ezekiel of **"greater abominations that they do."** **Verse 14** tells us what those were, stating, **"Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north [a picture of a people who have quieted God's Spirit (Zechariah 6:8); moving north is moving to spiritual coldness]; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz."** To understand this, we have to go back to the beginning of the original Babel. We read in Genesis 10:8, "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth." The words "mighty one" sounds rather innocuous in English, but the Hebrew word is *gibor*; it means "tyrant." Nimrod was a tyrant. Genesis 10:9-10 tells us: "He was a mighty hunter before the LORD [This is a hostile expression. It means he sat himself "before

the LORD,' in a superior position before God.]: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod [the name Nimrod means 'let us rebel'] the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel."

Babel was begun by a man whose name meant "let us rebel," a man who sat himself up before or ahead of the Lord as a tyrant over the people. Literal Babel was produced by rebellion, just as spiritual Babylon has been produced by rebellion, by a spirit of lawlessness against constituted authority. We read in Galatians 5:19-20: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these [every one of these is an act of rebellion against the divine will]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies [or 'sects'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*]." This reveals that sectarian religion is a work of the rebellious flesh. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church [in the singular]." The Greek word for "church" is *ecclesia*, meaning "the called out, the separate." Every religious institution, with the exception of the true church, has come from minds of rebellious men.



Semiramis & Tammuz

Who was "**Tammuz**"? The book *Babylon Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow tells us: "After Nimrod's death, his wife, Queen Semiramis, claimed that he was now the sun god. Later, when this idolatrous and adulterous woman gave birth to an illegitimate son, she claimed that this son, Tammuz by name, was Nimrod reborn." This occasion in Genesis was the beginning of mother and child worship. The people of Babylon worshiped Semiramis and Tammuz (mother and child). That is where its origin came from. This is not Biblical. It did not originate with Mary and Christ but with Semiramis and Tammuz. Tammuz was supposed to be Nimrod reborn. This was the beginning of many of these false teachings and practices.

In our text, we see a sad condition: "**women** [women who had been God's people] **weeping for Tammuz**" (**verse 14**). The *Amplified Bible* renders it, "There sat women weeping for Tammuz [a Babylonian God, who was supposed to die annually and subsequently be resurrected]." *Tyndale's Old Testament Commentary* tells us he was "the god of vegetation." *The Daily Study Bible* series, the Ezekiel volume, says that he was the fertility god. Their teaching was that in the fall "**Tammuz died**" and became the god of the underworld. Then, in the spring, "**Tammuz**" came to life again, and with his resurrection, new life burst forth from the ground. This teaching came from paganism, heathenism. Sadly, Old Israel in Ezekiel's day had been reduced to that type of practice. Yet, even sadder is the type of the New Testament reality of an organization that rose up in the Dark Ages, when this papal beast arose, and began the same practices with a supposedly Christian facade. When you look at this more closely, it becomes more rank, repulsive, and degenerate. These "**women**," who in **verse 14** were "**weeping for Tammuz**," were engaging in some of the oldest Babylonian paganistic practices.

Let us look deeper. The antitype of Nimrod (this rebel who founded Babel, or Babylon) is a picture of Roman Catholicism (an outgrowth of rebellion, lawlessness), which is called "BABYLON" in Revelation 17:5. Just as these "**women**" in our text engaged in paganistic practices, so do the practices of Roman Catholicism. Mother and child worship began in paganism and is practiced in Roman Catholicism even today. The time of Ezekiel's vision, when this occurred, was the time of the Autumnal equinox, the sixth month. Ezekiel 8:1 tells us, "And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month . . ." *Jamieson Fausset and Brown's Bible Commentary* says, "An annual feast was celebrated to him when women tore off their hair, yielded their persons to prostitution." The "**women**" not only engaged in idolatrous worship, but they degenerated into a detestable practice (as many did in those pagan organizations) of prostitution as an act of worship. *Matthew Poole's Commentary* says, "These she priests acted over before the idol with men of like lewdness, of whom what they received, as rewards of their prosti-

tuting themselves." They went into the presence of the idol and engaged in lewd, promiscuous acts of prostitution.

Some may say, "That is graphic and vile to think that such a thing could be done in the name of religion." It shows the utter darkness in Ezekiel's day that came about through Israel engaging in the degenerate practices of the pagans. Not only did Israel engage in harlotry in Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 16:35-36), but what does it typify? Look at how this system is styled in the New Testament. Revelation 17:5 states, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS." Verse 1 calls her (this system) "the great whore." Verse 4 tells us, ". . . having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." These women in **Ezekiel 8:14** were doing as Hosea 9:1 says. They had "gone a whoring." Other renderings offer it as "played the harlot" or "have been unfaithful to your God." Isaiah 54:5 reads, "For thy Maker is thine husband." Under the old economy, old Israel occupied the position of a bride or a wife. When God told them in Exodus 20:3 to "have no other gods before me," God told them "for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:5). Exodus 34:14 tells us, "The LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Just as a literal husband would be jealous if his wife started flirting around with other men, so God is jealous when His people "go a whoring after their gods" (Exodus 34:16).

The expression "a whoring" is talking about taking your affections (that allegiance and loyalty which belong only to the true God) and giving it to other gods. Israel did so spiritually by idolatry and literally in their following of the pagan practices of the supposed sacred prostitution. They were cautioned many times, for they had a repeated history of succumbing to idolatry. Leviticus 17:7 reads: And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations." Prior to stepping off the stage of action, Moses gave again the Law to the new generation just before they were to enter Canaan land. God warned them in Deuteronomy 31:16, saying, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them."

In a spiritual sense, the expression "go a whoring" means to "go a whoring after their gods." Was this taking place in Ezekiel's day? Ezekiel 6:9 states, "And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall lothe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations." That was the literal condition which had overtaken Israel in Ezekiel's day. We read in Ezekiel 23:29-30: "And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols."

The Scriptures make it clear that old Israel fell prey to serving many idolatrous gods throughout their history, and they had done so prior to going into Babylonian bondage (the time in which Ezekiel was writing). That was the type. The antitype shows this system of Roman Catholicism is just as much a "whore," participating just as much in illicit activities and prostitution. It may not be purely in the literal sense, but certainly in the spiritual sense of what they have done to Christ.

We read in 2 Corinthians 11:1-2: "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." Who is the "you" Paul was addressing? Second Corinthians 1:1 tells us it was "unto the Church of God." Continuing in

2 Corinthians 11:3-4, we read: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty [referring to Genesis, Chapter 3], so your minds [Church of God minds] should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 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 . . ." Just as the serpent beguiled Eve, Paul said that there would be "false apostles, deceitful workers" (2 Corinthians 11:13). They were "deceitful" because they picked up "another spirit" that produced "another gospel" and "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4).

The whore we see in Revelation, Chapter 17, will not take marriage vows. She will not pledge to obey and be faithful. That is what makes her a whore. Second Corinthians 11:2 says, "I have espoused you [the Church of God] to one husband, that I may present you . . . to Christ [the Husband is Christ]." The chaste virgin is referred to as the bride, the Lamb's wife (Revelation 21:9). To become a wife, you must take vows. The church has taken vows; she is willing to be obedient. We read in Ephesians 5:23-24: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husband in every thing." Christ is the Head. He is the husband, but this Roman Catholic system (that which is spoken of as a whore) will not take the vows, will not be obedient, will not be faithful, and desires to participate in other illicit activities. They want to participate in the tenents of another gospel that allow them to worship "the dragon," to worship "the beast" (Revelation 13:4). They have another gospel that is "speaking great things," and there are many "blasphemies" (Revelation 13:5). The bride is to be submissive to the husband, but Roman Catholicism is not subject to Christ. How do we know that? Because we are only subject to Christ when we are subject to His Word. Jesus said in John 15:14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." He said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." However, Roman Catholicism's teachings are diametrically opposed to the teachings of God's eternal Word.

The whore will not take vows, will not pledge to obey, and will not be faithful. They produce "another Jesus" and "another gospel" (2 Corinthians 11:4) because they have received "another spirit." Revelation 18:2-3 tells us: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." What a symbolic picture of the character of Roman Catholicism and their catechisms! It is a sad portrayal. Again, I must remind you, we "wrestle not against flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12). We are not against people, but against systems and spirits that are contrary to the Word of God.

"The Five and Twenty Men" Represent the Priesthood

We read in **Ezekiel 8:15-16**: "**Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men.**" We found that the "seventy men" (verse 11) were representatives of the people of Israel. So, who are the "five and twenty"? The old Levitical priesthood was divided into twenty-four courses of priests and one high priest. First Chronicles 24:1 and 4-5 tell us: "Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron; The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. . . . And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar, and thus were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar

there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar [sixteen plus eight equals twenty-four] according to the house of their fathers. Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another." First Chronicles 24:18 states, "The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah." There are the twenty-four courses of the priests.

In Luke, Chapter 1, John the Baptizer's father (Zacharias) was serving in one of those courses. There were so many priests that they had to perform their priestly functions by course. There were twenty-four courses of the old Levitical priesthood plus a high priest. Twenty-four plus one equals twenty-five. These twenty-five (**verse 16**) were representatives of the entirety of the Old Testament Jewish priesthood. Just as the "**seventy men**" were representative of all the people, these "**five and twenty men**" were representatives of all the priesthood. This is a typical picture, representing the massiveness of the outgrowth of this apostasy in the Dark Ages. It was an unprecedented, massive move in this New Testament dispensation.

The morning-time apostasy and what it produced (papalism in the Dark Ages) was so massive, it affected "all that dwell upon the earth," and the only ones who were excepted were those whose names were "written in the book of life" (Revelation 13:8). The saints who went underground, living and worshiping in the catacombs and caves, were nourished by the Word and the Spirit (Revelation 2:17; 11:3; 12:6). Other than those, the verse says, "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." Therefore, the symbol of "a beast [rising] up out of the sea" (Revelation 13:1) is used. The "sea" is a mass of water, and this was a massive move in this portion of the Gospel Day. A massive religious system arose. *Britannica* tells us: "Roman Catholicism is the largest of the three major branches of Christianity. Of the estimated 2.3 billion Christians in the world, about 1.3 billion of them are Roman Catholic." That is why this truth needs to be heralded. It was a massive move in the Dark Ages, and it is a massive organization today. It was dominant then, and yet today, it is still dominant. The cry in the Dark Ages was, "Be Catholic or die!" Many were viciously martyred at the hands of this beast.

God told Ezekiel to come and see what they "**do in the dark.**" Many times, people do not think God sees. Psalm 139:12 says, "The darkness and the light are both alike to thee." God can see what is done "**in the dark**" just as He sees what is done in the light. The spirit of this system gave rise to a dark age, and that system is still in darkness today. Revelation 17:4 tells us she has decked herself with some "precious stones." She has tried to pick up some teachings that were propagated through the Protestant era to make it look as though she is not as vile as she truly is. Yet, under the garment, she is still a great whore. God wants us to know the truth. God's will is for "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Why? The truth will set you free from falsity (John 8:32). In this day of ecumenicalism that we are facing, this religious system has tried to dress itself up and make itself look more attractive, covering its true nature and its history. It is supposedly reaching out to lock arms with all. However, it is still a deadly and damnable system.

In this prophetic book, through the venue of "**visions**" (**Ezekiel 8:3**), God gave the Prophet Ezekiel great insight into truth. In addition to the fact that the nature of the language of "**visions**" is symbolic, 1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us that Old Testament events are used as "ensamples" (or types). Some Old Testament happenings were actual historical happenings (*historical types*). Others are events that have never happened, and they are known as *prophetic types*. Regardless, they are both types (literal representations) of spiritual realities.

Ezekiel 8:12 tells us, "**Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark?**" Several things were out of divine order. **Verse 10** says all forms of "**creeping things, and abominable beasts, and . . . idols**" were put "**upon the wall**" (representing "salvation"; Isaiah 26:1). All those items were forbidden under Levitical law, portraying a spirit of lawlessness. Rebellion against God's law had raised up. The very things God's law forbade, Israel

was not only making a place for, but they were putting them right in "**the wall.**" That was certainly so in a literal fashion in Ezekiel's day, but the typical truth is during the Dark Ages of the Gospel Day, people were putting things into a supposed experience of salvation that God's Word forbids. They were making room for them "**upon the wall**" (a portrayal of allowing them in their lives or experiences).

At this juncture in Hebrew history, Israel had become "an harlot!" (Isaiah 1:21). Jerusalem had left off being faithful to the true God of Israel. The word rendered here as "harlot" is the Hebrew word *zanah*. It is translated in the Old Testament as "whoredom" (fifteen times), as "whore" (eleven times), and as "whorish" (three times). God used graphic terms to portray how vile and repulsive He considers it when His people are carried into idolatry. That is a literal picture of what old Israel did and what was transpiring in Ezekiel's day in the proximity of 594 B.C.

Some of the Things That Are Done "in the Dark"

In our text, we are viewing what **Ezekiel 8:12** says they "**do in the dark,**" representing typically the Dark Ages (predominantly A.D. 530-1530). What does this represent in the Christian dispensation? Does the system of Roman Catholicism engage in and advocate idolatry? Remember, in Revelation 17:1, she is styled as "the great whore," and Revelation 17:5 lets us know this whore is speaking of "BABYLON" (more particularly the mother, or the origin, from which the other daughters sprang), a representation of the system of Roman Catholicism. Does that system allow her adoration, veneration, and worship to go to others who are not God?

The following are some excerpts from a book entitled *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This particular catechism is numbered by paragraphs, and so we shall reference the paragraph number as we quote these excerpts.

- "Because she is the mother of Jesus, and Jesus is God therefore Mary is the mother of God" (Paragraphs 963, 971, and 2677).
- "Mary is the mother of the church" (Paragraphs 963, 975).
- "Mary is the co-mediator to whom we can trust all our cares and petitions" (Paragraphs 968-970, 2677).
- "God has exalted Mary in heavenly glory as queen of heaven and earth" (Paragraph 966).
- "She is to be praised with special devotion" (Paragraph 971, 2675).

Speaking of Mary, Pope Benedict the XV stated, "One can justly say that with Christ, she herself redeemed mankind" (*Encyclical Intersodalicia*, 1918). Pope Pius IX said, "God has committed to Mary the treasury of all good things, in order that everyone may know that through her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation" (*Encyclical* of February 2, 1849). Pope Leo XIII said: "Every grace which is communicated to this world has a threefold origin: it flows from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, and from the Virgin to us Nothing comes to us except through the mediation of Mary, for such is the will of God. Thus, just as no man goes to the Father but by the Son, so likewise no one goes to Christ except through His Mother. Whosoever will not have recourse to her is trying to fly without wings O Virgin Most Holy, no one abounds in the knowledge of God except through thee; no one, O Mother of God, attains salvation except through thee!"

Does that sound like idol worship? In 1982 Pope John Paul II, in a video entitled "Catholicism Crisis of Faith," is shown kissing the feet of a statue of Mary, and on the exterior of his wooden coffin was a large M for Mary. Roman Catholicism, especially in their Mary worship, is idolatrous. They have many statues of Mary. God said that you are not supposed to "make unto thee any graven image" (Exodus 20:4), much less bow down before it.

Not only does Roman Catholicism sanction, engage in, and encourage the adoration and worship of Mary, but they also engage in and encourage the adoration and veneration of the supposed saints and praying to the saints. Just as old Israel went "a whoring" after many gods, the system of Roman Catholicism is just as whorish. They are a little more deceitful. They do not call them gods; they call them "Mary" and the "saints." However, the practices are the same.

I want to quote some excerpts from a book entitled *Babylon Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow. It is too voluminous to include it all. Chapter 4, entitled "Saints, Saints' Days, and Symbols" (pages 30-31), reads: "The idea of praying to saints was but a continuation of the old devotion that the pagans gave to the gods and goddesses of the religion from the earliest times. . . . If we try to commune with people who have died, what else is this but a form of spiritism? Repeatedly the Bible condemns all attempts to commune with the dead (see Isaiah 8:19-20). Yet many recite the 'Apostles' Creed,' which says: 'We believe . . . in the *communion of saints*,' and believe that such has reference not only to the living but to the departed as well." They teach "A mutual sharing in helps, satisfaction, prayer, and other good works, a mutual communication" (the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 4, page 41). From the earliest times, we find that people prayed to and honored a plurality of gods. In fact, "the Babylonian system developed until it had some five thousand gods and goddesses" (*In the Beginnings*; page 61).

An Encyclopedia of Religions, Volume 2 (page 78), says, "In much the same way as Catholics believe about their saints, the Babylonians believed that their gods and goddesses had at one time been living heroes on earth, but were now on a higher plain." Ralph Woodrow's book says, "Since converts from paganism were reluctant to part with their 'gods'—unless they could find some satisfactory counterpart in Christianity—the gods and goddesses were renamed and called 'saints.' . . . Everything considered, it seems evident that the Roman Catholic system of patron saints developed out of the earlier beliefs in gods devoted to days, occupations, and the various needs of human life . . . [since the worship of saints is a continuation of these false gods, Romanism is found guilty of worshiping other gods besides the true God, a practice repeatedly condemned in the Scriptures]. The best preserved ancient temple now remaining in Rome is the Pantheon, which in olden times was dedicated (according to the inscription over the portico) to 'Jove and all the gods.' This was reconsecrated by Pope Boniface IV to 'The Virgin Mary and all the saints.'" They took an old pagan temple full of pagan idols and renamed it. It was the same temple and the same statues.

"Another pagan temple of Rome, which was formerly sacred to the Bona Dea, which means the good goddess, was Christianized and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In a place formerly sacred to the god of Palo, there now stands the church of Saint Apollinaris, and where there anciently stood the temple of Mars may now be seen the church of Saint Martine. So throughout the Roman Empire, paganism died only to live again in the Roman Catholic church. Pagan temples and shrines were renamed. Pagan gods and goddesses were also renamed, and their worship continued, now posing as Christian saints and merging all this paganism into Christianity. Not only did the devotion to the old gods continue, but even as the pagans had idols or statues of their gods, so the Roman Catholic Church also adopted the use of statues in their worship. In some cases, the very same statue that had been worshiped as a pagan god was renamed as a Christian saint, and the devotion continued. A statue of Jupiter, for example, was slightly changed and renamed as Peter" (*Bible Myths*; page 396). This is just part of the historical record. Many other writers validate and substantiate that paganism and idolatry are incorporated into the system of Roman Catholicism. **Ezekiel 8:16** tells us that "**with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.**" Did old Israel do that literally in Ezekiel's day? Certainly so.

Jeremiah penned about the same condition in Jeremiah 32:29-35, writing: "And the

Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, [This is talking about Jerusalem. Verse 28 says, 'The hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, . . . shall take it.'] and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal [these were supposed to be the people of God], and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face, Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem [a massive move].

"And they have turned unto me the back [just as Ezekiel said; they turned their backs on God and truth], and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house [speaking of the tabernacle], which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech [they had sunk to the level of offering their children as human sacrifices]; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." One rendering clarifies verse 35 by offering it as "I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing!"

Israel was in a deplorable spiritual condition. They had "turned unto me the back," turning their backs on God, on truth. They worshiped Baal, Molech, and many other idols. Look where it began in post-Davidic history (or subsequent to David's reign). First Kings 11:1-8 states: "But king Solomon [David's son and successor] loved many strange women [which was forbidden by the Levitical law; Deuteronomy 7:1-4], together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you [in modern terms: do not intermarry with those people]: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods [Solomon disregarded and disobeyed that command]: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

"For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, [The enemy does not relax his efforts when you are getting older. He will probably amplify them because your time is shorter, and he has less time to work on you.] that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods." What a sad commentary for such a man who once was so wise. When you disobey the clear injunctions of God's Word, it does not matter how spiritually blessed you have been in the past; you are going to lose that position. This was the literal picture of old Israel on many occasions.

Second Kings 23:11 states, "And he [King Josiah] took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire." The sun was worshiped by the pagans, and they believed that the sun rode a chariot. Here was old Israel mimicking idolatry and making chariots to the sun god. We read in Jeremiah 8:1-2:

"At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped." That is what old Israel had degenerated to. That is literal. What about the typical?

"They Worshipped the Sun"

When John saw apostasy in full sway, what did he warn? First John 5:20-21 says: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." Why would John write that? Shortly thereafter, "a beast [would] rise up out of the sea" (Revelation 13:1). It would be a massive move, and Revelation 13:2 tells us that "the dragon [paganism] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Revelation 13:4 states, "And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast." They worshiped the same thing that paganism worshiped. In **Ezekiel 8:16** we read, "**They worshipped the sun**" (a localized application in Ezekiel's day). They became hedonistic and heathenistic in their religious practices.

We also read that in Kings and Jeremiah, but is it typically true? Does Roman Catholicism worship the sun and engage in pagan practices? Let us consider two instances where they engage in sun worship. First, notice Daniel 7:25, prophetically speaking of the system of Roman Catholicism, which says, "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws." Did they change the times? Amongst the Roman pagans, December 25 was celebrated as the birth of Sol, the sun god. In the Dark Ages, in the fifth century, Roman Catholicism changed it to the celebration of the birth of the Son of God.

A writing entitled *The Colchester Archeologist* says: "Twenty-fifth December is the day in the later Roman Empire when people celebrated the winter solace and the birthday of the Sun God, Sol Invictus. The festival, Sol Invictus, on the twenty-fifth of December in the later Roman Empire combined the festivals both of the old sun god, Sol Indiges, and the new official sun god, Deus Sol Invictus. Sol was the official deity of the Roman Empire." Sol, the sun god, was worshiped by the pagan Roman Empire. Where do we see sun worship exhibited in Roman Catholicism? Part of every mass includes what is known as the Eucharist (a round host, or wafer). According to Roman Catholic teaching, when the priest consecrates that wafer, it supposedly becomes the body, the blood, and the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the people are all to bow down before it. As the priest gives them a wafer, they teach that is how Jesus Christ is taken into their lives. That is rank idolatry!

Pope John Paul II said in 1979, "The Eucharist, in the Mass and outside the Mass, is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and is therefore deserving of the worship that is given to the living God, and to Him alone." He was telling people that to bow down and worship that wafer is to worship God. That is a picture of a people who have gone "a whoring after other gods." This wafer is circular, and it is referred to as a "solar disc." In comparison, when Jesus took the bread and broke it, it was a *loaf* of bread; it was not circular, and it was not whole. The solar disc is comparable to the solar disc the old pagans partook of and worshiped. This solar disc (called the host or a wafer) is put in a holder known as a "monstrance" (a fabricated holder in somewhat of a cross shape, surrounded by



Monstrance

a sunburst).

I will quote again from *Mystery Babylon Religion* (pages 129–130), which says: "A monstrance is made in the shape of a cross with a hollow center in which the consecrated piece of bread is placed. This is surrounded by a sunburst design." Then, the author footnoted in the reference handbook of Catholic practices: "Before this monstrance, the Catholic must bow and worship the little wafer as God. Such a practice is rank idolatry and is very similar to the practices of pagan tribes who worshiped fetishes." *Mystery Babylon Religion* also says: "In 1854 an ancient temple was discovered in Egypt with inscriptions that show these little round cakes on an altar. Above the altar is a large image of the sun."

A quote from *Ancient Pagan and Martyred Christian Symbolism* (page 34) states: "A similar sun symbol was used above the altar of a temple near the town of Babain in upper Egypt where there was a representation of the sun before which two priests are shown worshipping. This use of the sun image above the altar was not limited to Egypt. Even in faraway Peru, South America, the same image was known and worshipped." The following quote is from *The Story of the World's Worship* (page 383): "Now, if there be any doubt in the reader's mind that the host of the Catholic mass descended from ancient sun worship and is indeed a sun symbol, he may simply compare the sun image before which the heathen bowed to the monstrance sun image in the center of which the host is placed as a sun and before which Roman Catholics bow today and he will immediately see the striking similarity. The very same type of sun images that the pagans used are found above the altar in the mother church of Catholicism, Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rome."

"High on the back wall of St Peter's is another sun image. This one is a huge and elaborate golden sunburst, which from the front of the church also appears above the main altar of the cathedral. It is evident that such is Babylonish for the great temple of Babylon also exhibited the gold sun image for the worship of the ancient people" (*The Two Babylons*, by Hislop; page 162).

"The circular sun image designed at the back of the church above the altar has been repeatedly used in thousands of churches and cathedrals to this very day. This same type of window or design has also been placed above the doorways of hundreds of church buildings throughout the world, but this again, like the other uses of the sun symbol, is but a continuation of ancient pagan symbolism. Not only do many church buildings feature this symbol above their entrances, but so did the ancient temples of Babylon and Egypt. In Babylon there were temples with images of the sun god to face the rising sun which were placed above the entry" (*Architecture Nature of Magic*; page 29).

That might seem like history, but it substantiates the fact that just as these twenty-five ancients (these **"five and twenty men"**) **"in the dark"** turned their backs on God and the temple (**"their backs toward the temple";** verse 16) and **"worshipped the sun,"** so the antitype (Roman Catholicism) turned their back on the truth and the true God and is full of paganistic, idolatrous worship in the worship of Mary, the saints, and the sunbursts. To tell people that they should bow before a circular wafer goes back to paganism. These symbols of the solar disc, similar sunbursts, and sun images have been found in Egypt and other pagan temples around the world. It is indeed idolatrous, pagan practices. You do not take in Christ by eating a wafer.

Christ certainly would not want anyone bowing to a sunburst, the same symbol that paganism worshiped. Yet, these practices are incorporated into Roman Catholicism. This religious system is deceiving the 1.3 billion people who are associated with Roman Catholicism. This picture in **verse 16** of our text tells us that **"their backs"** were **"toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun."** This was not only a literal occurrence in Ezekiel's day but a typical portrayal of conditions in the Dark Ages. Sadly, in the enlightened day in which we live (a time when all of the seals are open, the seventh trumpet is being

sounded, and God has given understanding greater than any prior day), there are still 1.3 billion people engrossed in this darkness. That system and those teachings continue to be perpetuated to this very day.

Let us consider **Ezekiel 8:17**, which reads, "**Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man?**" Ezekiel was getting a vision of the conditions, and as the people of God today, we need a fresh vision of the spiritual conditions about us. First, so we are not affected or impacted by the falsities of it, and second, so that we can help others engrossed in that darkness who might have an honest heart. Brethren have come out of the darkness of Roman Catholicism because they heard the message of truth. This message still needs to be preached so that we are not enveloped in it or its teachings and practices and so we can help others to see the need to flee that system. The Bible is clear. When people become empty on the inside, they look for external things to try to replace it. That is why you see all these shrines, statues, and crosses.

We will study Protestantism and learn they have crosses plastered on everything as well. The less reality there is *internally*, the more people look for some sort of replacement *externally*. That certainly happened in the Dark Ages, and we will find it also happened in Protestantism. When you have the reality within, you do not need those external objects to venerate, worship, and bow to. That shows there is a lack of true Biblical understanding and real spirituality.

"They Have Filled the Land With Violence"

Ezekiel 8:17 continues, "**Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence.**" God does not consider these practices "**a light thing.**" Although it is difficult for some people to accept, Roman Catholicism has never been, is not, and will never be a Christian system. The dear hearts who are engrossed in that are not saved (in the truest Biblical sense of the word). They have a religion in their mind. The catechism they have been taught and the externals they observe have no reality in the heart. I am not speaking against those dear people, but they are in darkness and need light. That is why we are to be the light of the world.

Let us look at that as far as typical truths. Again, Daniel prophesied of this religious system of papalism in Daniel 7:25, which reads, "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." That is a prophetic time symbol. "Time" in the singular equals one year (thirty days to a Jewish calendar month equals 360 days); "times," without any numerical expression, equals two years; "dividing of time" is half a year. If you take a day reckoning for one year, two years, and the dividing of times as half a year, you will get one thousand two hundred sixty days.

Prophetic Time Symbols

Forty-two months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month = 1260 days
Time = 1 year or 12 months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month = 360 days
Times = 2 years or 24 months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month = 720 days
Dividing of Time = ½ of a year or 6 months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month = 180 days
Time + Times + Dividing of Times (360 days + 720 days + 180 days) = 1260 days
1260 days or "each day for a year" = 1260 years (A.D. 270 - 1530)

Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 says prophetic time is "each day for a year." A thousand two hundred and sixty years is the time from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530. We read of this in Revelation

12:14 when the woman went "into the wilderness" (a secluded place) to be protected, representing the catacombs and caves where the church hid during the Dark Ages. There she was "nourished for a time, and times, and half a time." It is the same symbol. What does that equate to? Revelation 13:5 says, "Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." A thousand two hundred and sixty days and "forty and two months" are the same symbol, representing the same time period (A.D. 270-1530). Daniel 7:25 says that they "shall wear out the saints of the most High." Revelation 13:7 (speaking of the papal beast) tells us, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints [one rendering says 'wear down the saints with persecution'], and to overcome them." John Dowling wrote, "It is estimated by careful and credible historians that more than fifty million of the human family have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors" (*The History of Romanism*; pages 541-542).

A book entitled *The Glorious Reformation* by S. S. Schmucker says, "Papal Rome has shed the blood of sixty-eight million." That is the antitype of **Ezekiel 8:17**, which says, "**For they have filled the land with violence.**" Without the laws of the land, that system would do the same thing today when truths like these are taught. The spirit of that system has never changed. It has become more deceitful and more deceptive, working in conjunction with others in this day of ecumenism, but underneath it all is the same spirit. It is of the devil! I trust we can see the "**violence**" of which our text is typically speaking. The Dark Ages and the false system of papalism are portrayed in this prophetic passage in Ezekiel. Much more could be said, and volumes have been written and are being written to expose this beast.

The questions we must address, as God's people, are not prophetic questions but practical, questions such as: How is my worship? and Is it based on the truth? False religion is the deadliest foe that we face. Study Jesus. He sat and ate a meal with sinners. It was not sinners who raised up against Him. It was the false religions of the day that raised up, worked against Him, and attempted to kill Him. They were the ones who invited His greatest judgments. We must realize that. If we are not cautious, we can still be affected by the tentacles of the morning-time apostasy. We must ask, Is my worship based on truth (not on traditions, customs, or external observances)? Is my experience where it needs to be? Do I cast God's Word behind me? Do I refuse instruction?

I have watched people today who get to a point where they will not take instruction, and it is not long before they are out. Sadly, most will not say, "I am backslid; I have given up on God; I am living a sinful, worldly life." No, that does not happen often. Most of them become involved in some type of false religion that salves their conscience. That is deceiving souls. Other questions we should be asking are, Do I listen to God's Spirit? or Am I being moved to a false performance? If you are not being moved, you need to be thankful, but you also need to be aware. These spirits are loose. Revelation 16:13 says, "And I saw three unclean spirits . . . come out." These spirits are no longer merely housed in the religious systems they once gave rise to. Now they have come out and have "compassed the camp of the saints" (Revelation 20:9).

The devil has the world, the devil has Babylon, and he is after the church. Thank God, God will enlighten the eyes of our understanding so we can see the moves of the enemy. God is a faithful and true witness. He will reveal, through the Revelation and prophecy, and uncover these moves, these devices that Satan employs. May God help us to have eyes to see and ears to hear the precious truth God wants us to understand, not only for our personal welfare, but for the welfare of others so we can help them to see. We have spent a good deal of time dealing with the Dark Ages, but it is needful because it has dominated so much of the Gospel Day. The outgrowth of it continues to dominate much of the religious landscape today. We need to know and understand these truths.

NOTES:

CHAPTER TWELVE

A TYPICAL PORTRAYAL OF THE BURDEN FOR REFORMATION

Ezekiel 9:1 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.

2 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.

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the 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;

4 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.

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

The scene in this passage has changed tremendously from the prior scene. Ezekiel, Chapter 8, gave a typical depiction of the Dark Ages. Verse 12 says to behold what they "do in the dark," representing the portion of this New Testament dispensation commonly regarded as the Dark Ages. However, in **Chapter 9**, the focal point is the instruction, related in **verse 4** to "**set a mark upon [them] . . . that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.**" At initial observance, the phrase "**those that sigh and that cry**" is a unique expression. **Verse 4** refers to what occurred in the Dark Ages as "**abominations.**" The antitype (or the New Testament reality) in Revelation 17:5 is speaking of the one whom Revelation 17:1 styles as "the great whore." Revelation 17:5 reads, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." What occurred in the literal scheme of Ezekiel's day was indeed considered by God to be "**abominations.**" Likewise, that which it spiritually represents in this New Testament dispensation is considered to be "**abominations**" as well.

In view of these abominable circumstances, **verse 4** depicts the expression "**men that and sigh and that cry**" as a typical portrayal of a burden for reformation. As we study these Scriptures, keep in mind that to the Hebrews, the Scriptures were somewhat like a kaleidoscope. The more someone turns and looks through a kaleidoscope, the more aspects, dimensions, and distinct colorations are revealed. Certainly, this is true with typical truth; there is more than one aspect or application of typical truths. For instance, the Exodus account of Egyptian bondage has a typical application, with Egypt being a type of sin and sin's bondage. Yet, it can also serve as a type of spiritual Babylon and religious bondage. Representing one type does not preclude it from more than one application.

Typical truths could have more than one aspect or dimension. Broader applications certainly

do not diminish or negate the other views or aspects but merely add another perspective to the truth. In the Book of Revelation are seven distinct series. Each series starts at approximately the commencement of this Christian dispensation and continues through to the Consummation. Although all seven deal with the same truths, often they present a different perspective or aspect of that truth. All seven series need to be studied together as a composite to understand the entire picture. Consider a biology textbook with an outline of a man's body. Then, a transparent overlay of the skeletal system is placed over the outline of the man. Next, a transparency of the muscular system is placed over the skeletal system transparency and the bone outline. Other transparencies of different systems of the body (such as the circulatory system) are added until the overlays of every system are laid on top of that body outline. When all the systems are overlaid together, you have a complete composite picture of the entire man. The Book of Revelation is much that way. Each series brings a different perspective, thus the need of looking at it all to understand the entirety of it. Types are much the same way. We will not study all the typical truths that could be revealed in this prophetic book, but we will attempt to take one aspect, scheme, or thread and follow it through the entirety of Ezekiel. By no means is it exhaustive or the only aspect.

"He Cried Also in Mine Ears"

Through the vehicle of these visionary and typical truths, Ezekiel's prophecy gives a parallel of the Gospel Day. It takes us through the entirety (typically) of this Christian dispensation. **Ezekiel 9:1** reads, **"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."** What does **"cried . . . in mine ears"** represent? Ezekiel 8:3 reads, "And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem [talking about seeing visions in the spirit, not being literally transported]." Isaiah 30:20 says, "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers" Several renderings offer it as "teacher" in the singular.

Who is the "teacher" in the singular? Jesus said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he [the Holy Ghost] shall teach you all things" (John 14:26). The Holy Ghost is the Teacher. So, coming back to Isaiah 30:20-21, we read, "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers [teacher] be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers [again, singular in several renderings]: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." When your "ears shall hear a word behind thee," it is the voice of the Teacher, the Holy Spirit.

When **Ezekiel 9:1** begins, **"He cried also in mine ears,"** it lets us know he was hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. That is crucial because the Holy Spirit is who guides us. John 16:13 states, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." What is the truth that "the Spirit of truth" will guide you into? John 17:17 tells us, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The Holy Spirit gives the understanding of the Word. He is the Teacher. First John 2:27 tells us, "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." This is not advocating there is no need for teachers. First Corinthians, Chapter 12, lists the various gifts of the body, and verse 28 lists "teachers." God has teachers in the church. It is a divine office.

Ephesians 4:11-12 reads: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the mini-

stry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The gift of "teachers" is a ministerial gift. When 1 John 2:27 says "ye need not that any man teach you," it is not contradicting other Scriptures that describe the office of teaching. He revealed the one who truly brings understanding through those ministerial offices is the Holy Ghost. When a God-called man who has the office is teaching, God's people will hear a voice in their ear, an anointing, confirming it is the truth. That anointing also detects what is *not* the truth. If you attend a funeral service or some other occasion, and you hear someone touting unscriptural things, that same anointing will flash the red light of warning, saying, "That is not right." That voice you hear in your ear is the voice of the Holy Spirit. He is that anointing which teaches you "all things" (1 John 2:27). If you ever receive a revelation of truth, it is not merely because the teacher teaches it, but it is because the Holy Spirit reveals and confirms it as the teacher is bringing it.

Thank God for His faithfulness! Thank God for the Holy Spirit! Isaiah 35:8 says, "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Seven times in the Revelation, Christ said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth." If we will hear what the Spirit sayeth, we do not have to err. He will tell us, "This is the way" (Isaiah 30:21). When you are affected by those who would mislead, causing you to veer to the right or to the left, you will hear that voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Ezekiel heard that voice and said in **Ezekiel 9:1**, "**He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near.**" What does this depict? Remember, we are viewing this typically. What is the New Testament charge, and to whom is it given?

In 2 Timothy 4:1-2, the charge is given. It says: "I charge thee therefore [Prior to his martyrdom by Nero, the Apostle Paul was setting forth his final words to ensure things were set in order in the church. This was written to the young minister, Timothy, whom Paul considered a son in the faith.] before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom [what is the charge?]; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove [one rendering says 'correct and rebuke your people when they need it'], rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." The charge in this New Testament dispensation is to "preach the word," not your ideas, suppositions, or what you think it could be.

Who is the charge given to? In this New Testament dispensation, who are the ones "**over the city**" (**verse 1**)? Hebrews 13:17 reads, "Obey them that have the rule over you." Many people today struggle with having anybody "rule over" them, but God is a God of "order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). From the most minute molecular structures or atoms or cells to the vast galaxies, everything is in perfect order. If all things are going to be done in order, God must have those in position who are to keep order. This text is not talking about parents or civil authorities but about God's order in the church. Who has the rule? Who is "**over the city**"? It is the ministry, and God's people are to "obey them." The rest of Hebrews 13:17 states, "And submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account."

God holds the pastor responsible, and only the pastor; no one else is responsible for what goes on with the congregation. In the seven letters to the seven congregations in Asia Minor in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, Christ did not address one letter to a board, a deacon, a trustee, or a Sunday school teacher. He addressed every letter "unto the angel [symbolic of the ministry or pastor] of the church." There are two reasons: (1) he is the one God holds responsible, and (2) the pastor is the only one who has the authority to change things that are out of order. (Things were drastically out of order in Ezekiel's day and the Dark Ages as well.)

When Hebrews 13:17 says to "submit yourselves," it is good to note that the word "submit" only comes into focus when you disagree. Colossians 3:18 says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." As long as my wife and I agree, there is no submission. Submission only comes into focus when we disagree. If I say, "Well, I think we should do it this way," and she

says, "Well, I really think it would be better if we did it that way," we cannot do it both ways. Someone has to have the final say. First Corinthians 11:3 lets us know "the head of the woman is the man." When you come to a disagreement on how something should be done, the Scriptures teach a wise man will give due consideration to the words of his wife, but if the husband and wife are in differing positions, someone has to have the final say. In the home, that is the husband. In the congregation, that is the pastor. Otherwise, you would have a deadlock. You would have chaos. You would have what is found too many times in our legislative bodies—an impasse.

"The Six Men" Were Made Complete by the "One Man"

Ezekiel 9:2 reads, "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." This verse speaks of "**one man**" who is unique from the other "**six men**." Without this "**one man**," the other "**six**" were incomplete. Throughout the Scriptures, seven is the Biblical number of perfection and completeness. This expression of the "**one man among them was clothed with linen**" is denoting the high priest. We read in Leviticus 16:3-4: "Thus shall Aaron [the high priest] come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. He [Aaron, the high priest] shall put on the holy linen coat, and he [Aaron, the high priest] shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on." In this New Testament dispensation, the "High Priest of our profession" is "Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). Christ is spoken of typically in **verse 2** as this "**one man**." He is the "**one man**" necessary to enable us to be complete. Again, these "**six men**" were not complete without this "**one man**."

Colossians 2:8-10 reads: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him [Christ; verse 8]." Christ is the One who brings completeness. It takes a complete yielding to Christ to bring spiritual perfection. Hebrews 10:12-14 states: "But this man [Christ; verse 10], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he [Christ] hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Who makes perfect? Who makes complete? It is Jesus Christ.

Verse 2 says Christ was "**among them**." He was not *of* them, but He was "**among them**." The same picture is in Revelation when Christ appeared to John on the isle of Patmos. Revelation 1:12-13 says: "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks [the Greek says 'lampstands']; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [or lampstands] one like unto the Son of man." Matthew 16:13 says that "the Son of man" is Christ. This "**one**" represents Christ. He was "**among them**," not of them. He is distinct. The *Septuagint* renders verse 13 as "in the midst of them clothed with a long robe down to the feet and a sapphire girdle was on his loins." When a glorified Christ appeared to John in Revelation 1:13, John was receiving a vision (Revelation 9:17), or picture, of Christ working through His ministry.

Notice what these "**six men**" (**Ezekiel 9:2**) were equipped with. **Verse 1** says that it was "**every man with his destroying weapon**." **Verse 2** calls it "**a slaughter weapon**." What is the typical truth portrayed in this "**weapon**"? What were they each armed with? Consider, the "charge" was to "preach the word." Therefore, they were armed with the Word. This "**destroying weapon**" (**verse 1**), or "**slaughter weapon**" (**verse 2**), is speaking of the Word. "**Slaughter**" (**verse 2**) is the Hebrew word *mappats*, and it means "smiting to pieces." Speaking of Christ, Revelation 19:15 reads, "And out of his mouth [words go out of the mouth] goeth a sharp sword

[the word of God'; Hebrews 4:12], that with it he should smite [*mappats*, meaning 'smiting to pieces'] the nations." That is something new in the New Testament.

We read in Matthew 13:52, "Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." I brought you something "new" (verses out of Revelation). Now let us bring it out of something "old" (the Old Testament). Isaiah 11:4 says, "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor [the context shows this is also speaking of Christ], and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth." The Word of God is what comes out of His "mouth."

When our text describes this "**destroying weapon**" (verse 1), "**a slaughter weapon**" (verse 2), we need to understand what this sharp instrument represents. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is quick [alive], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This "sword" is two-edged; there are two edges to the Word of God. It can *bless* or *blister*; it can *heal* or *destroy*. It is determined by your position and how you respond to the Word. It can be a "**destroying weapon**," a "**slaughter weapon**," for those who are on the wrong side of it. Moses said in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death [notice the contrast: life and death], blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." What is the determination of whether it is life or death, blessing or cursing? Deuteronomy 30:20 says, "That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice." The distinction is based on what you do with the "**voice**," or the Word that comes out of His mouth. It is the choice of the individual.

Let us come to the New Testament. Prior to Christ's Ascension, He said in Mark 16:15-16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth [the Gospel] and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not [the Gospel] shall be damned." The difference is determined by what people do with the Gospel. It can bless you or curse you. It can bring life or death. It enables you to be saved or damned. It is the same message, the same Gospel, the same Word. It is all according to what you do with it, how you respond to it, as to what side of it you are on.

This was a "**destroying weapon**" because of the conditions of the people. Yet today when the Gospel is preached in a service, God intends to bring blessing and spiritual life to the people, but often they refuse, rebel, and set themselves up against it when they clearly see it. What God intended to be a blessing can become a curse, and it will rise up on people in judgment. (Note: people do not fight what they do not see. When people fight the message, finding fault with the message and with the messenger, it is because guilt has struck their hearts. They are trying to deflect that guilt. However, what has been seen cannot be unseen. What you see, Jesus said, you say you see; therefore, your sin remains; John 9:41. You are responsible when you see.)

We read in 2 Corinthians 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." Look at the custom Paul was alluding to. The city of Corinth was under the rule of the Roman Empire. When Rome sent troops to conquer a land, they brought back to Rome those who were vanquished, or defeated. The general of that military campaign and his troops were part of a parade that also included the defeated enemies. They marched the victors and the vanquished through the streets of Rome. The citizens cheered the Roman victory, and they burned incense to the Roman victors. It was the sweet smell of victory to the Romans, but to those who were defeated, to those who knew that at the end of the parade they would be put to death, it was the smell of death. Paul used that as an allusion, saying the Gospel is like that.

Whether it is a sweet-smelling savor of victory or the savor of death depends on the position you are in. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved [to the saved, it is a sweet fragrance], and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other is the savour of life." For those who are defeated, who do not have victory, that smell is the smell of death. To those who will not take the message they hear, that message to them is death. God's people love the truth! They want to hear it and walk in it, but there are those who, from time to time, come into the worship services and do not have that heart. The Gospel is a revealer. It makes sin "exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13). When people who do not want to live right come under the sound of the Gospel, it brings guilt and misery to them. The same Gospel that smells sweet to the saints will have a smell of death to those who are dishonest and lost.

When we look at this regarding the Gospel Day, we find that this "**destroying weapon,**" or "**slaughter weapon,**" is a picture of the Word of God. Jesus, speaking in the Pergamene letter (representing the Dark Ages; A.D. 530-1530), said in Revelation 2:16, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly [not speaking of the Second Advent], and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Christ was going to come through His Word—the same way He comes to people yet today. He told that age if they did not "repent," He would come and "fight against them with the sword of [His] mouth." Did it happen? What happened to the beast that had dominance in the Dark Ages? Revelation 13:3 says, "One of his heads as it were wounded to death." The exclusive night of papalism was forever broken, just as Jesus said. How was it wounded? It "had the wound by a sword" (Revelation 13:14), or the Word of God.

The Reformation Was the Remedy for the "Abominations"

In **Ezekiel 9:2**, the "**six men**" (the ministry Christ commissioned) "**came from the way of the higher gate.**" They were entrusted with the understanding that truth does not rely on "the weak and beggarly elements" of this world (Galatians 4:9). They had something higher. They "**stood beside the brasen altar**" (**verse 2**), the place where the daily sin offering was offered under the old economy. Exodus 29:36-37 states: "And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy."

A sin offering was made daily on "**the brasen altar**" in the Old Testament economy. Thank God, in this New Testament dispensation, our sin offering does not have to be offered every day. Hebrews 9:26 reads, "For then must he [Christ; verse 24] often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Christ is the sin offering in this New Testament dispensation, and He sacrificed Himself "*once*." Hebrews 9:28 states, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." We read in Hebrews 10:10, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

The "**brasen altar**" had a local application in Ezekiel's day because they had turned "their backs toward the temple" (Ezekiel 8:16). They were no longer viewing the sin offering as God intended. Yet, let us study it typically. Why is this important for the New Testament? Remember, the people in our text were engaged in "**abominations**" (**Ezekiel 9:4**). "Their faces [were] toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east" (Ezekiel 8:16). That occurred literally, but it also was typical of the worship in the Dark Ages (the worship of Roman Catholicism). In an article entitled "On the Celebration of Mass" by Joseph Fazio, SJ, written for Ava Maria College

in Naples, Florida, he wrote, "Mass facing east was the norm from ancient times." For years, historically, Roman Catholicism designed their buildings so mass was said facing the east, just as Ezekiel 8:16 says.

Concerning mass, Britannica.com says: "Mass [is] the central act of worship of the Roman Catholic Church, which culminates in the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist. . . . According to church teaching, Christ's sacrifice is not only recalled in the mass, it is made present. . . . Christ is offered anew to God the Father." In every mass, Roman Catholicism teaches (when the host, or wafer, contained in the monstrance of a sunburst, is consecrated) Jesus Christ comes into that wafer (His body, His blood, His divinity) and that they are actually offering Christ as a fresh, new sacrifice. That is an abomination! The Scriptures are expressly clear, He sacrificed Himself "once." In reality, Roman Catholicism offers a false offering. The mass is an abomination because it crucifies Christ repeatedly. Hebrews 6:6 reads, "If they shall fall away [the Greek word is *parapipto*, meaning 'apostasy'], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Each time they celebrate the mass, they are crucifying Christ afresh and putting Him to "an open shame." They refuse to accept by faith His one offering.

These "**six men**" (**verse 2**) are portrayed as being "**beside the brasen altar**," bringing men's minds back to the Biblical sin offering. Prophetically, this portrays the typical conditions of the Dark Ages. The remedy to these "**abominations**" is also seen in our text: reformation. A dark age had taken place. They were crucifying "the Son of God afresh" in every celebration of the mass. The true saints were hidden away in "the wilderness," representing the catacombs and caves where the saints were in seclusion. Revelation 12:6 reads, "And the woman [representing the church] fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there." Who fed the church while she was in the "wilderness"? Revelation 11:3 says, "And I will give power unto my two witnesses." Sadly, in false religion, there is much speculation about who the "two witnesses" are, but the Scriptures are clear. We read in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness." One witness is the Gospel, or the Word of God. Hebrews 10:15 tells us who the other witness is, stating, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." The two witnesses are the Word and the Spirit. Revelation 11:3 continues, "And I will give power unto my two witnesses [the Word and the Spirit], and they [the Word and the Spirit] shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

When the woman went into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, Revelation 12:6 says it was for "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (one thousand two hundred and sixty days). The delineation of prophetic time is "each day for a year" (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). Thus, one thousand two hundred sixty days is one thousand two hundred sixty years (the time from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530, the entire rule of popery). Revelation 12:6 says, "They should feed her." With what was she fed? Christ, speaking to this Pergamene age, said in Revelation 2:16, "Repent; or else I . . . will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Revelation 2:17 tells us, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Thank God, there was "hidden manna."

Although the Bibles were chained to the pulpit and written in Latin (so the common man could not read or understand it), the Word and the Spirit fed them. It was just as it was in the Exodus in the Wilderness of Sin. Just as God provided Israel with manna to sustain them, the Word and the Spirit provided this "hidden manna" (the Word of God) while God's people were in the "wilderness," or underground in the catacombs and caves. On the niches and walls of those caverns under the city of Rome, the most frequent inscription was, "The word of God is not bound" (2 Timothy 2:9). Although Bibles were chained to pulpits above ground, although it was

a dark age with no public message being sounded, no trumpet being heralded publically, the church (the saints) were being fed "the hidden manna" underground by the Word and the Spirit.

The "**six men**" were a ministry God brought into place (despite the conditions working in the dark age) to bring about a solution, which was a reformation: the sixteenth-century Reformation. Hebrews 9:10 describes conditions under the Old Testament economy and then speaks of "the time of reformation." What was the first reformation? Hebrews 9:11 speaks of "Christ being come." When He came, He brought the first reformation: a "time of reformation." The old externals (meats, drinks, washings, and carnal ordinances; Hebrews 9:10) were just types and shadows of the truth (Hebrews 10:1). When the reality came, when the time of reformation came, those externals were put away. During the Dark Ages, religious leaders returned to external observances and carnal practices. Thus, there needed to be a reformation to begin a restoration to the morning-time truths. Between the Prophet Malachi and John the Baptizer (four hundred and thirty-four years; Daniel 9:25), man did not hear a public message from God. Jesus said, "The people . . . sat in darkness" (Matthew 4:16). However, during the Dark Ages, there were twelve hundred and sixty years of darkness! A reformation was greatly needed! So, God began to work with reformers.

What Proceeded and Produced the Reformation?

Ezekiel 9:4 tells us, "**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.**" The *Septuagint* says "that groan in their grief." This "sigh" (groan) represents a burden. The sixteenth-century Reformation would have never occurred if men had not first gotten under a burden concerning the prevailing spiritual conditions. That is what **verse 4** is revealing. There can be no reformation until people "**sigh**" and "**cry**" over spiritual conditions. It is just like the children of Israel when they were in Egyptian bondage. They had to first become burdened over the condition. Then that burden translated into a cry and prayer. Today, there are many opposing forces, and the enemy wants us to feel conditions can never improve, things will never change, and we must just acquiesce and accept conditions as they are. That is not so! Second Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray . . ." God said, "I will hear and I will heal." But there must first be a burden. There had to be a burden in the days of the Exodus, there had to be a burden preceding the sixteenth-century Reformation, and we need to have a burden yet today. Do not allow the enemy of souls to saddle us with the thought: "Well, there is nothing we can do, it is just always going to be this way. We just have to hold on and hold out until Jesus comes." That is a lie! John 8:44 tells us, "He is a liar, and the father of it," and "There is no truth in him."

Exodus 2:23-25 reads: "And it came to pass in the process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning [there has to be some groaning for Him to hear], and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." One rendering says, "The time was come for their rescue." Because they sighed and cried, God raised up Moses as a deliverer. It starts with a burden. What became the sixteenth-century Reformation that laid a "deadly wound" to the papal beast (Revelation 13:3) began with a burden. Conditions never change unless there is first a burden to change them.

The sixteenth-century Reformation began with a burden that moved men until they sighed and cried "**for all the abominations**" (**Ezekiel 9:4**). They were burdened about and praying over the

conditions. Psalm 17:1 lets us know that the "cry" is "prayer." Psalm 61:1 says, "Hear my cry, O God [these are couplets, parallelisms, Hebrews used to teach; the second part of the couplet elaborates and explains]; attend unto my prayer." Crying is praying. There must be a burden over conditions for them to ever change, and that burden will move one to pray. It is not really a burden if there is no prayer. If you are not praying about it, I say, with all love and kindness, you are truly not burdened about it. The natural outgrowth of a burden (of the sighing or the groaning) is the cry (or the prayer). The much-needed Reformation, which would lay a deadly wound to the papal beast and end the horrific Dark Ages, began with a burden that moved men to prayer. Prayer brought about the Reformation, and it began with a burden.

Let me just cite a few instances. An article entitled "Praying With the Reformers" says, "The reformers were men and women of deep prayer and a spirituality firmly rooted in Scripture." An article entitled "The Prophet of Florence" (speaking about Girolamo Savonarola, who lived from 1452 to 1498) reads, "He was God's John the Baptist to the Reformation." Another article says, "He devoted himself with great zeal to prayer." An article entitled "Revival and Reformation," speaking of Martin Luther (1483-1546), says: "Martin Luther is probably one of the most well-known Christian reformers. This was accomplished through fervent prayer." A publication called *Think Theology* says: "Martin Luther's mighty prayer life is legendary. He is supposed to have said this famous statement: 'I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.'" Let us consider John Knox (1513-1572). An article called "The Powerful Prayers of John Knox" tells us: "One of the most striking examples of powerful prayer comes from the nation of Scotland and the man John Knox. Many church historians believed Knox prayed with such force and fiery passion that his prayer transformed the entire nation of Scotland. His prayers are believed to have ignited and sustained the fires of the Reformation revival in Scotland. Knox was a man of fire and prayer. His prayers shook hearts and political leaders alike." Mary, Queen of Scots, stated, "I fear John Knox's prayers more than all the assembled armies of Europe." Knox was consumed by prayer. He once prayed, "Give me Scotland, Lord, or I die!"

The Reformation was brought about by men who sighed and cried, men who had a burden and prayed! Many early reformers were martyred for their burden and their actions, but that did not deter them. Every true reformation has been wrought by prayer. When Israel went into such terrible apostasy under King Ahab and became worshipers of Baal and other idols, there was a three-and-a-half-year drought. Then God told Elijah in 1 Kings 18:1, "Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." First Kings 18:19-21 reads: "Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table [eight hundred and fifty to one is certainly unfavorable odds]. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

Elijah let the prophets of Baal go first. They whooped and hollered, hopped up and down, carried on, and cut themselves. In 1 Kings 18:27, Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." When it came to the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah "built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar . . . And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water" (1 Kings 18:32-33). Elijah told them to do this three times (four times three equals twelve, a Biblical number of perfection). When Elijah finished with all this, he prayed. We read in 1 Kings 18:36-39: "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day

that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word [he was getting them right back to the Word]. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."

Prayer brought this Reformation. **Ezekiel 9:5** reads, "**And to the others . . .**" If they had the "**mark**" (**verse 4**), then they were spared. But what happened to "**the others**" who did not have the "**mark**," who did not "**sigh**" and "**cry**," who did not have a burden, who did not pray? **Ezekiel 9:5-6** continues: "**He said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.**" This reveals the truth of Acts 10:34, which states, "God is no respecter of persons." Your spiritual condition dictates what occurs. If these people had "**a mark**" (or a burden), they would have lived. These "**others**," the ones who did not have a burden, were slain.

Whether old, young, men, women, or children, all must have a burden. All must pray. Otherwise, the "**slaughter weapon**" (the message) is death. The typical portrayal is those who had the burden, who "**sigh**" and "**cry**," were not content with the conditions—the dead, false forms of Roman Catholicism. For those who were content with the spiritual conditions and were content with the dead, empty form, it brought death ("**slay utterly**"; **verse 6**). Ezekiel was under a burden over the conditions, and he prayed. Verse 8 reads, "And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?"

The "Mark" Is a Protection

Verse 6 says the judgment began "**at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men.**" That is the same thing Peter said when he saw these conditions working in his day. First Peter 4:17 reads, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." Those who have been around the longest and have had the most opportunity were the ones God held the most responsible. Church of God, we are a highly responsible people! Being one of God's own and having a burden will protect you from the judgments of God. We must have this "**mark**" ("**seal**"; Revelation 9:4), or this burden. Why? **Verses 5-6** reveal those who did not have this "**mark**" were to be slain. What is the typical picture? Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." People who did not have a "**mark**" were the ones who did not "**sigh**" and "**cry**." They were content with the conditions. They had no burden and no vision. People in this type of spiritual condition will succumb to staying in those conditions. It takes a burden and being moved to prayer to produce a change.

Ezekiel 9:6 says, "**Come not near any man upon whom is the mark.**" Revelation 9:4 reads, "And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." The "**seal . . . in their foreheads**" (or in their minds), having truth within, protects. God protects His people. Revelation 7:3 states, "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." This "**mark**" (**verse 4**) was protection, just as when God instituted the Passover. The blood was to be "on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses" (Exodus 12:7). Exodus 12:13 explains, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass

over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." When the blood was applied to the door posts, it was a token, and the death angel passed over. In the Revelation, when there was a "seal," they were not harmed. In our text, when they had a "**mark**" (when they sighed and cried, when they had a burden and prayed), they were not slain. Why? They had a vision; so they did not perish. They had a vision that God could change the circumstances, and that moved them to prayer.

The Hebrew word for "**mark**" (verse 4) is *tawv*. It is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and is written in the form of an X, or a slanting cross. This portrays the Reformation was brought about by a people who were not only willing to have a burden and pray but were also willing to bear their cross. It is a typical picture of the words of Jesus in Luke 14:26-27, when He said: "If any man come to me, and hate [the Greek word is *miseo*, meaning 'love less'] not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross [not Christ's Cross, but your cross, my cross, or the disciple's cross], and come after me, cannot be my disciple." True disciples are those who have died out to everything else.

Ezekiel 9:9 says, "The land is full of blood," and it certainly was so in that dark age (the age this chapter is typifying). What causes a land to be full of blood? Proverbs 1:10-11 reads: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause." It was a move of a sinful state. Did they cause the land to be full of blood? Revelation 13:7 says, "And it was given unto him [the papal beast] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." Roman Catholicism held worldwide sway in that dark age. After talking about "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER" (Revelation 17:5), Revelation 17:6 says, "And I saw the woman [the mother is Roman Catholicism] drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Roman Catholicism has been a murderous system. Ezekiel 9:9 says it is "full of perverseness" (the *Septuagint* says "iniquity and uncleanness"). This lawlessness to constituted authority and the uncleanness caused God to be stirred and pour out His judgments on that system. In Ezekiel 9:10, God said, "I will recompense their way upon their head." Revelation 13:3 tells us, "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death." It happened just as He said.

The sixteenth-century Reformation, typically portrayed in this text, started with a people who were stirred by the Word of God, assumed a burden, and were moved to fervent prayer. James 5:16 tells us, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This set the stage for the Reformation. Ezekiel 10:1 reads, "Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne." This is the first time we have seen it since the morning time. When they came forth in the morning time with the morning glory, Ezekiel 1:26 says, "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." Thank God, in this Reformation is the appearance of a "throne," a vision of Christ being able to take His rightful position and rule, which had been denied Him in the dark age.

This portion of the prophetic vision reveals a typical portrayal of a burden for reformation. Thank God for an understanding of what preceded and produced the reformation, but we must ask ourselves, How is my burden? Am I disturbed over conditions as I ought to be? Do current conditions move me to prayer? Do I lack a burden or a vision? These are things we need to consider for there will be no change until there is a burden and prayer. Thank God, a burden and prayer can change the worst conditions, as exemplified in the days that led up to the end of the

Dark Ages. Those sixteenth-century brethren brought about a tremendous, much-needed reformation. They took the sword of God's Word and laid a deadly wound to that papal beast and forever broke the dark night of the rule of Catholicism.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A TYPICAL PORTRAYAL OF THE ROUTE TO REFORMATION

Ezekiel 10:1 Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

2 And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.

3 Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory.

5 And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh.

6 And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.

7 And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out.

8 And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

9 And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone.

10 And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

11 When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

12 And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

13 As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

14 And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

15 And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

16 And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

17 When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at

the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

20 This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.

21 Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

22 And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

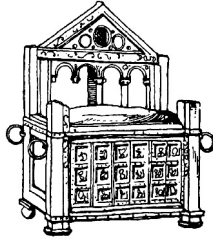
When studying these texts, we must be mindful of two fundamental and foundational truths. The wise man penned, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; . . . there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). When studying prophecy, we must recognize history is cyclic (it runs in cycles). That is evident throughout the history of Old Testament Israel. Their history was repetitive. It also is apparent in the history of the Gospel Day. These valuable lessons need to be understood to be successful in our life's journey. The positive things can reveal what is needed to produce positive events or outcomes in our day. Looking back and seeing what brethren did to bring spiritual success gives great insight and encouragement on how to see spiritual success in our day. We can learn from the negative aspects as well. What brought about negative results, difficult times, and tragic events can enlighten us so we do not repeat those same moves.

The second truth we must remember as we go through Ezekiel's prophetic writing is that he was not merely writing for the time then present. These writings were penned and preserved to be types ("ensamples"; 1 Corinthians 10:11), or representations, written for our benefit. They were written to give admonition, counsel, or instruction, so we could emulate the positive aspects and not be foolish enough to repeat the negative aspects. When **Ezekiel 10:1** says, "**Then I looked,**" it is a reminder, Ezekiel was receiving a vision. In this portion of Ezekiel's vision, we are studying a typical portrayal of the route to reformation. Chapter 8 depicted the terrible conditions that existed in Ezekiel's day, which are typical and parallel the Dark Ages of this New Testament dispensation. Ezekiel 9:4 tells of a people who "sigh" and "cry" (typically), who were under a burden over the sad conditions on the religious landscape. Not only were they burdened, but it moved them to prayer. In our text, we see a typical picture of those prayers being answered. The scene changes with **Ezekiel 10:1**. Keep in mind as we examine our text, we are coming up sequentially through this Gospel Day, or the Christian dispensation.

We read in **Ezekiel 10:1**, "**Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.**" This is the first appearance of the "**throne**" since the beginning portion of this prophetic writing (typifying the morning time of this Gospel Day). When it was seen initially (Ezekiel 1:26), not only was there "the appearance of a sapphire stone" and "the likeness of the throne," but there was also "the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it [representing Jesus Christ]." Our text speaks of "**a sapphire stone**" and "**the appearance of the likeness of a throne,**" but there is no mention of a man. Proverbs 30:5 tells us, "Every word of God is pure." There is divine design in every word incorporated within the Scriptures, and there is also design in every word *not* incorporated in the Scriptures. Our text is noticeably absent of speaking of a man because now this man has taken on a different role. This vision is for a different purpose. In **Ezekiel 10:1**, we see "**a throne,**" which in this instance is a reference to God the Father. Nothing can be likened to Him. Isaiah 40:18 reads, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Isaiah 40:25 states, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." There is no one to whom God can be likened. There is certainly no equal!

A Fresh Vision of God and His Proper Position

In this picture in Ezekiel, all we are allowed to see is a picture of this glorious **"throne."** The absence of a man, in this case, lets us know it is a reference to God the Father. Why is this important? In Roman Catholicism (the power previously entrenched for 1260 years), "the man of sin" sat on a throne. Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 reads: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the Second Advent; verse 1] shall not come, except there come a falling away [the Greek word *apostasia*, from which the English word apostasy is derived, means 'a defection from truth'] 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, shewing himself that he is God."



St. Peter's Chair

Prophecy has been fulfilled in the office of the popes of Rome. In Saint Peter's Basilica is what is supposedly Peter's chair (also known as the Throne of Peter, although not physically sat upon). Today, it represents papal authority and was sat on for years by the popes. Over the centuries, an article has been revered that included the Latin words, "Dominus Deus Noster Papa," which mean, "Our Lord God the Pope." That is blasphemous! That is why Revelation 13:1 says this beast has "the name of blasphemy." When Johann Tetzel traveled through Germany in the sixteenth century, selling indulgences to amass funds to build Saint Peter's Basilica, he made the ludicrous claim, "The Lord God hath ceased to reign and resigned all power over to the Pope." In that dark age, Roman Catholicism saw the popes as God, and they still claim that when the Pope speaks "ex cathedra," which means from his seat, his words are infallible.

What type of seat does the Bible say this usurper occupies? Revelation 2:13 (written to the Pergamene age; A.D. 530-1530) reads, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." Catholicism says he occupies Saint Peter's chair, but the Scripture calls it "Satan's seat." Revelation 16:10 tells us, "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness." It is not Peter's chair, it is not a divine position, but it is "Satan's seat"; it is a kingdom of darkness. We need to understand, in Ezekiel's vision, God heard the prayers of the reformers. Psalm 66:19-20 says: "But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." The reformers prayed; they sighed and cried over the one who held this position (setting himself forth as God), who occupied this position in the Dark Ages.

God heard those reformation brethren, and the first truth revealed on the route to reformation was that they received a fresh vision of God in His proper position. A terrible disservice had been done to God through the dark age. Men had usurped and made claims that belonged to God alone. The route to reformation began when God gave a fresh vision to those who had the burden and prayed. This was not a vision of a Pope sitting on a throne but of God occupying His proper position on the **"throne."** According to Revelation 19:6, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." He has never abdicated the throne; He has never resigned His power to any man. He is still "the Lord God omnipotent," and He still reigns. Isaiah 40:22 says that He "sitteth upon the circle of the earth." He still puts men up and puts them down. He is in full control.

The reformers came to the same realization as Peter when the Sanhedrin threatened the Apostles to preach no longer in that name of Jesus. We read in Acts 5:29, "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:40 tells us that "they had called the apostles, and beaten them." Why? Because they continued to speak in the name of Jesus Christ. The morning-time church endured that persecution, and the reformers came to the same conclusion: they "ought to obey God rather than men." Sadly, they had to endure

many hardships, mistreatment, and some suffered martyrdom. The reformers had to get a fresh vision of God and His proper position. That was true then (without such there could have been no reformation), and it is still necessary any time we want a fresh revival yet today. We must have a renewed vision of God in His proper position.

This "**sapphire stone**" (**verse 1**) is something clear, solid, and durable. Exodus 24:9-10 reads: "Then went up [upon mount Sinai'; verse 16] Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." When verse 10 states, "They saw the God of Israel," what does it actually mean? First, we must remember, "God is light" (1 John 1:5). First Timothy 6:16 tells us, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." God, speaking of Moses, said in Numbers 12:8, "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold." The Hebrew word for "similitude" is *temunah*, and it means "a shape." God is light, light unapproachable, and what they saw was a "similitude," or a shape of brilliant light.

Exodus 24:10 tells us when they saw this "similitude," this shape of brilliant, dazzling light, "there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone." It is the same thing we see in our text (**Ezekiel 10:1**), indicating a clear vision of deity. This "**sapphire stone**" was "as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." It was a clear coloration of blue, like the skies. The Biblical sapphire stone is clear, solid, and durable, just as God and truth are. Men may have believed they did away with Him through the Dark Ages, but God is still in the same position. When people received a vision of Him, they saw He had not been altered at all. The darkness of time and the teachings of men do not change the unalterable, immutable, omnipotent God.

The first thing these reformers received was a fresh vision of God in His proper position. The appearance of this brilliant, bright, clear, solid, heavenly blue "**sapphire stone**" reveals darkness has been forever broken, and light has begun to shine again. In the sounding of the seven trumpets series, Revelation 8:10 reads, "And the third angel sounded." This took place during the period from A.D. 1530 to A.D. 1730. During the Dark Ages (A.D. 530-1530), no public message was heralded; there was no sounding of the trumpet. Notice, there is no trumpet nor angel on the pictorial chart for the period of A.D. 530-1530. The church had to go into the wilderness (underground and in the catacombs and caves; Revelation 12:6, 14). Revelation 8:10 continues, "The third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp." There had been 1260 years in totality of the influence and power of darkness. There was also a great darkness between Malachi the prophet and John the Baptizer. For 434 years, man did not hear a public message from God.

When Jesus came on the scene, Matthew 4:16 says, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light." They had not heard from God for 434 years. At the end of the dark age of Roman Catholicism (1260 years), there had been great darkness! Men's minds were so darkened that they had little understanding of even the most meager and elementary truths. The masses of the people thought salvation and partaking of Christ came about by attending a mass, having the priests perform the Eucharist, and eating a wafer. What darkness! When light broke through, it is referred to as "a great star" (Revelation 8:10) because the darkness had been so great.

What was this star? Revelation 1:16 says in Christ's "right hand" were "seven stars." Revelation 1:20 defines these seven stars as the "angels" (the Greek word is *aggelos*, which means "messenger"). The stars are symbolic of a ministry. They are God's luminary agents who bring light to a sin-darkened world. Thank God, there was a divine call. Initially, this ministry who brought the sixteenth-century Reformation was a great move from



God. This "great star from heaven, [was] burning as it were a lamp" (Revelation 8:10). According to Isaiah 62:1, "Salvation thereof [is] as a lamp that burneth." The message of salvation was back in the public venue. It was a great light because the message on salvation was bringing people understanding. Light was arising, just as the star arises in a dark night. It was the message of salvation, not penitence or works. People were receiving the revelation of truth. Martin Luther, one of the greatest reformers, received the truth concerning Romans 1:17, which says, "The just shall live by faith." He took that truth and laid a deadly wound to the papal beast (Revelation 13:3); its exclusive power over mankind was forever broken.

Ezekiel 10:2 reads: "**And he** [referring to the One sitting upon the '**throne**': God] **spake unto the man clothed with linen** [a symbolical or typical picture of Jesus Christ because the linen was what the high priest wore; Leviticus 16:3-4 and Hebrews 3:1], **and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.**" This is the first time we see "**the cherubims**" since Ezekiel 3:13 (in a time period typical of the morning time). It is important we rightfully understand this, as there is much misconception. The Hebrew word for "**cherubims**" means "the living ones." "**Cherubims**" are not celestial creatures, nor are they angelic beings. According to **Ezekiel 10:15**, the "**cherubims**" are "**the living creature**" Ezekiel first saw "**by the river Chebar.**" (Ezekiel, Chapter 1, is a symbolic portrayal of Pentecost and the morning time.) The reason this is the first we have seen of these "**cherubims**" since the morning time is because of the morning-time apostasy and the ensuing Dark Ages. God's people had to go underground. They were not in public view. For a true saint to be in public view and known as a saint during the Dark Ages was to face torture and martyrdom. The expression "he found his niche," no doubt, came from this time. Many people were born underground, lived their whole life underground, died, and were buried in a niche in those cave walls. However, thank God, in our text we are seeing a beautiful picture of people being able to come out into public view again.

We read in Isaiah 63:18, "The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while." The morning glory was short-lived. As early as when Jude wrote his Epistle (A.D. 66), apostasy was working. Jude 4 states, "For there are certain men crept in unawares." They were "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [or loose living]." Verse 10 of Jude tells us they were natural men, and they only knew what they knew "naturally, as brute beasts." Even then, the seeds were being sown for the rise of the hideous beasts that opposed God's people. The rest of Isaiah 63:18 says, "Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary." Did that take place? Daniel 8:12 reads, "And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered." This Scripture is typical of the Dark Ages. The truth had been "cast down . . . to the ground." Actually, the truth had to go underground. During that period of time, the powers of the enemy "practised, and prospered."

Revelation 11:2 reads, "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot." Under the old economy, the Jews were the people of God, but the Gentiles were not. They were considered the "uncircumcision" (Ephesians 2:11). In Revelation, the term "Gentiles" is symbolic. John was talking about those in this New Testament dispensation who had not enjoyed the circumcision of Christ. Colossians 2:11 says, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision [speaking of Christ; verse 8] made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." That is the circumcision we have in this New Testament, but John was using this imagery in Revelation 11:2 to describe those who were not spiritually circumcised. They were unregenerate. He was figuratively speaking of the system of Roman Catholicism.

Revelation 11:2 says, "And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." We previously found forty-two months (using thirty days to a Jewish calendar month) equals

1260 days, and using the delineation of prophetic reckoning (each day for a year; Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6) gives us 1260 years (A.D. 270-1530). That is when they were "tread under foot." Revelation 12:6 states, "And the woman [representative of the church] fled into the wilderness [not a picture of her apostatizing, but a description of the seclusion of the true people], where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there two hundred and threescore days." Revelation 11:3 tells us "the two witnesses" (the Word and the Spirit) fed her.

"The Wheels" (the Message) Coming Back Into View

In our text, we see a beautiful picture: the living creatures are visible again. They had been underground in the catacombs and caves, but now the redeemed are beginning to be seen instead of men and the system of men. We also see another reappearance in **verse 2**, which reads, "**And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels.**" We have not seen "**the wheels**" mentioned since Ezekiel 3:13. (A prior study revealed these "**wheels**" represent the Word; Jeremiah 18:1-3. The Word is what God uses to mold and make men, to form our character. "**The wheels**" are circular and complete, and the Gospel message is circular and complete. It addresses all of mankind's needs.)

"**The wheels**" have not been seen since the morning time; now the message is coming back into view. The second truth, or principle, portrayed in this passage is the reappearance of "**the wheels**" reveals the message was returning to its proper position. It was not in the proper position during the Dark Ages when their stance was not based on the truth of God's Word. Rather, it was based on canon law, church teachings, and traditions. Amos 8:11 prophesied of this, saying there would be a "famine . . . of hearing the words of the LORD." Now the message, or the Word, was coming back into focus. When Jesus spoke to the Pergamene age (representing the Dark Ages; A.D. 530-1530), He told them in Revelation 2:16, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Christ was going to turn the truth loose. The "sword of my mouth" is the Word of God (Revelation 1:16; Hebrews 4:12). Speaking of the papal beast, Revelation 13:3 reads, "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death." Revelation 13:14 says it had "the wound by a sword." One tremendous blow upon papalism came by a Roman monk—Martin Luther. He had a doctorate degree and had been studying the Book of Romans. (At that time Catholicism was teaching salvation through works, penance, the Eucharist, and other various religious works.) He traveled to Rome and climbed what is called "the scala sancta" (or the sacred stairs, which are part of the church of Saint John the Lateran). The superstitious teaching is that those are the same stairs which Jesus ascended at Pilate's judgment hall. That is nothing but vain traditions.

Tradition states, as Martin Luther was going up those stairs on his knees, worshiping as he went, a spiritual thunderbolt struck his mind. As he was trying to attain his salvation by works, going up these stairs on his knees, God brought to his mind Romans 1:17, which says, "The just shall live by faith." Light broke through, and he understood ascending those stairs was not what he needed to be doing. Luther took that revelation of truth and used it as a sword, dealing a deadly wound to the beast and breaking the exclusive night of papal darkness forever! That is when the message of the lamp (salvation) began to shine upon the hearts of mankind again. The message of justification by faith (not rites or rituals) came back, and a message on salvation was heralded again.

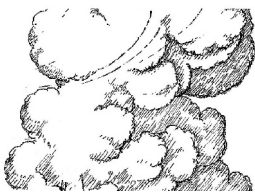
In **verse 2**, "**the man clothed with linen**" (our High Priest, Jesus Christ; Hebrews 3:1) was told to "**fill thine hand with coals of fire . . . and scatter them.**" What is this particular "**fire**"? Revelation 4:5 reads, "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

If there is only "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4), what are "the seven Spirits of God"? They represent the Spirit of God working throughout each of the seven periods that comprise this Gospel Day.

The "**fire**" represents the Spirit of God. We read in Acts 2:3-4: "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire. . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This portrayal in **Ezekiel 10:2** shows the Holy Spirit was again loose, bringing understanding and enlightenment to the darkened minds of men. Ephesians 1:17-18 reveals it is the Holy Spirit who enlightens "the eyes of your understanding." Jesus said in John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth [thy word is truth'; John 17:17]." In this reformation, we are seeing the third feature—the need and desire of the Holy Spirit to bring enlightenment. The Holy Spirit was again bringing understanding and enlightenment to men.

When looking at the "**coals of fire**," we see two things working together. We see a picture (typically) of the message the Holy Spirit provided to this particular age. The first portion of this Reformation is commonly referred to as the Lutheran era (A.D. 1530-1730). Isaiah 6:1 reads, "In the year that king Uzziah died [he said he received a vision] I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne." Then, Isaiah 6:6-7 says: "Then flew one of the seraphims [the same as the cherubim] unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." This is a representation of the message that was heralded under the Holy Spirit's anointing in this first segment of the Reformation period—the message on salvation. Iniquity was being purged, sin was being taken away, and people were hearing a clear message on salvation. The truth of Romans 1:17 was revealed, which states, "The just shall live by faith," not by works, penance, the Eucharist, flagellation, nor other imaginations of men. The message concerning salvation was coming back into clear view under the anointing of the Spirit of God.

In **verse 2**, Ezekiel saw where our High Priest was told to "**scatter**." This was to be a wide-reaching reformation. **Verse 3** says this started in "**the inner court**," and **verse 5** says that it moved to "**the outer court**." It was a progressive move, a move that was going to spread. The sixteenth-century Reformation began somewhat localized, but it spread and scattered and brought light to the hearts of men. **Ezekiel 10:4** states, "**Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory.**" Typically, "**the LORD'S glory**" and "**the house**" being "**filled with the cloud**" reveal that the presence of God was in that sixteenth-century Reformation. It is needful to understand that and also that there is a vivid distinction between the sixteenth-century Reformation that God was in and what followed (the system of Protestantism, which came out of men's minds, a system God never ordained). There is a vast distinction! Our text lets us know the presence of God was in the Reformation.



The Cloud Indicated the Glory of God

Ezekiel 10:4 tells us that "**the house was filled with the cloud.**"

The expression "**filled with the cloud**" is used repeatedly throughout the Bible. We read in Exodus 19:9, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee." The "thick cloud" denoted the presence of God. Let us get another example. After Moses had built everything in accordance to the pattern given him in the mount (full obedience), we find in Exodus 40:34-35: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." That "cloud" indicated the glory of God. When Solomon dedicated the temple, 2 Chronicles 5:13-14 says: "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one [what a picture of unity], to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted

up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud [what was it?]: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God."

When Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, Matthew 17:5 tells us, "While he [Peter] yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." The **"cloud"** was **"the glory of the LORD,"** the presence of God, that shekinah glory cloud. The presence of God was in that sixteenth-century Reformation and in the hearts of the dear men who braved the consequences that led up to that Reformation. We read in **Ezekiel 10:5**, **"And the sound of the cherubim's wings was heard even to the outer court."** **Verse 3** reveals this started with **"the inner court"** but proceeded to **"the outer court"** (**verse 5**), revealing God used these saints to have a worldwide impact. The Reformation was not done in a corner.

Roman Catholicism tried to crush the Reformation. A man by the name of John Huss was martyred by Rome on July 6, 1415. Before he died, he uttered these words of prophecy: "Today you roast a goose [the name *Huss* in Bohemian means 'goose'], but in a hundred years there will arise a swan that you can neither roast nor broil." The Luther family insignia was a swan, and in a hundred years, God raised up Martin Luther. He nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, and laid a deadly wound to that papal beast. Rome could not martyr him. They could not "roast nor broil" him. God preserved him. The move of the Reformation was a move of God that could not be stopped.

The Reformation Was an Effort of Christ and "the Cherubims" Working Together

Ezekiel 10:7 reads, **"And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen [Christ]: who took it, and went out."** This Reformation placed **"the fire"** right where it belonged—in the hands of Christ. He took it and went out, and this message (the Reformation under the anointing of the Spirit) could not be stopped. They martyred Huss, Wycliffe, and many others, but this work was initially in Christ's hands. Yet today, for a work to be effective, we must put it **"into the hands of"** Christ. Notice, in **verse 7**, the words **"one cherub."** We previously found that these cherubs represent the redeemed, or the saints. When **verse 7** says that **"one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims [plural] . . . and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him,"** we see exactly what the Apostle Paul wrote of when he said, "We are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). The Reformation was an effort of both Christ (who was in His rightful position initially in this Reformation) and **"the cherubims"** working together.

The reformers could not bring a reformation by themselves, but neither could Christ. We are "workers together." It took a combination of Christ and His people. There is a vivid lesson there. For a work to be effective, we must **"put it into the hands of"** Christ (**verse 7**). However, there is also a role for us. **Ezekiel 10:8** reads, **"And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings."** Man must have his **"hand"** in it. The Lord has chosen to use human instrumentality. There would have been no reformation without men (**"the cherubims"**), and there would have certainly been no reformation without the "High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1) having it put in His **"hands."** It takes a combination of both.

We read in Luke 9:1-2: "Then he [speaking of Christ] called his twelve disciples together, and gave them [His twelve disciples] power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And

he sent them [the disciples] to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." Why didn't Christ do it Himself? The divine plan is to use human instrumentality. Luke 10:1 tells us, "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also [disciples; Luke 9:1], and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come." Acts, Chapter 2, tells of the great event of Pentecost, the advent of the Holy Spirit, the institution of the New Testament church. They came out of that upper room speaking "the wonderful works of God" (verse 11). Then, Acts 2:14 reads, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice." Peter began to preach, and when he finished preaching, "They were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37). The people were not "pricked" until they "heard" something. God has ordained using human instrumentality. Here the Holy Ghost came down out of Heaven and moved into the hearts of those hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15), but before anyone else got an ounce of help, Peter had to preach.

First Corinthians 1:21 says, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." We read in Romans 10:13-15: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved [that is a wonderful truth, but that is not all]. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" How do the "glad tidings of good things" get to people? The preacher brings them. The Reformation would have never occurred without some "**cherubims**" going out to preach a message at the risk and peril of their own lives.

In Acts, Chapter 8, we read of Philip involved in a great move of God in Samaria. Acts 8:26-35 says: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship. Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias [Greek for the Hebrew word 'Isaiah'] the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias [or Isaiah], and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this [Isaiah 53:7], He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

In verse 26, there was an angel involved. Why didn't the angel deal with the eunuch? As Philip came into Gaza, it was, no doubt, the place where many dignitaries traveled, where entire caravans of chariots passed by. The Spirit said, "Join thyself to this chariot" (verse 29). The Spirit knew exactly which chariot had the honest heart (and He still knows where every honest heart is today). The man was reading the Bible (Isaiah 53:7); was not the Word enough? Isn't just reading the Bible enough? Shouldn't that be enough to get them saved? Not here. The eunuch was wiser than a lot of people, but when Philip asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" he said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"

God's Plan Is to Use Human Instrumentality

Many people hate the thought of having to have a "man" tell them what the Bible means, but that is God's plan. Some people say, "I can read it and get it for myself." You can try, but you

will not. You can study until your eyes pop out of your head, but you will not get it as the man of God gets it because that is not your call; it is his. In this account, an angel, the Spirit, and the Word were all involved, but it was not until Philip got up in the chariot and started preaching to the eunuch that the eyes of his understanding were enlightened. Then he was saved. God uses human instrumentality. What if Philip had not been willing to leave Samaria? He could have said: "Why me, Lord? I do not want to leave. I am busy here." However, Philip listened divine direction, and that is also what brought the Reformation: men who were willing at the risk of their lives, fame, fortune, and families to herald the truth.

In Acts, Chapter 9, Paul (then known as Saul) was on the Damascus Road, and verse 1 reads, "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord . . ." Acts 9:3 says, "And as he journeyed . . . suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." Who was it? Verse 4 says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Verse 5 reads: "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus." Saul was speaking to Jesus. Don't you think Jesus could have told Saul how to get saved? When Saul asked in verse 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" we read, "The Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Jesus could have taken Saul through the steps of salvation, but He did not. That is not God's plan. Acts 9:10-12 tells us: "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." God sent Ananias to help Saul get saved. We are workers together with God. You can read other Scriptures and find Saul saw Jesus in the glorified flesh, but Jesus did not tell him. He sent a Church of God preacher to tell Saul what to do.

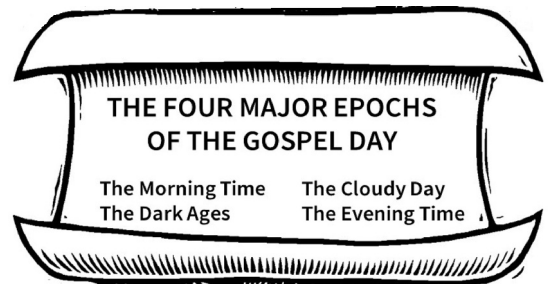
Acts, Chapter 10, tells of a devout man named Cornelius, "a centurion" of "the Italian band" (verse 1). Verse 2 says he was "a devout man, and one that feared God." He was a Jewish proselyte. He had converted from paganism to Judaism. Acts 10:3 states, "He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day [three p.m.] an angel." We have another angel involved. Did that angel come and tell Cornelius how to get saved? Verses 4-5 say that the angel said: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up. . . . And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter." Acts 10:6 tells us, "He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side." It is amazing how the Lord can reveal all these details! Peter had to be persuaded by the sheet being let down three times that he could go because he would not have normally gone as they were Gentiles.

Acts 10:19 tells us, "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him . . ." We have an angel and the Spirit involved, but Peter had to go down and preach to Cornelius. In Acts 10:40, Peter talked about what all Christ did, saying, "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly." Then, in verse 42, he stated, "And he commanded us to preach." That is when the people were saved. God uses human instrumentality. We are workers together with God. In **verse 7**, we read they "**put it into the hands of him.**" Thank God, it has to be in Christ's hands, but **verse 8** lets us know we have to have our "**hand**" in it as well. It is a coordination and correlation of being workers together with Him. He will do what we cannot do, but He will not do what we can do. This Reformation was brought about because of men who were selfless, who were indeed true disciples, who truly had a heart for truth, and who had received a fresh vision. After 1260 years of the Dark Ages and of a man being exalted as God, they needed a fresh vision of God in His proper position. Once that took place, thank God, they also saw the need of and had a desire for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. That put the Word back in its proper position and brought about a reformation.

I trust not only the application prophetically, typically, historically of these things that occurred that represent various portions of the Gospel Day, but also, their application yet to us today is becoming clear. Reformation revival will not just occur because God desires it, but it occurs when God gets enough people in place to where they are willing to "hear what the Spirit saith" and are willing to be workers together with God. Just as God knew exactly where the eunuch was (in the middle of Gaza, in the middle of a desert, in the middle of a caravan), He knows where every honest heart is yet today. Just as He knew in which house Saul of Tarsus was in praying, just as He knew right where Cornelius' house was, He knows where every honest heart is yet today. He can guide them to us and us to them. He will do His part, but we must do our part and be "workers together with" God. All this brought about a great reformation from which Rome has never recovered and never will; and it will still bring a work of God today.

Ezekiel 10:9-10 reveals what the message will do and how it is made effective. When **verse 9** says, "**Behold the four wheels by the cherubims,**" it is necessary to be reminded who "**the cherubims**" are. False religion advocates they are celestial beings (angels), but the text reveals this is not so. **Ezekiel 10:15** states: "**And the cherubims [the Hebrew word actually means 'the living ones'] were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.**" Ezekiel reveals "**the cherubims**" and "**the living creature**" are the same thing. To understand what Ezekiel "**saw by the river of Chebar,**" look again at Ezekiel, Chapter 1. There he saw a prophetic, symbolic portrayal of the Holy Spirit being given on the Day of Pentecost and what was produced: "Also out of the midst thereof [fire, representing the Holy Spirit] came the likeness of four living creatures [a representation of all God's people]" (Ezekiel 1:5). (To study more about the symbolic portrayal of Pentecost and the four insignias, see pages 40-41.)

We read in **Ezekiel 10:9**, "**And when I looked, behold the four wheels [the 'wheels,' or the message, are functional again] by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub.**" For each of these four major epochs, God still had a people and a message. For a time, many saints were driven underground, but God was still faithful. God has always had a people and a message, although it was not always a public message. When God's people were underground, they were being fed the hidden manna by the "two witnesses," the Word and the Spirit (Revelation 11:3).



Ezekiel 10:9 continues, "**And the appearance of the wheels [the Word, or the message] was as the colour of a beryl stone.**" This is the first we have seen "**a beryl stone**" (representing the morning time) mentioned since Chapter 1, when Ezekiel first related the appearance of these things as a result of Pentecost. He said in Ezekiel 1:16, "The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl." When we studied the "**beryl stone,**" we found the "**beryl**" family includes seven distinct, colorful, precious stones. These seven stones correlate with the seven periods of the Gospel Day.

The "**beryl stone**" appeared when the "**wheels**" came back into public view, letting us know here is a message that has produced a precious and solid experience. During the Dark Ages, people could not publicly get a solid experience because they were taught to follow the dictates of the church: do penance, come to the mass, and partake of the Eucharist. When the Reformation broke forth, a "**wheel**" (a public message) and "**a beryl stone**" (something precious and solid) came into view. The message of this time was Romans 1:17 ("The just shall live by faith"). A "deadly wound" (Revelation 13:3) was laid to that papal beast with this message from the sword

of truth. The **"beryl stone"** represents the period when the sixteenth-century Reformation commenced, commonly called the Lutheran era (A.D. 1530-1730). One of the colors of **"the beryl stone"** was an emerald green stone, representing the gentle mercies of God.

The Dominant Distinction of the New Covenant Was Mercy

After God had destroyed the world with the Flood, Noah came forth out of the ark and offered worship to God. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and a rainbow appeared in the sky as a token of God's covenant (Genesis 9:12-13). In this New Testament dispensation, John received a vision, and Revelation 4:3 states, "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." That tells us the closest thing to God's mind is His covenant. God is a God of covenant. He performs His Word. The rainbow that appeared to Noah had seven prismatic colors, as every rainbow does. But in the Revelation, the "rainbow round about the throne" has a totally new hue. It was "in sight like unto an emerald."

In the midst of seven prismatic colors, the prevailing hue was "like unto an emerald." This is a new rainbow, representing a new covenant, and it is exactly what Jesus Christ came to usher in. The emerald's soft, gentle color is symbolic of one dominant distinction of this new covenant: mercy. Hebrews 10:28 describes how it was under the old covenant, stating, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses." The old covenant did not dispense mercy freely. Isaiah 55:3, prophesying of Christ, reads, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you [Christ, through His blood, brought 'the everlasting covenant'; Hebrews 13:20], even the sure mercies of David."

During the Dark Ages, people lost sight of the manifest characteristic of the new covenant (mercy). It was replaced by a human organization based on penance, flagellation, the Eucharist, and works, but the truth of Ephesians 2:4 was coming back into view, which tells us that "God . . . is rich in mercy." Religion certainly was not merciful in the Dark Ages, a time when millions of the saints became martyrs. But thank God, the truth was beginning to shine forth again. First Peter 2:9-10 tells us, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth [not just speak forth, but here is something people can see] the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

Our text also has a first-century application concerning those who came out of the darkness, commonly called the intertestamental period (the 434 years between Malachi and John the Baptizer), but it also takes on a new significance when we realize the application to this Lutheran period. After at least a thousand years of darkness, a time when mercy was not being preached, God was calling people out of darkness into His marvelous light by letting them obtain mercy. **Verse 9**, speaking of the appearance of the **"wheels,"** is portraying a public message being sounded forth again. The **"wheels,"** being described as having **"the colour of a beryl stone,"** show the message was mercy and salvation. Revelation 8:10 reads, "And the third angel [or ministry] sounded [the third angel sounded in 1530; there was no angel sounding, no trumpet being blown, from 530 to 1530], and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp." The "star" represents the ministry (Revelation 1:16, 20), God's agents to bring man light.

The "lamp" "burning" indicates the message in this period was the message on salvation (Isaiah 63:1). Mercy was being sounded forth. It was coming back into public view. What made this message (and any message) effective? Is it effective because the preacher preaches it? Is it because a man may have a real gift to be able to set forth God's Word? Does that make the message

effective? No! The role the ministry fills is vital, but what makes it effective? **Ezekiel 10:10** reads, "**And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness** [regardless of whether it was the morning time, the Dark Ages, the cloudy day, or the evening time, when someone has a real experience of salvation, they have the same appearance; it is the same for all ages], **as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.**" This is what makes the message effective. At the commencement of this prophetic writing (typifying the commencement of the Gospel Day), Ezekiel 1:16 tells, "The wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness [same as our text]: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."



A picture of the living creatures (the saints) putting their lives right in the midst of the message.

Remember, we are dealing in symbolism. The **"wheel"** is the Word, or the message. A **"wheel"** is circular, complete. We have a complete Gospel. A **"wheel"** also is a manner of conveyance, designed to help us through the journey of life, but the message only helps us if it becomes **"a wheel . . . in the midst of a wheel."** If the message is taken into our lives and we put the message on and it becomes us, that is what makes the message effective. The **"wheel . . . in the midst of a wheel"** is a picture of the lives of the saints (the living creatures) taking hold of the message and putting their lives right in the midst of the message. We read in Philippians 2:12, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This

does not mean (as too many people say), "Me and Jesus have our own thing going." Nobody has *their own thing* going with Jesus. Read the context.

You can only work out that which "God . . . worketh in you" (Philippians 2:13). If He does not give you light and understanding on a truth, you cannot put it into practice. If you do not know something is wrong, you cannot quit it. It takes understanding; it takes light. God has to work it in. He has to send a message. He brings the **"wheel"** to us, and in the **"wheel,"** He brings us His Word. When He brings His Word, Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding." When we have understanding, God is working it in us. That is how He works it in, when He gives us understanding, when the Holy Spirit (the "spirit of wisdom"; Ephesians 1:17-18) enlightens the eyes of our understanding.

When you were first saved, there were things you were freely doing, but you had no idea they were wrong. It was not long before God enlightened you, and you gained understanding. You cannot do them now and be right because you know better. You took the message, and when God worked it in, you worked it out. The **"wheel"** became a **"wheel"** in you. The message became something you took in, making it a part of you and part of your experience. The **"wheel . . . in the midst of a wheel"** is you and me taking hold of that message, putting it on, and living it out. That is what makes the Gospel effective.

The message is only effective when people embrace it. Some men paint pictures of these visions and make them all fanciful, causing people to think a supernatural, mystical something is going to come down out of the sky, but that is not so. They are relaying spiritual truths to us. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The Word does an effective work when you believe it as the Word of God and take it as the Word of God. It is not effective when people sit in a worship service, hear the Word preached,

and say: "That is just his idea. That is just how he feels. I do not see it that way. I do not think that is necessary." When you take it as the word of men, it will not do you an ounce of good, but if you will take the message as the Word of God and believe it is coming from God, it will do an effective work in your life. That is a convincing agent to a lost-and-dying world.

I was raised in sectism. I went to church services every week and watched people who acted one way in the service and then another way through the week. I was just a young boy, but I knew something was wrong. When I first came to the Church of God, the first thing I noticed was the people were living what the pastor was putting out over the pulpit. I had never seen such a thing! The effectiveness lies in living the message. That is what we are seeing in our lesson. When people came out of the catacombs and caves (out of hiding and seclusion) and came back into public view, they began to herald a message, and their lives were behind the message. They did not have the understanding in A.D. 1530 we are privileged to have today, but for a time, they walked in what light they had, and that made the sixteenth-century Reformation initially effective.

We read in **Ezekiel 10:11**, "**When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went** [they were focused, just as the living creatures in the morning time who went 'straight forward'; Ezekiel 1:9], **but to the place whither the head looked they followed it.**" Why was the sixteenth-century Reformation initially successful? Why was it able to lay a "deadly wound" to the papal beast? Why was the darkness of night forever broken? Because "**to the place whither the head looked they followed it.**" They followed "**the head**" (singular). Who is "**the head**"? Colossians 1:18 reads, "And he [his dear Son; verse 13] is the head of the body, the church." Christ is "**the head.**" The sixteenth-century Reformation was a divine move. **Verse 16** tells us, "**When the cherubims went, the wheels went by them.**" **Verse 17** says, "**When they stood . . . and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also.**" Why did this occur? Why were they so effective? Why such a harmony? **Verse 17** tells us, "**The spirit of the living creature was in them.**" Initially, there was a "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3). In subsequent studies, we will find the *outgrowth* of it was not a divine move, but it *commenced* as a divine move. Initially, they followed divine direction. **Verse 19** says, "**Every one stood at the door of the east gate.**" They were getting out of darkness and coming back to the source of light.

Ezekiel 10:12 reads, "**And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes.**" The "**head**" is spoken of in **verse 11**; then **verse 12** speaks of various parts of the body (the "**backs,**" the "**hands,**" the "**wings,**" and the "**eyes**"). What does that symbolize? The Reformation had various reformers, and they were all focused on the same thing: getting away from the false claims of popery and getting back to the Word of God. The various reformers had different approaches, just like "**backs**" and "**hands**" and "**eyes**" have different functions. Also, the body had not yet come together as a cohesive whole in this period of time.

"THE WHEELS WERE FULL OF EYES"



"Seven eyes" (Zechariah 3:9)
 "Seven Spirits" (Revelation 5:6)
 The Holy Spirit working in every time period
 of the Gospel Day.

"The Wheels, Were Full of Eyes Round About"

The latter portion of **verse 12** tells us, "**The wheels, were full of eyes round about.**" Again, this is the first mention of these "**eyes**" since Ezekiel 1:18, which states, "As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four." Zechariah 3:9 tells us what these "**eyes**" represent, stating, "For behold the stone [Jesus Christ]

that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." This one "stone" and the "seven eyes" represent what occurs in the "one day" (the Gospel Day, or "the day of salvation"; 2 Corinthians 6:2). Who was the "stone"? Peter, preaching to the Sanhedrin, said in Acts 4:10-11, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . is the stone." To understand what the seven eyes are, Revelation 5:6 tells us, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain [Jesus; John 1:29], having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." If Ephesians 4:4 says there is only "one Spirit," how can there be "seven Spirits of God"?

The only way the "Spirits" can be sent forth into all the earth is to be sent forth into the balance of human history. At the time in which Revelation 5:6 was penned (A.D. 96), the balance of human history was composed of seven periods. That is why there were "seven horns." Luke 1:69 tells us the horns represent the power of salvation. This is the message of salvation and the Spirit of God which conveyed it in the seven periods that comprise the Gospel Day. When Ezekiel speaks of these "**eyes**," it reveals the Spirit of God can now operate in public view again. Yes, it was operating in the Dark Ages, because the Spirit and the Word were the two witnesses that nourished God's people in the catacombs and caves for the 1260 years, but it was out of public view. Now, the Word and the Spirit are back in public view, public operation. The morning-time church started out with a Spirit-filled people (Acts 2:4). Ephesians 5:18 admonishes, "Be filled with the Spirit," and they were. Throughout the Book of Acts, many times you can read that they were filled with the Spirit. The morning time started out with a Spirit-filled people and a Spirit-filled message.

Now we are seeing a typical, prophetic picture—after the 1260 years (the totality of the Dark Ages), after they had been "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9), now a Spirit-filled message was again producing a Spirit-filled people. Keep in mind, they did not have the light we have, and we cannot judge past periods by the light we have now, any more than you can judge a child and expect a child to understand what you understand. The brethren in those days did not have the opportunity we have today. Thank God, they were coming out empowered and emboldened by the Spirit of God to preach a message at the peril of many of their lives. Christ had told the people of this dark age, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Revelation 2:16). They did not repent, so He turned "the sword" loose. Revelation 13:3 reveals they laid a "deadly wound" to the papal beast. It was "the wound by a sword" (Revelation 13:14). When they did that and the dark night of papalism was forever broken, light began to shine forth. The "**wheels**," or the message, came back into public view.

We read in **Ezekiel 10:13**, "**As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.**" The Hebrew says, "For they were called in my hearing the whirling wheels." It was a period of getting back to the message, back to the Word, and it was whirling and moving and making progress throughout the then-known world. They were "whirling wheels." A "**wheel**" that sits still does not do any good. A "**wheel**" is only doing what it is intended to do when it is "whirling." If you get in your car, put it in gear, and your wheels do not whirl, you are not going anywhere.

The "**wheels**" need to whirl, to go, to advance. Thank God, these were "whirling wheels." The people made progress with their message. They conveyed the message. (Much more could be dealt with in these passages, but I am trying to stay with the one scheme as much as possible.) **Verse 16** reads, "**And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them.**" When the living creature, or the saint who has the life, has "**a wheel . . . in the midst of the wheel**" (when the message is right in the midst of their life and people look at them), they can see the message.

Where "**the cherubims**" (the living creatures, the saints) go, the message goes. When we go and have this life, people see.

Philippians 2:13-16 reads: "For it is God which worketh [The word 'worketh' is present and continual tense. The Greek word is *energeo*; our word 'energy' is derived from it. It means 'to be active, operative.' God wants to continue to be active and operative in our lives.] in you . . . Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, [There is no new thing under the sun'; Ecclesiastes 1:9. It was crooked and perverse then, just as it is crooked and perverse today.] among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life." You hold forth "the word of life" by the way you live your life. John 1:4 says, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." The life is the light, and the light is the life.

Verse 16 tells us where "**the cherubims went, the wheels went.**" Some people teach modesty at home, but then they go on vacation and share pictures of themselves in their bathing suits. It does not sound like "**the wheel went**" with them. The standard is the same wherever you are. You should not have one standard at home and another standard while on vacation or when you are at work. "**When the cherubims went, the wheels went by them.**" Wherever the saints went, the message went with them. They carried it. That also shows the harmony between the people and the message. The people and the message actually become one. **Ezekiel 10:18** states, "**Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.**" Where His Word is honored and His Spirit is free to work, "**The glory of the LORD**" is with His people. It is not with places and organizations. God does not live in the church building. "The tabernacle of God is with *men*" (Revelation 21:3). The reason He is in our assemblies is that the people of God all assemble and bring the presence of God.

"**The glory of the LORD**" certainly was never in Roman Catholicism. When God gave Moses the instructions concerning the Old Testament tabernacle, God was explicit and detailed. God is not a careless God. Likewise, we cannot be careless and live careless lives. God gave this stern reminder in Exodus 25:40, saying, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." He was telling Moses to make sure he built it according to the Word God gave him. God was saying, "Be sure to do it the way I told you." We read in Exodus 40:16, "Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he." That is a good example for us yet today. When Jesus performed the first miracle at the marriage at Cana in Galilee, His mother gave instructions to those servants that are also good for us yet today. She said, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

Exodus 40:33-35 tells us: "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." The glory of the Lord came on the scene when Moses built everything according to the pattern. God told King David that he would not build the Temple, but his son Solomon would. First Chronicles 28:11-12 tells of David's instruction to Solomon, stating, "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit."

David gave Solomon "the pattern of all he had by the spirit." What God gave David is what He gave Solomon. We read in 2 Chronicles 5:1, "Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished: and Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God." Solomon built everything according to the pattern. Second Chronicles 5:13-14

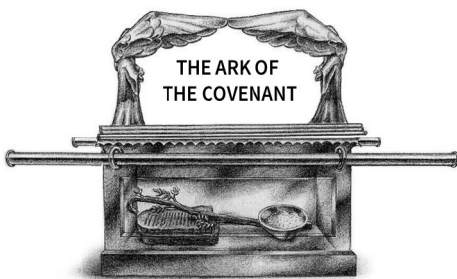
says, "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one [what a picture of unity] sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God."

"The Living Creatures," "the Cherubims," Point the Way to Christ

When **Ezekiel 10:18** says, "**Then the glory of the LORD . . . stood over the cherubims,**" it reveals there were people in this sixteenth-century Reformation who were getting back to the pattern, back to the message, back to the Word of God. **Ezekiel 10:20** reads, "**This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel** [That is what was on the throne in the Person of Christ. Thank God, they got a renewed vision!] **by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims** [getting a picture of the living ones]." **Ezekiel 10:22** says, "**And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river Chebar, their appearances and themselves.**" The "**likeness of their faces was the same**" reveals when redemption (or salvation) comes back into view, it is "**the same**" in all ages. There is just one salvation. **Verse 20** tells that "**the living creature**" and "**the cherubims**" are the same, not celestial (or angelic) beings, but a picture of the redeemed.

If you follow these cherubim through the Scriptures, you will find they are guardians and keepers of the presence of God. The first place they appear is in Genesis. When man sinned and could no longer enjoy the fellowship and presence of God (for sin cannot enjoy the presence of God), Genesis 3:24 tells us, "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims [the Hebrew word is *chayoth*, meaning 'living one'], and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." The root word of that Hebrew word *chayoth* means "brilliant appearance." God's people are living ones, and that life does something to your appearance. It brightens your countenance.

Many people misconstrue Genesis 3:24. It does not say the cherubim had the sword in their hand. It says, "He placed . . . a flaming sword which turned every way." Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword." Many people are under the common impression that "the cherubim" and "the sword" were there to keep man out. But in reality, they were placed there to show man the ultimate way back into fellowship with God. The "flaming sword . . . turned every way." Thank God, it is for whosoever will; no one is excluded. Salvation is universal; it goes in all directions. "The flaming sword . . . turned every way to keep the way." According to John 14:6, Jesus is "the way." If you will pay attention to "the flaming sword" (the Word of God), and look at the living ones (the "**living creatures,**" "**the cherubims**"), they will point you to the way—Jesus Christ. That will bring you to the tree of life.



The cherubims overshadowed the mercy seat.

What is the tree of life? We read in Proverbs 3:18, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." Proverbs 3:13 tells us, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom." How does man find wisdom? We read in Proverbs 11:30, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." God was showing man the way to access life once again was through Jesus Christ. That is the message exemplified in the lives of "**the cherubims,**" the living ones.

The "cherubim" are the guardians, the keepers of

the presence of God. What were the "cherubim" guarding? Genesis 3:8 states, "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." When God told Moses how to construct the Ark of the Covenant, what was to be overshadowing the Ark? Exodus 25:17-18 reads: "And thou shalt make a mercy seat [the antitype of that is Jesus Christ] of pure gold [purity, holiness]: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims [the living ones] of gold [God's people are a pure, holy people], of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat." A cherub was at each end of the mercy seat, and it was all one, joined together. The cherubims were connected to the mercy seat, a type of the redeemed being one with Christ, and they were all made of the same pure gold, denoting the saints sharing in Christ's holiness.

Many pictures show the cherubims on their knees, but 2 Chronicles 3:13 says, "They stood on their feet." Exodus 25:20 states, "And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another." What a picture of unity! Their wings came together, and they faced one another toward the mercy seat. Exodus 25:22 reads, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims." God's people, a pure people, are those who enjoy and guard the presence of God. This is a type of the presence of God coming back into view through the lives of ones who embraced the truth available in that day. It is a beautiful picture!

Certainly, much more can be derived from this chapter, and there are other aspects, perspectives, and dimensions to the truths contained in these verses, but we have felt led to deal with the typical truths, particularly as they portray the typical scheme of the progression of this Gospel Day. We see some timeless truths and principles set forth that will be effective in any period when they are personally and collectively applied. They are: (1) a fresh vision of God in His proper position, and that is what we see portrayed in verse 1; (2) the reappearance in **verse 2** of "**the wheels**," showing that the message is in its proper position; (3) **verse 2** speaks of "**coals of fire**," portraying the need and desire of the Holy Spirit to bring enlightenment; (4) in **verse 9** there is the appearance of a "**beryl stone**," the fourth stone, representing the fourth period of this Gospel Day (AD. 1530-1730), an emerald green, which is a picture of a message of mercy, and that message of mercy is still the message for the world today; (5) in **verse 10** we see "**a wheel . . . in the midst of a wheel**"—make sure your life matches the message; (6) **verse 11** says, "**whither the head looked they followed**," representing the need to follow "**the head**," who is Christ; and (7) **verse 12** says they "**were full of eyes**," letting us know the importance of being filled with the Spirit. Another truth portrayed in this passage is the difference between the descriptions of the living creatures. **Verse 14** mentions "**the face of a cherub**," a difference from Ezekiel 1:10, which mentions "face of an ox." This reveals each of the cherubims (the redeemed) must be willing to live a sacrificial life.

Initially, in the sixteenth-century Reformation, the people did all these things, and they were successful, breaking the dark papal night. If we will do these things and embody these principles, we will see a great move of God yet today. The question we must ask is, Do our lives exemplify these principles? If they do not, we need to get ourselves in the position where they do. If they do, we need to continue to hold on and continue to exemplify these principles, knowing that God will honor these principles and do a work yet in this day in which we live.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A TYPICAL PORTRAYAL OF THE RISE OF PROTESTANTISM

Ezekiel 11:16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

Ezekiel 12:1 The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

6 In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.

7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight.

13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

15 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

Ezekiel 13:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD.

One common truth unites these portions of Ezekiel's prophetic writings. **Ezekiel 11:16** states, "I have scattered them among the countries." In **Ezekiel 12:3**, the prophet penned, "Prepare

thee stuff for removing." Then, Ezekiel 12:13-15 says: "My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon And I will scatter toward every wind And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations." In Ezekiel 13:3, we read of "foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!" The common truth that unites these texts is the thought of being "scattered." In Ezekiel's writings, the expression "scattered" is employed fifteen times, and the term "scatter" appears eleven times. Our Scripture text reveals that the scattering is a "removing" (Ezekiel 12:3) to "Babylon." The predominant truth in these passages is the thought of being "scattered," a scattering, and of people being taken by that scattering into "Babylon" (Ezekiel 12:13). This is a typical portrayal of the rise of Protestantism.

As we have viewed the typical sequence detailed in Ezekiel, we have found that there was a dark age (typically portrayed in Ezekiel, Chapter 8), a time when Israel was doing things "in the dark" (Ezekiel 8:12). That represents a type of the Dark Ages period of the Gospel Day. In Ezekiel, Chapter 9, we found a description of the burden the brethren had to bring about a reformation. Ezekiel 9:4 speaks of "men that sigh and that cry," showing a burden and taking it to prayer over the conditions of the day. This was followed by a depiction of the route to reformation that we considered in Ezekiel, Chapter 10. It makes a great distinction for us to understand that God was in the sixteenth-century Reformation.

Although our pictorial charts have exact dates (denoting various occurrences) and although those dates allude to seminal events and conditions that occurred beforehand, giving rise to those historical events, things did not occur throughout the Gospel Day as instantly as one flipping a switch. So it was with the Reformation. The ground swell and rumbles of the Reformation occurred well before the sixteenth century. Several prior reformers sowed seed God honored and that yielded fruit, culminating in the sixteenth-century Reformation. John Wycliffe (1330-1384), John Huss (1369-1415), Savonarola (1452-1498), and Zwingli (1484-1531) are just a few of the notable brethren who sighed and cried while the dark age was still the predominant condition. These were men who were burdened over the conditions and sowed the seeds of reformation.



The sword that dealt a "deadly wound" was the Word.

God used those reformers to "fight against them [those who comprised the papal beast] with the sword of my mouth" (Revelation 2:16). Revelation 1:16 tells us, "Out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword," a picture of "the word of God" (Hebrews 4:12). Initially, this was a very effective move. We read in Revelation 13:3 that the papal beast received a "deadly wound." Revelation 13:14 says it was a "wound by a sword." In Revelation 2:16, Christ prophesied that if they did not repent, "I . . . will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." They did not repent; they have never repented. To this day, that system (Catholicism) does not teach repentance. So, Christ turned loose "the fateful lightning of *his* terrible swift sword," and a "deadly wound" was laid to that papal beast. Thus, the dark papal night was forever ended.

Revelation 13:3 reads, "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed." Revelation 8:10 tells us what caused the "deadly wound" to be "healed," stating, "The third angel sounded, [The third angel is in the fourth period of the Gospel Day (A.D. 1530-1730) because no public message was sounded in that dark age (A.D. 530-1530). The saints were underground in the seclusion of the catacombs and caves, or the "wilderness"; Revelation 12:6.] and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp." Stars represent a ministry (Revelation 1:16, 20). We see what type of ministry this was at the commencement of that sixteenth-century Reformation. It was "a great star." Why? For the same reason Matthew 4:16 (describing Jesus coming on the scene after the 434 years of darkness between

Malachi and John the Baptizer) says, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light." It was a "great light" because there had been a great darkness. Likewise, the star in this sixteenth-century Reformation was a "great star" because there had been a great darkness. What was the message? It was "burning as it were a lamp." Isaiah 62:1 tells us that "salvation thereof [is] as a lamp that burneth." The message of salvation was restored. It came back into public view. Thank God, a great Reformation commenced, but the sad truth of Revelation 8:10, as well as in our text, is that the glory of that Reformation, the divinity of that operation, was short-lived. "There fell a great star [the ministry] from heaven."

"There Fell a Great Star From Heaven"

Keep in mind, we are dealing in symbolism. So many people are prone to take Revelation literally. Literal stars do not fall. I realize there is an expression, "I saw a falling star," but stars do not fall. Isaiah 40:26 reads, "Behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names [Psalm 147:4 tells us, 'He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.'] by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." The Scripture indicates not one natural star has ever failed. These stars in Revelation are not literal but are symbolic of a ministry (Revelation 8:10; 9:1).

Revelation 9:1 states, "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth." This is not God's Heaven. There are three heavens mentioned in the Scriptures. We read in Genesis 1:7-8: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven." The first heaven mentioned in the Scriptures is the firmamental, or the aerial, heavens. This is the place where the sun, the moon, and the stars reside. It is referred to as "heaven." The wise man penned in Ecclesiastes 5:2, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven." That is the celestial Heaven in which God dwells. When Jesus gave the model for prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, He said, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9).

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:1-2: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven." That verse lets us know there must be three. The first two are the firmamental heaven and the celestial Heaven. What is this "third heaven"? Verse 1 tells us it is a position where you "come to visions and revelations of the Lord." It is an ecclesiastical heaven, a spiritual position. It is in this "third heaven" that the Revelation takes place. Ephesians 2:6 terms it a little differently, saying, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That third heaven is a spiritual position. When the Revelation speaks of heaven, it is speaking of this exalted spiritual position.

When these ministries fell, Revelation 9:1 tells us they fell "unto the earth." To understand what "the earth" represents, Ecclesiastes 12:7, speaking of man, states, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was." The "earth" is the part of man that came out of the dust of the earth, that earthen, mortal, or human part of man. We read in Jeremiah 22:29, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." The Prophet Jeremiah was not speaking of terra firma, the literal planet, but he was speaking of mankind. That is the only "earth" that has the capacity to "hear

THERE ARE THREE HEAVENS	Firmamental (Genesis 1:1, 7-8)
Celestial (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2; Matthew 6:8-9)	Ecclesiastical (2 Corinthians 12:2; Ephesians 2:6)

the word of the LORD." Second Corinthians 4:7 says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." What is this describing? Second Corinthians 5:1 and 4 tell us: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle . . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." The "earthly . . . tabernacle" is the mortal portion of man. Thus, the "earth" then represents the mortal portion of man.

When these stars (this ministry) fell from the exalted spiritual position that God had called them to and placed them in, they went down, and when they went down, something else came up. Revelation 13:11 tells us "another beast [came] up out of the earth." This "beast" came out of the earthen, human, mortal minds of these fallen ministers. They developed this religious system. The revelator denoted it as a "beast." Again, the word "beast" is symbolic. Look at how it is used in the Scriptures. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus . . ." One rendering offers it as, "Wild beasts, those men of Ephesus." Paul was referring to the men as "beasts." These "beasts" were men who were operating on an animal, brute beast, carnal, and earthly level, a level where they were operating with a mortal mind. We read in 2 Peter 2:1 and 10: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies . . . But chiefly [Peter described the nature of these prophets and teachers] them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [the *New Analytical Lexicon* says 'constituted authority']. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."

Second Peter, Chapter 2, speaks of "brute beasts" (verse 12), who are "false prophets," "false teachers" (verse 1), those who "chiefly . . . walk after the flesh," who "despise" God's constituted authority (verse 10), and who want to replace and usurp it with their man-made authorities. Concerning beasts, Jude 4 tells us, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [or loose living], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude 10 reads, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts." These beasts are men. There is an old expression, "He is a beast." Is that speaking literally? No, it is referring to someone's nature, characteristics, or attributes. That is the same way the Revelation employs it.

The beasts on the pictorial Revelation charts represent religious systems that arose out of the minds of men. (Keep in mind, John was receiving a "vision"; Revelation 9:17. The language and nature of the language of visions are symbolic; Revelation 1:1.) Revelation 13:11-14 states: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth [a religious system that is beastly in its character, attributes, and nature has come up out of the minds of these fallen men]; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him [he operated with the same type of authority and power that papalism did], and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship [letting us know this beast is a system of 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, And deceiveth them [This is a religious system. It is a system of worship, but it is a false system because true religion does not deceive. This false religious system is full of deceit and deception, and it came out of the minds of fallen men.] that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast."

The devil or the devil's agents cannot perform miracles. When Revelation 13:14 says, "And he [speaking of the beast] doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven," we see this beast trying to represent itself as a *true* prophet. (The true prophet, Elijah, made fire come down from heaven; 1 Kings, Chapter 18.) However, Revelation 16:13 denotes this beast

as "the *false* prophet." How does he try to pass himself off as a true prophet? These "great wonders" are done "in the sight of men" who had no knowledge of the truth; thus, it appeared to be a wonder. True miracles, true wonders, do not deceive. These are works of deception to "them that dwell on the earth" (people who are in those sectarian organizations).

To people without a knowledge of the truth, these "wonders" appear to be miraculous, but they are a work of deception. We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." The *Amplified Bible* reads, "With all sorts of pretended miracles and signs and delusive marvels, all of them lying wonders." False religion engages in pretended miracles, delusive marvels, lying wonders. This is a picture of a false religious system. Revelation 13:14 says, "They should make an image to the beast." In the sixteenth-century Reformation, the very thing they started out protesting against (a man-made organization, with man as the head, dogmas, creeds, and a religious hierarchy), they turned around and built a system (an image) just like it. That religious system portrayed by this beast with the two horns is the religious system of Protestantism. Horns symbolize kingdoms (Daniel 8:20). There were two kingdoms (or predominant political powers) that predominantly supported Protestantism and gave it its political power and strength: Germany and England.

Protestantism Is Only Given One Descriptive Feature

Protestantism is a system of "worship" (Revelation 13:12) that "deceiveth" (Revelation 13:14). Thus, it must be a false religious system. Again, Revelation 13:11 states, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth [this gives its origin: it came up out of the earth, out of the minds of men]; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." These "horns" have a dual representation. When John received a vision of the Lamb in the morning time on Mount Zion, it had "seven horns" (Revelation 5:6). The horn represents the power of salvation (Luke 1:69). Though there was much falsity during the two periods that comprised this Protestant era, there was at least enough truth being heralded to where a man could gain salvation.

On the pictorial chart, many have made this beast look like a lamb, but in reality, the only lamb-like features were the horns. Why was no other description given of this beast? Again, much of the imagery in the New Testament is taken from the Old Testament. In old Israel, the false religious worship that moved in under King Ahab and Queen Jezebel was Baal worship, and Baal was an image ("the image of Baal"; 2 Kings 10:27). Concerning Baal, both *Easton's Bible Dictionary* and *Parson's Bible Dictionary* say, "Each locality had its special Baal, and the various local Baals were summed up under the name of Baalim." There are several places in the Scripture where Baal is found in the plural sense of Baalim.

- Judges 2:11 "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim."
- Judges 10:10 "And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim."
- 1 Kings 18:18 "And he answered [this is Elijah answering Ahab], I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim."
- 1 Kings 16:30-31 "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD . . . And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him [Ahab; verse 30] to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him [Ahab worshiped and served Baal, but the term *Baalim* is a plural term for the various Baals]."
- Jeremiah 2:23 "How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim?"

- Hosea 2:17 "For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth."

The Scriptures speak of Baal worship in the plurality of Baalim because there were many different Baals, and as a composite, they comprised what was termed "Baalim." Each locality had its own special Baal. It was all Baal worship, but there were many different Baals. So, it is with Protestantism, which is the system (the beast that came up), but it lacks description in Revelation 13:11 because it has taken on many different manifestations through various denominations and sects. God was in the sixteenth-century Reformation, but He never ordained the rise of the system of Protestantism. It is a system motivated by the "spirits of devils." Revelation 16:13-14 says: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism], and out of the mouth of the beast [papalism], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Protestantism]." They are *all* "spirits of devils." Every one of these systems was produced by devilish spirits that got hold of men who fell away from the truth they had in their day.



The Roman Pantheon – Worship the God of Your Choice

Revelation 13:11 tells us this Protestant beast "spake as a dragon." When the pagan Roman Empire was in power, there was a building in Rome called the *Pantheon*. Within were all the images of the various national gods. When people came to Rome to conduct their commerce, they could go into the *Pantheon*, find the god of their choice, burn their incense, give their obeisance, worship that god, then return to their commerce. How does Protestantism speak like a dragon? They say, "Choose the church of your choice." For there to be a choice, there has to be more than one; but Colossians 1:18 says there is only one body, one church. According to *Christianity Today*, in 2001, there were 33,830 different denominations, all supposedly Christian. The magazine stated, "As of now, that number is undoubtedly higher," and indeed they have proliferated. In February 2021, *The Center for the Study of Global Christianity* reported there are a staggering 45,000 denominations! That is why a nondescript image is used to describe the Protestant beast. It takes on as many different manifestations as there are sectarian organizations.

God was never in the rise of Protestantism. We read in Galatians 5:19-20: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies ['sects'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*]." Sectism is as much a work of the flesh as any of the other things that are enumerated in these verses in Galatians. God never ordained sectism. He never ordained these multiplied thousands of supposed Christian churches. That is a deception. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church [singular; just one]." That is why you cannot "go to the church of your choice." Biblically, there is no choice.

Jesus' blood was shed as a purchase price. He shed it one time; He could only purchase *one* thing with that purchase price. Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." He shed his blood one time, and it purchased just *one* thing: the Church of God. All these other things came out of the minds of men. The Baptist church goes back too far. They tout they came from John the Baptist, but John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). John never wanted to establish a church or an organization. He said, "He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (John 1:27). John, speaking of Jesus, said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

These organizations came out of the minds of men. Every sectarian organization is born of rebellion and is a work of the flesh. That might seem like a strong statement, but it is the Bible truth. Sectism is a work of the flesh. George P. Fisher wrote in *History of the Christian Church*,

page 313: "The cause of reform was hindered not so much by the number of its enemies as by the discord of its friends." The Protestant party was divided into the Calvinists, the Lutherans, and the Unitarians. On page 310, Dr. Fisher related an account concerning the division between Luther and Zwingli of Switzerland, writing: "The efforts of the disinterested men to heal the schism which threatened to inflict great disasters on the Protestant cause proved unavailing. The leaders of both parties met at Marburg in October 1529, and they were not able either at their private conference or at the public assembly to come to an agreement. Zwingli, with tears in his eyes, offered a hand of fraternal friendship to Luther, but this Saxon reformer refused to take it since he could not join in Christian fellowship." This leads us right back to our text.

God's People Were Scattered "Among the Nations"

Ezekiel 11:16 says, **"I have scattered them among the countries."** **Ezekiel 12:15** reads, **"I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries."** Ezekiel 34:6 states, "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth." This is exactly what happened. The words "scattered upon all the face of the earth" typify the Protestant beast that came up out of the earth. Jeremiah 30:11 tells us, "For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee." The "nations" Jeremiah spoke of in these verses are typical of denominations. A nation has its own system of government, its own boundaries, its own culture, and its own citizens. Denominationalism has its own government, boundaries, cultures, customs, commands, and citizens.

Ezekiel 12:13 says, **"My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon."** The Hebrew word here is *Babel*, first introduced in Genesis 11:9, which states, "Therefore is the name of it called Babel." The *Greek-English Septuagint* (the *Septuagint* was in use at the First Advent of Christ) does not say "Babel," but it says "*Confusion*." That is exactly what **"Babylon"** is: religious confusion. Protestantism is confusion. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church [singular]." Jesus prayed in the garden in John 17:22, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." Colossians 1:18 reads, "And he is the head of the body [singular]." Ephesians 4:4 tells us, "There is one body," and Colossians 1:18 says that the body is "the church." Again, there are reported to be 45,000 denominations. How can that be when Jesus prayed for *one*, when Jesus purchased *one*, and when the Bible says there is *one*?

When **Ezekiel 12:15** speaks of **"scatter them among the nations,"** what caused and causes this occurrence? According to Galatians 5:19, it is part of "the works of the flesh." Let us look deeper. **Ezekiel 12:2** says, **"Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not:** [Why do they not see and hear?] **for they are a rebellious house."** If people do not want **"to see,"** they will not, and if they do not want **"to hear,"** they will not. What a sad condition, and it works in religion even today. People are **"rebellious."** You can tell them clearly what the Scripture teaches, and you get responses such as, "Well, our church does not teach that; we do not believe that." To not believe the Bible constitutes rebellion. This attitude and spirit gave rise to this Protestant beast, the image of papalism. Every one of these opposing forces is born of rebellion, and they still are yet today!

Seven times in Revelation (once for every period of time that comprises the Gospel Day) this admonition is recorded: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." This was said twice

People do not "see" because they have closed their eyes against the light.



in the two segments that comprise the Protestant era (A.D. 1530-1730 and A.D. 1730-1880). Christ told them the same thing: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:29; 3:6). Jesus told us why they did not "**see**" in John 12:35, saying, "Yet a little while is the light with you." Jesus was not talking about something physical, such as a light bulb or the literal sun and moon.

What is "light" in the spiritual sense? Psalm 119:130 tells us, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." This is a parallelism, where truth is stated in one fashion and then restated in another to clarify the first statement. It is a couplet. Light is understanding. Jesus continued in John 12:35, saying, "Walk while ye have the light, [He was saying: 'I have given you understanding. Walk in the understanding you have been provided.'] lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." The reason people do not "**see**" is that they have closed their eyes against the light. When they failed to walk in the understanding that was given to them, their minds and eyes became blinded.

We read in Ephesians 4:17, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, [How?] in the vanity of their mind." This beast of Revelation 13:11 is the Protestant system of religion that is comprised of many religious denominations which arose from the minds of men, earthen minds. Ephesians 4:18-19 tells us why it came up out of the minds of men: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." When people have eyes that do not "**see**," their understanding is "darkened," and they have "blindness" in their hearts because they refused to walk in the light when they had the light. The system of Protestantism arose because men failed to continue to "walk in the light."

We are taught in 1 John 1:7 to "walk in the light, as he is in the light." The word "walk" indicates a progression, advancement, or movement. We cannot stand still; we cannot stagnate. Light is progressive, and as it advances, we must advance. We must progress as light progresses. The people in the sixteenth-century Reformation failed to do that, and we can read what it produced in **Ezekiel 12:14**, which tells us, "**And I will scatter toward every wind . . .**" **Ezekiel 12:14** says that they that remain shall be scattered "**toward every wind.**" God is going to allow this scattering to the winds to take place. What does that mean? Ephesians 4:14 says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, [That is what the winds are. Whose doctrine?] by the sleight of men, [There are those 'lying wonders.' There are those 'delusive marvels,' 'pretended miracles.' It is just 'sleight of men.'] and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

The winds of doctrine deceive. They teach people: "Once you are saved, you are always saved. Once you have been born, you cannot be unborn. You do not have to worry about falling from grace." That is a deception. That is a lie. The Scriptures make it expressly clear in Galatians 5:4, stating, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Not only can you do it, but some had done it. Jesus told the Ephesian congregation in Revelation 2:5, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent." Jesus was not only saying that you could fall, but that the people in both the Ephesian congregation and the period of the Gospel Day it represented certainly had.

Other winds of doctrines (lies) are: "You sin, I sin, we all sin. Nobody can live above sin. Everyone sins more or less every day. Everybody sins daily in word, thought, or deed." What does the Bible say? First John 3:8-9 tells us: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil [Jesus came to destroy the power of sin]. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." False religion is full of deceptions, saying, "Well, you are just a Chris-

tian sinner." That is like saying someone is a truthful liar or an honest thief. They are incompatible. These are some deceptions, some winds of doctrines that God's people, through Protestantism, were scattered to and subjected to during the era of Protestantism.

Ezekiel 12:6-7 tells us what it produced, stating: "**In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight** [the condition of this Protestant era was 'twilight,' a mixture of light and darkness, a time of truth and error] . . . **And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight.**" We read in Ezekiel 12:12, "And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth." It was a day of mixture. Ezekiel 34:12 states, "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." This is talking about what occurs in this evening time, but I want us to get a point. On a cloudy day, one minute the sun is shining, and the next minute the clouds have covered the sun. It goes from light to darkness, darkness to light, light to darkness. A cloudy day is a mixture of light and darkness. The spiritual cloudy day was a mixture of light and darkness. They had some truth, they had the horn of salvation, the lamp that burneth (a message concerning salvation), but they also had a lot of darkness brought over from paganism and papalism.

Joel 2:2 says, "A day of darkness [speaking prophetically of the Dark Ages] and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness . . ." Here is this mixture: "clouds" and "darkness," a dark and cloudy day. Zechariah 14:6 reads, "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of this Gospel Day], that the light shall not be clear, nor dark." That is exactly the way it was. It was not "clear, nor dark." It was a "**twilight**" (**Ezekiel 11:6**), condition. What is a "**twilight**" condition conducive for? Proverbs 7:9-12 says: "In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner)."

A Period of Spiritual Captivity

In the Revelation, false religion is represented as a harlot. Revelation 17:5 tells us, "And upon her forehead [speaking of 'the great whore'; verse 1] was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." Roman Catholicism was the mother of many harlot religious bodies that would not take the Husband (the Head, Christ) and would not take the vows to commit to obey. They are rebellious, and they became "ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." These harlot bodies came up out of the earth, making an image to their mother, an image of Roman Catholicism.

Proverbs 7:12 says that she "lieth in wait at every corner." If you go through any city, on almost every street corner, you will find a sectarian church building—a false religious system that is there to seduce, entice, and deceive. We read in Proverbs 7:25-27: "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." That is what false religion does. Every one of these systems—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—was produced by "spirits of devils" (Revelation 16:13-14).

This spiritual condition caused many in the Protestant era to "remove and go into captivity" (Ezekiel 12:11). This spiritual condition caused people, even God's people (because this was all that was available in that era), to go into a period of captivity. Let us look at 2 Peter 2:14-19. Although this has a more local reference in the first century, as each of the Epistles did, it was

penned and preserved throughout the annals of time because, as Ecclesiastes 1:9 tells us, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be . . . there is no new thing under the sun." In the same way the enemy worked in the first century, he works in the twenty-first century. Second Peter 2:14-19 reads: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty [that is what false religion promises people], they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."



False religion brings people into a bondage to that false teaching.

The *Amplified Bible* renders verse 14 as "eyes full of harlotry." Peter was talking about those who were overcome with a spirit that was producing spiritual harlotry. They were bound by corruption. Most of them lived corrupt lives. That is not to say there are not some honest hearts or some saved people down in Babylon, but we are talking about the system, and the vast majority of those who lead that system are corrupt. Verse 19 says "brought in bondage." False religion brings people into bondage to that false teaching. It blinds their thinking to where they think that wrong is right and error is truth (Isaiah 5:20). Their minds are bound with falsity. In reality, while they are promoting "liberty" (verse 19), they are producing bondage. Ezekiel 12:11 calls it "captivity." Ephesians 4:14 terms it as "every wind of doctrine by the

sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." These doctrines deceive, captivate men's minds, and blind them with false thinking that holds them captive.

"Scatter toward every wind" (Ezekiel 12:14) is exactly what happened. Some were scattered in the Lutheran wind, some in the Calvin wind, some in the Zwingli wind, some in the Wesley wind, and many others. Various winds of doctrine scattered people into **"nations" (verse 15)**, or denominations. What does denominationalism do? Ezekiel 36:20 states, "And when they entered unto the heathen [the Protestant beast 'spake as a dragon' (heathenism, paganism); Revelation 13:11], whither they went, they profaned my holy name." Division and sectism profaned God's name. They profane God's name yet today because they claim to represent, supposedly, the name of Christ.

We read in Isaiah 4:1, "And in that day [a prophetic expression of this Gospel Day] seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." The "name" does not take away the "reproach." Proverbs 14:34 states, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." The reproach here is sin. The seven women are a picture of false religion, one working in every period of this Christian dispensation. Every time there is a true church, the enemy will see that there is a false church. In every period, the enemy had false systems and false people he worked through.

These "seven women" will "take hold of one man." That "one man" is Christ. Although they want to be called Christians, they say, "We will eat our own bread." Jesus said in John 6:51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." What is that bread? John 6:54 tells us, "Whoso eateth my flesh . . ." and John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh." To be His, we have to partake of His Word. However, false

religion wants to eat their own bread (their own teachings, their own doctrines). Regardless of what the Bible says and regardless of what Christ taught, they want to eat their own bread and wear their own apparel.

Revelation 19:7-8 tells us the apparel God's people are to wear: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." False religion does not want to wear robes of righteousness. They want to wear their own apparel, apparel such as: sin more or less every day; speaking in an unknown tongue as the evidence of the Holy Ghost; church membership; infant baptism; and many others. Yet, none of those take away their reproach. In every age, there have been people used by the enemy to deceive and work against God's people and the cause of God.

It is important to understand that the system of Protestantism was never God's will. Protestantism is no more a Christian system than papalism. We must establish and reestablish that because too many people have a softness and sympathy for Protestantism. It is deceitful and deceptive because it has some Lamb-like features. It has some truths that they tout, and that makes it much more deceptive, dangerous, deadly, and damnable.

Catholicism and Protestantism were both produced by men under the domination of the spirits of devils. Again, Revelation 16:13-14 reads: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs [Frogs are slippery, slimy, and hard to pen down. False preachers are the same way. Often, they have an answer for everything. They are just as hard to pen down as a frog.] come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism], and out of the mouth of the beast [papalism], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Protestantism]. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles [it is the elusive marvels, pretended miracles in the sight of people who do not have a knowledge of truth; it is sleight of men, cunning, craftiness], which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle." Today, false religion is working to gather people against the truth. If you talk to people in a community, they will say you can worship anywhere except for the Church of God. That spirit is working to gather people away from where the truth is. That is the devilish spirit that motivated Protestantism in the Protestant era, and it still motivates the same system today.

Ezekiel 12:6 says, "**In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders** [you have to be your own burden bearer], **and carry it forth in the twilight** [a cloudy condition, a mixture]: **thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground.**" Ezekiel 12:12 reads, "And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes." This is depicting a sad condition, revealing that in "**Babylon**" (**verse 13**) is spiritual confusion. They cannot see the position they are standing in. They cannot see the ground. They cannot see their feet. Their faces and their eyes are covered. They are in self-imposed darkness by virtue of being in that system. They cannot see the position they are in or where they are headed. Where the true Word of God is being sounded forth, you can see those things.

We read in Psalm 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." When you get where the Word is preached in its fullness, it will show you where you are standing. It will show you the position you are in. The Word will not only show you the position you are in, it will show you the way you need to go. They do not do that in "**Babylon**." They will preach a good message for a while, but at the end, they will say, "Of course, nobody can live this," and you cannot see the ground. You cannot see your feet. You cannot see where you are standing. You cannot see how to walk. That was the condition of the cloudy day. Protestantism is a system of darkness and deception.

Last, notice in our text what the Lord promises. Remember, we are dealing typically with this

Protestant era, the two segments comprised of the Lutheran era (A.D. 1530-1730) and the Wesley era (A.D. 1730-1880). **Ezekiel 11:16** tells us, "**Although I have scattered them . . . yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries.**" The Hebrew word for "**sanctuary**" is *miqdash*, and it means "a consecrated thing or place, an asylum." God made provisions for the saints in the Dark Ages: when the woman fled into the wilderness, she had "a place prepared of God" (Revelation 12:6), a place where the "two witnesses" (the Word and the Spirit; Revelation 11:3) would feed her. We read in Revelation 12:6 and 14 that they were fed, or "nourished."

Just as God made provision for the people in the Dark Ages, He made provision for the honest-hearted people in the dark and cloudy day. He said, "**Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary** [an asylum]." Though they were in a dark and cloudy day, God was still true to His people. He made provision for the people. Revelation 6:9 tells us, "And when he had opened the fifth seal [the second segment of the Protestant era], I saw under the altar [Jesus Christ; Hebrews 13:8, 10] the souls of them." The word "souls" not only means the eternal portion of a man, but many times it is used symbolically to denote the totality of a man. Genesis 12:5 states, "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the *souls* that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan." You do not take "souls" anywhere. This is talking about people. (The word "souls"—mentioned in Genesis 46:15, 18, 22, 25, 26, and 27—is not talking about the eternal portion of man but about people.)

The souls under the altar were a people in submission to Christ during this Protestant era, people who were grieved over the spiritual conditions. They cried, "Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10). They were grieved by the earthen, man-made system that built sectarian walls and divided God's people. They were godly people. "White robes were given unto every one of them" (verse 11). They were true to God, and God was true to them in this period. The Lord always makes provision for His people. He has in every age, and He did in the Protestant age as well. I trust we can see the typical portrayal in our text of the rise of Protestantism. Again, the seeds of this Reformation were sown for many years, but on June 25, 1530, the Augsburg Confession was adopted at the Diet of Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany. These were, in essence, the articles of faith of the first Protestant sect. It was a seminal event, forever breaking the exclusive rule of papal Rome as the only organized, supposedly Christian religious system. Thus, this date is a marking point in time.

We must recognize the spirit that gave rise to this system is still working today. It is not only working in the system it developed, but Revelation 16:13 says these spirits have "come out." They are no longer working solely in that system, but they want to work on us, as the Church of God. We must ask ourselves: Do I have "**eyes to see**"? Am I walking in everything I "**see**"? Do I have "**ears to hear**" (**Ezekiel 12:2**)? Am I attuned to what the Spirit wants to say to me? Failure in these areas gave rise to this religious system of Protestantism, and it will produce a false experience, a false congregation, and false fellowships even yet today. We must each address these questions: How is my experience? Do I have "**eyes to see**" and do I walk in what I "**see**"? Do I have "**ears to hear**" and listen to what I am told? If things are not as they ought to be, you need to pray. The good news is, thank God, they can be. God made provisions even in the Dark Ages of Catholicism and the dark and cloudy day of Protestantism. He made provision in every period for honest people. Thank God, He has made provision yet today for His people.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A TYPICAL PORTRAYAL OF THE OPERATION OF SECTARIAN RELIGION

- Ezekiel 13:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*
2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;
3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!
4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.
5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.
6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word
7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?
8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD.
9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.
10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:
11 Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.
12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?
13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.
14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.
15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;
16 To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD.
17 Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,
18 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?

19 And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

A host of truths are incorporated in this lengthy portion of Ezekiel's prophetic writings. We could not be exhaustive in our consideration of these verses, but we want to consider the prevailing tenor of the text as we continue to follow the typical scheme concerning the progression of the Gospel Day. **Verses 2-3** of our text establish what constitutes a false prophet. The Revelator styled Protestantism, or sectarian religion, as a "false prophet." Revelation 16:13 reads, "And I saw three unclean spirits [behind all of false religion are anti-holiness spirits working to produce a people devoid of Biblical holiness] like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism], and out of the mouth of the beast [papalism], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Protestantism]." The term "false prophet" is employed other times in the Revelation as well (Revelation 19:20; 20:10). This system of Protestantism is very deceptive. This is why it is spoken of as a "false prophet." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned the people about false prophets and false religion.

False religion is one of the greatest plagues foisted upon mankind. In His earthly ministry, Christ's strongest denunciation was toward those who were engaged in false religious practices. He did not put nearly as many judgments on the lost sinner because they knew their spiritual state. Jesus put judgment on false religion, on those who were deceived and who were deceiving others concerning their spiritual state. Matthew 7:15 says, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." At first, it is not always immediately clear you are dealing with a false prophet. False prophets practice deceit. Otherwise, they would not appear in sheep's clothing. The very point of the sheep's clothing is to foster deception. False prophets do not appear as "wolves" because then they would not be able to devour the prey. Thus, they disguise themselves as something other than what they are. Their intent and purpose have not changed, but they cloak, or cover, it. They put on a religious veneer, thus working through deception. Jesus likened them as to having "sheep's clothing."

We are introduced to the second beast of Revelation in Revelation 13:11, which reads, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth [out of the minds of men]; and he had two horns like a lamb [a work of deceit]." They have some lamb-like features because this is a deceitful system. Revelation 13:14 tells us, "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth." True religion does not deceive. When John saw this beast, he said in Revelation 13:11, "And I beheld [John was receiving a 'vision' (Revelation 9:17), and the language of visions is found in Revelation 1:1, which tells us 'he . . . signified' (defined as 'revealed by signs' or 'symbols'). This is dealing with symbolic expressions.] another beast coming up out of the earth [a religious system developed by men]." The word "earth" represents man (2 Corinthians 4:7; 5:1, 4; Ecclesiastes 12:7). This beast came "up out of the earth" (out of the minds of men); it is a system of men.

Jude 4 states, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude 10 says, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts." These men operate on a brute, natural, carnal, unregenerate level. Revelation 13:12 tells us this beast (of verse 11) is made up of those "which dwell therein to worship." This beast is a system of "worship." Verse 14 tells us what type of worship: it "deceiveth"—it is false religion. This system is very deceptive and deceitful.

Second Corinthians 11:13-15 tells us: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers,

transforming themselves [God did not transform them] into the apostles of Christ. 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." It is a work of deceit. They work through deception. Our text reveals what constitutes a false prophet, and it is needful to understand a man is not a false prophet just because he teaches something that is not correct. We are all human creatures, and we do not have infinite understanding as God does. At some point, we have all misunderstood some aspect of truth. A man is not a false prophet just because he teaches something that is not correct.

Ezekiel 13:2-3 states: "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!" The *Amplified Bible* renders **verse 2** as "out of their own mind and heart." Other renderings say "out of their own minds" and "out of their own heads." Even that alone does not constitute a false prophet. It is the combination with what **verse 3** teaches: **"that follow their own spirit."** What makes a man a false prophet is not only wrong teaching but having a wrong spirit behind the wrong teaching. Teaching certainly is a vital part, but a man is not a false prophet just because he teaches something that is not correct. When one is teaching something that is incorrect and is being prompted by a wrong spirit, that is what constitutes a false prophet.

"The LORD Weigheth the Spirits"

Verse 2 talks about **"out of their own hearts,"** and **verse 3** says **"their own spirit."** The word for **"hearts"** is the Hebrew word *leb*, and it speaks of the thoughts and intellect of man. The word for **"spirit"** is *ruwach*, and it is used 232 times in the Old Testament, speaking of the type of spirit a man has. This same word is used in Proverbs 16:2, which reads, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits." I repeat, it is not just a wrong teaching that comes out of the mind that makes a man false, but the spirit back of it, producing it. Look at Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:3, which says, "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." How does God weigh the actions? Again, Proverbs 16:2 says, "The LORD weigheth the *spirits*."

Many times, we may have a perfectly good motive and try to accomplish a certain action, and it may not turn out the way we intended. When God looks at the actions, He weighs the spirit behind the actions. He looks at what was promoting it, what was causing that action and what the intent was. There is a spirit working behind false doctrine and this false religious system of Protestantism. We read in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith [singular, there is only 'one faith'; Ephesians 4:5], giving heed to seducing spirits, and [then, out of those spirits comes] doctrines of devils." When people "depart from the faith," those same "spirits" give rise to "doctrines" that are devilish and counter to the faith or the truth. We need to understand what makes a system and a prophet false are not the *teaching* alone but the *spirit* behind the teaching.

Speaking of the spirits behind paganism, papalism, and Protestantism, Revelation 16:14 states: "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." The "spirits of devils" gave rise to every one of these religious systems: paganism, papalism, and Protestantism. Every one of those devilish systems is supported by "spirits of devils." Always keep

in mind, we are dealing with systems, not individuals. The enemy may bring some good person to your mind, but we are not dealing with people. Ephesians 6:12 says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . spiritual wickedness [the Greek says 'spirits']." We are dealing with spirits that promote systems contrary to God's Word. They are deceiving the masses, working contrary to people's spiritual welfare. When one is under the domination of a spirit of the devil, that is when they truly are a false prophet. When under that spirit, their teaching will become wrong as well.

First John 4:1 reads, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits." You cannot try a spirit with a spirit; you try a spirit by putting the Word on it. If it is God's Spirit, the Word and the Spirit will agree (1 John 5:8). The Spirit will never lead you contrary to the Word, and the Word will never lead you contrary to the Spirit. Any spirit that leads contrary to the sound teachings of God's eternal Word is not the right spirit. Again, 1 John 4:1 reads, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Notice it starts with "spirits," but they picked up bodies along the way: "many false prophets." Spirits work through people; they work through false prophets.

Our text is a portrayal of what **verse 3** calls "**foolish prophets.**" The enemy causes people to say, "You should not preach against other people." However, **Ezekiel 13:1-2** states: "**And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets.**" That was a Biblical command. That was divine direction. The man of God needs to sound out an alarm, a warning against those who are false and those who are foolish. It is very needful to understand the operation of sectarian religion, what promotes it, and what produced it.

Notice how the false "**prophets**" are described in **Ezekiel 13:3**. It states, "**Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!**" We found in a prior study, "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not" (Ezekiel 12:2). False religion is born of rebellion. Because it is a work of the flesh, they "**have seen nothing.**" Because of their spiritual condition, they have no spiritual insight. Jude 19 describes them as "they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." All this terrible separation, division, and multiplicity of sectarian organizations in the Protestant era was caused by those who were "sensual," following human senses, human dictates, and the thoughts of their own minds.

They had "not the Spirit" because they had come under a seducing spirit. Ephesians 1:18 talks about "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Verse 17 says that it is by "the spirit." However, when one does not have the Spirit, they will not receive understanding. Truth is revealed by the Spirit. If you receive any truth, if your eyes are enlightened, it is going to take the Spirit of God within you to enlighten your understanding. Revelation 1:10 tells us John "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." What happened? Revelation 1:12 reads: "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw." John's eyes were opened when he was "in the Spirit." We read in Revelation 17:3, "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw." John was able to see when the Spirit carried him, and that vision was concerning Babylon. It still takes the Spirit to give you a clear vision of Babylon today. Sadly, many people who profess to know the truth and profess to be Church of God people do not have a clear vision of Babylon. That can be very harmful, yea, even deadly! It requires the Spirit of God to take what the angel brings and enlighten the understanding.

If you ever get a vision of the church, it is going to take the Holy Spirit. Revelation 21:10 tells us, "He carried me away in the spirit . . . and shewed me that great city." An individual cannot see until they are born again. Jesus said in John 3:3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Many advocates and teachers of false

religion are talking about a kingdom to come, a millennial reign, and a golden time on the earth. They cannot see the kingdom. Unless you are born again, you cannot truly see, and the majority of sectarian ministers do not have a born-again experience. We know this to be true because 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." He walks "in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The power of sin is destroyed. God saves His people "from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Yet, the majority of religion today still teaches man must *continue* in his sins. Paul said in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." Yet, multiplied millions are supposedly continuing in their sins and thinking they are saved. They are under a deception. That is why the truth needs to be heralded. If the ministry in sectarian religion had a born-again experience, they would live right, and the Lord would be faithful and reveal the truth to them.

False Prophets Prey on People

Ezekiel 13:3 tells us they "**have seen nothing**" because they are operating in "**their own spirit.**" Isaiah, speaking about a false ministry, said in Isaiah 56:9-10: "All ye beasts of the field, come to devour [these beasts of paganism, papalism, and Protestantism are out to devour the souls of man], yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind: [What good is a watchman who cannot see anything? Many of them see nothing wrong with abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, and same-sex marriage because they are 'blind.' They do not see because they are not born again. They are under another spirit.] they are all ignorant, [They are 'ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth'; 2 Timothy 3:7. They are highly educated, credentialed, and studied, yet ignorant. What a sad commentary.] they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; [What good is a watch dog that cannot bark? The whole point of having a watch dog is to guard. A person who is dumb cannot speak. That is exactly how false prophets are. They have no message, no insight, and they sound forth no warnings.] sleeping [not spiritually awake], lying down, loving to slumber."

Our text not only defines what constitutes a false prophet, but it also reveals the character and operation of what **verse 3** designates as "**the foolish prophets.**" **Ezekiel 13:4** tells us, "**O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.**" A natural fox is always hungry. Its desires are satisfied by cunning and craftiness. Jesus used the expression of a fox in Luke 13:31-32. It reads: "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox." Herod was not a literal fox. Jesus was talking symbolically, denoting the cunning, crafty nature of a political leader.

Foxes live by devouring things. We read in Song of Solomon 2:15, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." Foxes take the life of the vines by using their sharp claws to shear the tendrils of the vine to get the grapes to drop to where they can reach them. Thus, they kill the vine. These foxes are deadly. They devour by living off of others. We read in Psalm 63:10, "They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes." When ones fell by the sword, the foxes would come and devour the carcasses. They live by devouring things. They live off of others. That is exactly what a false ministry does. They live off of others.

Psalm 63:10 in the *Amplified Bible* says, "They shall be a prey." False prophets prey on people. The thought of "**foxes**" (**verse 4**) reveals at least two truths. First, they live by devouring others. **Ezekiel 13:18** reads, "**And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls!**"

Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?"

Verse 19 says "to slay the souls." We need to understand, false religion is deadly! Often, people can clearly see the evils and falsity of papalism, but there is too much sympathy for Protestantism. Often, people comment, "They are almost like the Church of God." No! The Church of God is the "only one of her mother" (Song of Solomon 6:9). She is unique. Jesus said, "I will build my church [singular]" (Matthew 16:18). There is nothing else like it, nothing else of divine origin, divine conception, and divine operation, but the Church of God.

False religion is deceitful and deadly. Jeremiah 5:26 reads, "For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men." False religion has massive campaigns, tent rallies, and mega-churches, trying to "catch men." What are they after when they fill the stadiums? "Men." They have "set a trap." If you are trying to catch an animal, you use deceit. A trap requires bait, something that is attractive to whatever you are trying to catch. If you are trying to catch a mouse, you might use cheese or peanut butter. You have to disguise the trap to make it alluring. False religion is "a trap," but it is disguised. They do not want people to know they are after men's souls. So, they disguise the trap, but that does not make it any less a trap. The mouse trap is disguised to catch a mouse, but the results are the same. When he tries to get the cheese, the trap gets him. Often, the mouse does not die immediately. It will kick and squirm, trying to get loose, but it is trapped. That is what false religion does to the souls of men. Jeremiah 5:27 describes Babylon as "a cage" that is "full of birds."

Talking about Babylon, or religious confusion, Revelation 18:2 states, "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." The "cage" is Babylon. Why do they want to "catch men"? It is the same reasoning Willie Horton, the famous bank robber, gave when asked why he robbed banks: "Because that is where the money is." False religion wants to "catch men" because that is where the money is. Jeremiah 5:27-28 reads: "As a cage is full of birds ['they set a trap, they catch men'; verse 26], so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper."

I want to bring your attention to one who is very famous in the realm of religion. As of 2013, she has a ten-million-dollar corporate jet, a two-million-dollar house, another two million dollars in houses for her children, and her television ministry was expected to take in ninety-five million in the year this was calculated. Her ministry headquarters cost twenty million to build. In her private office are a conference table and chairs that cost forty-nine thousand dollars. That is just one example of many, showing how false religion has "waxen rich." Look at the televangelists and prosperity preachers. Does the Bible speak about that? Revelation 18:3 reads, "For all nations ['Babylon'; verse 2] have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication [they have to get you drunk on the wine so you lose your good judgment], and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies."

Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:1, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies [the Greek word *hairesis* is translated in other Scriptures as 'sect' or 'what sectism produced'], even denying the Lord that bought them." Jude 4 tells of "certain men [that] crept in unawares . . . denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." People misunderstand, thinking that is speaking about atheists, that they deny His existence, but that is not so. To understand what the word "denying" means, turn to Titus 1:16. It reads, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny

him." The *Amplified Bible* says they "deny and disown and renounce Him by what they do." Jude said they deny the *Lord* God and our *Lord* Jesus Christ. They do not deny His existence, but they deny His lordship over their lives. Instead of *Christ* having the lordship over their lives, *they* have the lordship.

We read in 2 Peter 2:10, "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh." Second Peter 2:1-3 states: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness . . ." Jesus warned of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing. They know the talk; they know what to say; they can be persuasive. To tell if they are truly sheep, look at their tracks. A wolf may wear sheep's clothing, but he cannot make sheep's tracks. Wolves leave wolf tracks. Look at what their message produces to gain insight as to whether it is a wolf or a sheep.

Preachers who make millions of dollars, flying around in corporate jets worth millions of dollars, are covetousness. If you have listened to them (and I do not advise you to do so), they are always asking for money! Years ago, when the PTL (Praise the Lord) club became popular, the leaders ended up in prison because of the fraud they perpetrated. Second Peter 2:3 says, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." False religion makes "merchandise" out of people. When I was just a young boy, my mother did not go to worship services very often. One day, the pastor came to visit, and I thought: "Oh, good! Maybe he can encourage Mother to go to church." When he came in, I did not hear a whole lot of encouragement about coming to the services. However, since it was the beginning of a new year, he brought my mother a new box of tithing envelopes. It was as if he was saying, "We do not care whether you come or not, just be sure to send your money."

Second Peter 2:3 in the *Amplified Bible* reads, "In their covetousness, lust, greed, they will exploit you with cunning, false arguments." Another translation says, "In their covetousness they will try to make you a source of profit." Look again at the words of Isaiah 56:10-11, which read: "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, everyone for his gain, from his quarter." **Ezekiel 13:19** reads, "**And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread?**" It is saying the same thing.

We read in 1 Timothy 6:5, "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." "Gain" is not "godliness." When some say, "God must really be blessing our ministry; the money just continues to flow," that is not a true measurement. Actually, that is no measurement at all. Rock stars and television stars get money flowing, but that is no measurement of "godliness" or of pleasing God. Ezekiel 22:24-25 reads: "Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion." First Peter 5:8 tells the "roaring lion" is "your adversary the devil."

Ezekiel 22:25-29 reads: "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravaging the prey; they have devoured souls [souls are the prey for false prophets]; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls,

to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar [just as with our text], seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully."

I trust the manner of operation taking place in the realms of false religion is becoming clear. Their teachings are wrong because their spirits are wrong. They are not godly, but they are selfish. **Ezekiel 13:6** tells us, "**They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.**" This reveals they are not godly, but selfish. **Verse 6** lets us know rather than being a true, God-called leader, one who will protect the people from the enemy, they give them false hope. It says, "**They have made others to hope.**"

We read in **Ezekiel 13:5**, "**Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.**" They are not true God-called leaders who protect the people. A godly leader fills in these "**gaps**," or breaches, in the wall, places where the enemy tries to approach. Sectarian religion does not do that. Ezekiel 22:30 states, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." What a sad condition! Rather than protect the people from the enemy, they are only interested in their profit. They desire to consume these things in their own lusts.

False Religion's Preaching Caters to the Flesh

Let us consider the second aspect of these "little foxes" (Song of Solomon 2:15). The first feature was they live by devouring others, and the second is that they operate by a deceitful message. They preach a "**hope**" (**Ezekiel 13:6**), a feel-good gospel, a prosperity gospel. Ezekiel has been taking us sequentially through the scheme of the Gospel Day, and it is needful to understand how Protestantism was produced—the spirit behind that system—and that the spirits which produced those systems in bygone days have "come out" (Revelation 16:13). They are no longer only working in that system, but they are working around the camp of the saints. In the more than fifty years, I have been in the ministry, I have seen many Church of God congregations (that once stood for these beautiful truths) turn into sectarian congregations. Just *knowing* the truth now does not make us immune from being infected with one of these spirits. We must *love* the truth, *live* the truth, and *learn* the truth. That is crucial because we can be deceived as well.

Some people quote Matthew 24:24, which reads, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if . . . possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Notice that I left out the italicized words "*it were*." These were not in the original manuscript. When words like that are italicized, it means they were not in the original manuscript; the translators inserted it. The King James says, "Insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect." That makes it sound as though it is not possible, but it is possible. If you take out the insertion, it reads: "If possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Knowing the truth does not make us immune from the powers of deception. Unless we have a *knowledge* of the truth and a *love* for the truth, we can be ripe candidates for deception. I have worshiped with many people over the years who had glorious experiences, who had a wonderful knowledge of the truth, men who could preach rings around me, yet, they died deceived. Knowledge is crucial, but there has to be a "*love of the truth*" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). We can be deceived if we do not keep our love and our experience in the position they need to be kept in. People with more power and greater abilities than any of us have gone into deception. We are not

immune. Ephesians 4:27 says to "give [no] place to the devil." He cannot *take* a place; the only place he has is what we *give* him.

False religion operates by a deceitful message. It is by "**vanity and lying divination**" (**verse 6**). One rendering says "spoken falsehood and divined a lie." **Verse 9** says "**divine lies**," or the *International Children's Bible* says "see false visions and prophesy lies." The tenor of much of the teaching in Babylon is that they have "**made others to hope**" (**verse 6**). They preach a false "**hope**." We read in Isaiah 30:10, "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Truth is not always "smooth." The words of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were not smooth. Yet, false religion works on people through a smooth, feel-good gospel. Some have said: "Oh, I love listening to him. I always leave feeling so good." If you are not right, you should not leave feeling good. That is a deception.

In the Old Testament, when the kings needed direction concerning a battle, they said, "Is not there a prophet around?" That is the way people are. They wait until they get in trouble, and then they say, "Isn't there a preacher we can talk to?" One king said: "Yeah, there is this one, but I do not like him. He never has anything good to say to me" (paraphrasing 1 Kings 22:7-8). If there is nothing good to say, God's prophet cannot say anything good. Isaiah 30:9 states, "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD." A people not wanting truth is what fostered Protestantism. They did not want to hear the truth then, and as an organization, they still do not want to hear the truth today. They want "smooth things." Paul warned Timothy of people who would "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3). What kind of ears itch? Dirty ears. They want the preachers to "prophesy . . . smooth things" (Isaiah 30:10).

Many times, speaking the truth and speaking plainly, so people can see their spiritual condition, is not "smooth things." An honest heart will not want what is "smooth," but what is right and true. I would rather God show me I am wrong here, while there is time and opportunity to correct it, than to wait until I get to the Judgment and hear, "Depart from Me." Now is the accepted time. We are in a day of preliminary judgment. God sends forth His judgments so people can see what their spiritual state is now. We are in such a day of deception that in many cases, people think, "If it is religious, it is good." Nay, nay! Religion put Jesus on the Cross, and religion crucifies Him afresh every day. Many are being deceived by false hopes. God is interested in getting help to us. He wants us to make Heaven our home, and for that to happen, at times the Gospel has to have some teeth. Isaiah 41:15 says, "Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth." The true Gospel will put a bite on things that are not right in your life. We are living in a day of a feel-good gospel, a prosperity gospel, what the Lord calls "**a vain vision**" (**verse 7**).

False religion's preaching caters to the flesh. **Verse 9** says they see "**vanity**" and "**divine lies**." The *Amplified Bible* says "empty, false, and delusive visions and who give lying prophecies." Some examples of "lying prophecies" are the teachings of the rapture, a coming kingdom, a millennium reign, the doctrines of once saved—always saved, unconditional eternal security, and that no one can live free from sin. Those "lying prophecies" cater to the flesh. Those are "**vanity**" and "**lies**." What will those carnal, fleshly, literal teachings do? **Verse 10** says, "**They have seduced my people**." People hide themselves in those lies. If you ask them, "Are you saved?" they might say something like, "Well, I got saved when I was a child, or a youth; so I am still saved today." Just because people were saved, somewhere way back, does not mean they are saved right now. Yet, they trust in that. They say: "I was baptized as a child. I joined the church. I shook the preacher's hand. I spoke in tongues." People rest in those things, but they are falsities,

"vanity," and "lies." We read in Isaiah 28:15, "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." People have made false teachings a "refuge" to hide in. You cannot hide under falsities. God sends hailstones to eliminate the refuge of lies—places people have hid themselves.

A Knowledge of the Truth Is Vital

False religion's teachings appeal to the flesh because you do not have to do anything. There are no requirements or obligations. The idea is to do the best you can, live however you want, yet you are fine. Sadly, they are not fine but under a deadly deception. These "lying prophecies" cater to the flesh. They are deceptions, and they seduce. **Ezekiel 13:10** says, "**Because, even because they have seduced my people.**" The Hebrew word for "seduced" is *taah*, and it means "to lead astray." Through their teachings and the spirit behind them, sectism leads people astray. We need to understand, the whole purpose and intent of the enemy is to damn souls. One of the most effective means to damn souls is to deceive them about their spiritual condition. Devilish spirits have propagated devilish organizations, causing people to rest in things other than sound Biblical truth or a real experience of salvation. People trust in those things, but they are deadly and damnable. They seduce; God certainly does not want people to be "**seduced.**"

God reveals His will for all mankind in 1 Timothy 2:4, which says, "Who will [God's will] have all men to be saved." Second Peter 3:9 says that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all [that is all-inclusive] should come to repentance." He not only wants "all men to be saved," but the word "and" is a conjunction, and 1 Timothy 2:4 lets us know His desire is also for people "to come unto the knowledge of the truth." What is the truth? Jesus said in John 17:17, "Thy word is truth." Why does He want people "to come to a knowledge of the truth"? Because a lack of that knowledge prevents you from being able to maintain your salvation. Hosea 4:6 records these sobering words: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

I have seen it work over the years. I have seen people in sectarian religion gain a genuine experience of salvation. There was no question in my mind; they were truly saved. Their nature, spirit, and life (for a time) changed, but they did not "come unto a knowledge of the truth." Because they did not come to a position where they could be fed the truth, it was not long until being fed the falsities of religion killed their experience. Thus, it is so crucial people not only be saved but "to come unto a knowledge of the truth" that enables them to maintain their experience. The Scriptures are so forceful against false religion because it is deceitful and deadly! This is the reason for heralding these truths—so people can gain understanding.

We are not merely dealing with the historical perspective of how things occurred through the Gospel Day. Certainly, understanding how things occurred, why they occurred, and how things are today because of what has occurred over the ages is needful, but the same spirits that gave rise to those systems in bygone days are loose today. Spirit beings are timeless, and those same spirits are working today. Unless God's people have a "knowledge of the truth," those spirits can make inroads into our lives individually and into our congregations collectively. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth makes you free from falsity. It is crucial we have a knowledge of the truth so that falsity does not make inroads in our lives, poisoning our experience and our thinking, and costing us our experience and our spiritual life.

The message of organized religion is false. Obviously, they have to have some elements of truth, or they could never deceive. Consider if someone called and said, "I am a scammer and I

am trying to get your credit card and I want your bank account information so I can rob you blind." That would not be effective. Instead, they call and say: "I am with the Social Security Administration. Would you give me your social security number?" Now, if they are from the Social Security Administration, they should have your number. Scammers work through deceit. You might get a phone call from someone saying, "Oh, you won ten million dollars; just give us your bank account information, and we will deposit it." Then, when you give them your bank account number, they clean out all your money. That is deception, and false religion works the same way. They cover it with a guise, or a veneer, working to deceive. Many times, when you get to the message false religion is advocating, it is the opposite of the truth.

Look at how the Lord styles it. Four times in four verses (**verses 10-15**), He used the expression "**untempered mortar**." This is how sectarian religion truly operates. What is the typical portrayal of this text? What are they trying to do? **Verse 10** says, "**They seduced my people**." The Hebrew words mean "lead astray." He also talked in **verses 10, 12, 14, and 15** about "**the wall**." A wall protects and insulates you from the enemy and the elements; it is a line of demarcation between what is *in* and what is *out*. That is exactly what salvation is. "**The wall**" is "salvation" (Isaiah 26:1), but notice that **Ezekiel 13:11** says, "**Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall**." Here is a supposed salvation that cannot stand. **Verse 12** says, "**The wall is fallen**." **Verse 14** tells us, "**So will I break down the wall . . . and bring it down to the ground**." This is an earthly, man-made deception that cannot stand. This "**untempered mortar**" is also mentioned in Ezekiel 22:28. The *Amplified Bible* and the *International Children's Bible* say "whitewash." One rendering offers it as, "When people have built a flimsy wall, these prophets daub it with whitewash." The word for "**untempered**" is the Hebrew word *taphel*. It means "to smear plaster or slime."

Consider, when the Tower of Babel was being built, what was it built with? What was the purpose of building this tower? Genesis 11:4 states, "And they said, Go to, let *us* build *us* a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let *us* make *us* a name." Notice the emphasis was on "us." This was not a city God built, in a way God ordained, but it was built in a way that man concocted. Genesis 11:3 reads: "And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, [Only God can make a stone, and the stone is Christ (Acts 4:10-11); but they did not want to build with Christ. They wanted man-made substitutes: 'bricks.' Babylon is not built on the Stone—the Rock, Jesus Christ, the truth.] and slime had they for mortar."

Genesis 11:9 states, "Therefore is the name of it called Babel." The *Septuagint* says "Confusion." This word rendered as "Babel" is the same Hebrew word rendered as "Babylon" throughout much of the rest of the Old Testament, revealing that spiritual Babylon is religious confusion. Babylon is trying to build names for themselves. The Biblical name—the Church of God—is not good enough for them. It has to be some other name. Babylon is not built upon the stone (Jesus Christ) but is built out of man-made bricks (human substitutes).

Whitewash Teachings Produce a Flimsy Salvation

Babylon whitewashes over sin, saying: "No one can live above sin. Do the best you can, and God understands." That is whitewash. God understands one thing—His Word—and it says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). The Bible not only says you *can* live holy, but you *must* live holy (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Consider what whitewash produces. Jesus said in Matthew 23:27: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited [whitewashed'; *Amplified Bible*] sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full

of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." There is no life, just an external profession.

What are some of the whitewash teachings that cause people to have a flimsy "wall" (a flimsy salvation) that cannot stand? Some advocate *baptismal regeneration* (the belief that physical water baptism is regeneration). There is no power in baptism to alter a man's spiritual state. If you are not saved from sin when you go down into the baptismal pool, the only difference water baptism makes is you go down a dry sinner, and you come up a wet one. Water does not wash away your sins. The songwriter penned it well: "*What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*" Water will not take away sin.

I have often wondered if water washes away your sins, where do the sins go when they pull the plug and all the water goes down the drain? If you live in the city, what kind of purification is used to get sin out so you are not drinking it back in? Some may think that is pretty foolish, but that is just how foolish it is to think water can take sin away. There is no truth in the teaching of *baptismal regeneration*. That is just whitewash, but many people rest in that. When asked, "Are you saved?" many say, "I have been baptized." That is no true measurement of your spiritual state.

Some teach *unconditional eternal security*: "Once saved, always saved." They say, "If you have been born, you cannot be unborn." That is true, but you can die. You are not unconditionally eternally secure. You can fall from grace (Galatians 5:4). A lot of what they call *grace* is more of a *disgrace*. All these things are whitewash. Isaiah 28:15 tells how people try to make "lies" their "refuge," but they cannot hide in these "lies," for there is no truth in them. Another "whitewash" is the teaching that you cannot live above sin—a "sin-more-or-less doctrine." First John 3:5-6 tells us: "And ye know that he [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." I say with love and kindness, preachers who say "I sin, you sin, and we all sin" have neither "seen him, neither known him."

If someone was going to teach me about a person, I would prefer it be somebody who knows them. I know *about* President Biden, President Trump, President Obama, and President Bush. Consider if I were to drive over to Washington, D.C., and tell the guard at the gate of the White House, "I am here to see the President," and he asks, "Who may I say is calling?" and I say, "Tell him Brother Borders is here." I can imagine he would call the White House and be told, "The President does not know any Brother Borders." I can tell the guard: "I know all about him. I have read about him." However, there is a difference between knowing about somebody and knowing somebody. Many preachers think they know about Christ, but if they live in sin, they do not know Him. That is right out of God's Word. First John 3:6-10 says: "Whosoever abideth in him [abiding in Christ] sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him [preachers who say 'We are all sinners' have never seen nor known Him]. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil [if someone tells you they commit sin, they are telling you they are 'of the devil'] Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The difference between those who are "the children of God" and those who are "the children of the devil" is between who sins and who does not sin.

False religion has become so whitewashed today that they say, "We are all God's children, even the homosexuals, lesbians, adulterers, and adulteresses." That is a lie. That is whitewash, "**untamped mortar**," a "**wall**" of salvation that is going to "**fall**." It will not stand the Judgment shock. Some false religions are performing same-sex marriages and supporting pride month. That is where they "glory . . . in their shame" (Philippians 3:19). We do not mistreat people. We love all people everywhere, but if they are ever going to get an ounce of help, they must hear the

truth. They will not get help for their souls when someone just puts whitewash over it, saying: "You are fine. Just do the best you can." When they get to the Judgment, they are going to find they are not fine. Jesus said if you "die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21).

Another whitewash is *speaking in tongues*. Some people think because they can jibber jabber in some supposed unknown tongue (regardless of how they live), they are all right. That is whitewash. These falsities come about because of "prophets" who are prophesying falsely. What I am writing is not a popular message, but it is the truth that people are going to meet at the Judgment seat. We read in Jeremiah 5:31, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" There is a fact many people do not consider. What spiritual position will that type of teaching place you in at the end?

When you pass into eternity and face a sin-avenging God, where will all that falsity place you then? Those who are dishonest love a false gospel that tickles their ears, makes them feel good, and makes room for the flesh. We read in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Today, mostly "fables" (something with no basis in the truth) are being preached.

Again, Jeremiah 5:31 asks, "What will ye do in the end thereof?" Deuteronomy 32:29 states, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Babylon, or sectarian religion, has another gospel with another spirit that produces another Jesus. It is often touted, "A loving God would not send people to hell." Really, in the truest sense, He does not. He just dispatches people where they have chosen to go. Second Corinthians 11:4 tells us, "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" The religious world has "another gospel" produced by "another spirit." This "another gospel" is touting such thoughts as "We are all God's children." You are only a child if you are born, and Jesus said, "Ye *must* be born again" (John 3:7). He said if you are not born again, you "cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Everyone is not God's child. They are His *creation*, but they are not His *children* unless they have experienced this new birth. Anything other than that is a whitewash, a deceit to just make people feel good.

False prophets say: "We are just all God's children, and we ought to be able to love anyone we want to love. If a man wants to love another man, if a woman wants to love another woman, love is love." No, that is whitewash and deceit. False religion advocates and supports these things. That is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is "another gospel" produced by "another spirit," and it is giving people a concept of "another Jesus." These things do not bring "newness of life" (Romans 6:4) to mankind; rather, they "**slay the souls**" by "**lying to my people that hear your lies**" (**Ezekiel 13:19**). This may sound harsh, but false religion is deadly. It is damning more people than the bars and the honkey tonks. There will be more people spiritually hurt in church houses than are hurt in the barrooms. We must not have sympathy for false religion. It is duping, deceiving, and damning millions.

Study the Gospel. Jesus did not receive trouble from sinners. Matter of fact, the religious leaders faulted Him for eating meat with sinners. Jesus' trouble came from the religious leaders: Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes. We need to be as David in Psalm 119:104, when he wrote, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." When we have a real understanding of the truth of God's Word, we will "hate every false way." Why? False ways produce false living. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverb 23:7). If you think wrong and believe wrong, you will live wrong; and if you live wrong, you will die wrong. Psalm 119:128

says, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."

God Is Pouring Out Judgment on False Religion

Notice what the Lord says about the manner of operation typifying the sectarian system of religion. We read in **Ezekiel 13:15**, "**Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it.**" God said, "**Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall.**" God is stirred, and He *has* poured out His "**wrath**," *is pouring* out His "**wrath**," and *is going to continue* to pour out His "**wrath**" on a system that works to "**slay the souls**" (verse 19). God said, "**The wall is no more.**" God will not let a falsity like false religion continue to stand and deceive and dupe people. What will He do? What did He do in the closeout of the Protestant era? **Ezekiel 13:13** reads, "**Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.**" What is this "**stormy wind**"? What does "**wind**" represent in the Scripture? Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus, said in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whether it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The "**stormy wind**" represents the Spirit. You cannot see the wind, but you can feel and see its effects. Likewise, you cannot see the Holy Spirit, but you can feel Him and see the effects of Him.

The Revelation tells us in this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day, God will turn loose His judgment and His wrath on false religion. Revelation 6:13 says, "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind [the Holy Ghost; Acts 2:2]." When God saw this religious system whitewashing everything, He said in **Ezekiel 13:13**, "**I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones.**" The "**shower**" is made of "**hailstones.**" Isaiah 28:15 reads, "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; . . . we have made lies, our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." When people are asked, "Are you saved?" they often say: "I joined the church. I shook the preacher's hand. I was baptized. I have spoken in tongues." That is where they think they have "made a covenant," but those are all "lies."

Isaiah 28:17 states, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." The plumb bob measures vertical, and the line measures horizontal. That is how you build a square building. God's building is "foursquare" (Revelation 21:16). It is squared; it is plumbed; it is laid to the line. How does God keep the church square? Isaiah 28:17 continues, "And the hail [or what the Holy Ghost would bring, the '**stormy wind**'] shall sweep away the refuge of lies." Only one thing can sweep away a lie—the truth. In the literal, hail is nothing more than solid rain. Deuteronomy 32:2 says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain." God's doctrine, or His Word, is the rain, and solid rain (hail), is just solid truth, or solid doctrine. That is what sweeps away the lies people are trusting in.

Many times, it is done in ignorance. Paul "persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Galatians 1:13) in ignorance. He thought he was doing God's service. Paul was a religious man. However, he was persecuting the church. When Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus Road, He said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Why did Jesus say that? Matthew 25:40 tells us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Paul did all that in ignorance; so God had to send some truth to sweep away

those false religious lies. Paul wrote in Philippians 3:5, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee." But when he wanted to win Christ, he said that he did "count them but dung" (Philippians 3:8).

At the end of this Protestant era (and even yet today), **Ezekiel 13:11** tells us that "**great hailstones, shall fall.**" Solid truth was poured out at the end of this era of Protestantism. Honest-hearted people were discontented with the spiritual conditions. Concerning the end of the second segment of the Protestant era, what is called the Wesleyan age, Revelation 6:9-10 states: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar ['Jesus Christ' is the 'altar'; Hebrews 13:8, 10] the souls of them that were slain for the word of God [a people who were in subjection to Christ, sold out, who had died out] And they cried [a picture of prayer] with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth [earthen systems of religion]?" (For a more complete treatment of this passage, see *The Book of Revelation Explained, Volume 2*, pages 105-116.) These people were in subjection to Christ, walking in all the light that was available to them, and were grieved over the conditions in Protestant religion. They were grieved about a system that had built sectarian walls, dividing God's people. They were praying for the judgment of God to be poured out on that divisive system so God's people could be united again.

Thank God, Revelation 6:12 tells us when "the sixth seal" was opened, "there was a great earthquake." God began to rearrange the religious landscape. Walls came tumbling down. A "**stormy wind**" (the Holy Spirit) sent out "**great hailstones**" of truth, and the refuges of lies were uncovered. God's people came leaping and shouting home to Zion (Isaiah 35:10; 51:11). Truth began to be heralded, calling God's people out of Babylon. What is the call of this epoch of the Gospel Day that we are currently in? Revelation 18:1 says, "And after these things I saw another angel [not speaking of celestial beings, but symbolizing a ministry; read Revelation 22:9 and Galatians 4:13-14] come down from heaven [having a divine call], having great power [you can tell if a minister has a divine call because his message will have power in it]; and the earth was lightened."

When a true man of God (one who has the call of God upon his life) preaches, the earth (or man) will become "enlightened" (Ephesians 1:18). People will receive understanding, and that will produce glory. Revelation 18:2 states, "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Revelation 18:4 reads, "And I heard another voice from heaven [the voice of that '**stormy wind**,' the Holy Spirit], saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." God is plaguing (or pouring out judgment on) false religion. (Read Revelation, Chapters 15 and 16.) False religion is engaged in covering and whitewashing sin, and honest people who are truly saved must heed the call to "Come out." When Lot was told to come out of Sodom, the angels took him and his family by the hands to lead them out. If they had stayed, they would have been subjected to the same fate as the rest of the city. Babylon is fallen, and God is putting judgment on it. Unless people come out, they are going to be overcome by that spirit, and they will suffer the same fate as the rest of them. Revelation 18:4 warns if people do not heed the call to "come out," they will be "partakers of her sins, and . . . receive . . . of her plagues."

We read in Jeremiah 51:6, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance." We are living in the evening portion of the Gospel Day, a time when God is pouring out His vengeance, His judgment, on these false religious organizations. He is also issuing a call to His people, in essence, saying, "Come out of that thing; come out to where you can get your soul fed; deliver your soul from that

system." Why? Because these systems are operating under a false spirit, and if you stay in them, you will pick up that spirit. The conditions there **"slay the souls" (Ezekiel 13:19)**. I knew a man who was a womanizer and a drunkard, but he somehow came in contact with enough Gospel that he got saved. His spirit changed, his attitude changed, and for a short time, his life changed. I tried to introduce him to the truth, but he stayed in the religious system he was in. There was nothing in that system to sustain his experience, to feed his soul. They fed him sectarian lies, and it was not too long until he was back to the way he was before. The only difference was that he had a religious veneer and a profession. They taught him, "Once you are saved, you are always saved." He died under that deception. False religion is deadly and damnable! It is used by the devil to **"slays the souls"** of men.

I trust we can see the typical truths portrayed in our text. Sectarian religion came about as a work of the flesh. When Galatians 5:19-21 lists "the works of the flesh," one of them is "heresies." *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says "sects." Sectism is a work of the flesh. It never came from God; it came out of the minds of men. It is produced by spirits of devils, and it produced a system of worship that "deceiveth" (Revelation 13:12-14). Their teachings are false, their spirit is false, and their motivation and cause are false. It presents a false gospel that produces a false experience. Sadly, multiplied people honestly think they are saved; yet, they have no idea at all of what real Bible salvation actually is. They have been taught a falsity. Protestantism dupes, deceives, and damns souls. Do not have sympathy for sectarian religion. The Lord wants His people in this day to "Come out" (Revelation 18:4), to "come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

We speak "the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). We have a love for the souls of men and women, because we realize there is much more falsity being heralded than truth being preached. That is a sad commentary, but it is true. Multiplied millions are being duped, believing they have a refuge, but their refuge is lies. The only way they are ever going to get help or come to the knowledge of the truth is for the truth to be sounded forth. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12). We are not against people. No matter how deep in sin they are, we want to see them do well in their soul. We want to see them enjoy this "so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3), but there is only one way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). It is not *a* way among ways, but Jesus is *the* way." He is the exclusive source.

When we come to a knowledge of the truth, Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth does not make you free from sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "Knowledge of the truth" will make you free from falsity. If people do not get away from falsity, they cannot maintain an experience of salvation. That is why truth is so essential! That is why Jesus prayed in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." An individual needs to get to what the Word of God teaches, not what men, organizations of men, and human minds devise. It is not what the sinful and the worldly feel about it, but what the Word of God teaches that matters.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

FOUR SORE JUDGMENTS AND A REMNANT BROUGHT FORTH

Ezekiel 14:21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?

22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.

Many of Ezekiel's prophetic writings have both a literal and a spiritual fulfillment. Often, all people see is the local, or the literal, aspect for the time then present. But if that was the only merit to the text, it would not have been penned and preserved through the annals of time for our benefit (1 Corinthians 10:11). They were not penned and preserved for a day that is well passed (in the proximity of 594 B.C.), but these texts are relevant to you and me today. Let us look at some Scriptures to substantiate that.

Jeremiah 51:6-8 tells us: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed." Strictly contextually, this has reference to literal Babylon. Jeremiah 51:11 says, "Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it." We can read in Daniel where that occurred.

When the writing appeared on the wall in literal Babylon, in the days of Belshazzar, when the kingdom was about to be overthrown, Daniel, interpreting the writing on the wall, said in Daniel 5:28, "PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." We read in Daniel 5:30-31: "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom." This was the literal aspect (the literal fulfillment), but it also has a spiritual application for today. Jeremiah 51:8 says, "Babylon is suddenly fallen." What is the spiritual connotation? Revelation 18:2 states, "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." Jeremiah 51:45 reads, "My people, go ye out of the midst of her," and Revelation 18:4 tells us, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people." There are many prophecies with both a local (or literal) fulfillment and then a broader universal and spiritual fulfillment.

Another example of this is found in Isaiah 21:6, which reads, "For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth." Isaiah 21:2 says, "A grievous vision is declared unto me." In the visions, Isaiah was instructed, "Go, set a watchman" (verse 6). We know by reading the context, this had an application to a literal event. Yet, we also know that the position of a watchman has a much wider spiritual application. We read in Isaiah 62:6, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace." Hebrews 13:17

states, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls." In the New Testament dispensation, the watchman is a picture of the ministry. Again, prophecy often has a dual fulfillment: literal (or localized) and spiritual, which has a much wider application. With this in mind, let us view our lesson text.

"Judgments" Will Bring God's People Together

Though there is certainly truth worthy of consideration in the historical reference, our burden is to look at the wider application as it relates to this Gospel Day, or the Christian dispensation. We have found that there is a thread, or a scheme, throughout Ezekiel. It begins in the first chapter with a prophetic picture of Pentecost and the church being instituted or produced. Then it describes an apostasy and next a dark age. When the dark age ended, there was a cloudy day—an era when another beast arose, an era of sectarian religion. Now we have come to the portion of this Christian dispensation where sectarian religion and the Protestant era are ending, and God is going to bring **"a remnant,"** a people, together. Our text tells us how He does that: **"judgments."** For anybody to get help on any line, someone has to tell the truth. It is just that simple. People will not see unless the Lord enlightens the eyes of their understanding by hearing the Word of God.

It takes the man of God and the Spirit of God bringing the Word of God to give people a clear vision, whether it is of Babylon or the church. Revelation 17:1 reads, "And there came [unto me] one of the seven angels." The word "angels" in Greek is *aggelos*, and it means "a messenger." That is symbolic of a ministry, not a celestial being. Paul wrote in Galatians 4:13-14: "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel [*aggelos*, a messenger] of God." What did this "angel" (messenger) do? Verse 13 says, "I preached the gospel." These angels in Revelation are not celestial beings. Revelation 22:8-9 reads: "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren."

These angels in Revelation are not celestial beings but are a symbolic portrayal of a ministry. We read in Revelation 17:1, "And there came one of the seven angels [a messenger, a ministry] 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." It takes a combination of a ministry with a message under the anointing of the Spirit (Revelation 17:3) for people to get a vision of truth. Without these truths being preached, people will never see or receive the clear vision of truth the Lord desires they have.

Concerning Babylon, Revelation 17:5 states, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON." It takes a God-called ministry preaching the message under the anointing of the Spirit for people to get a clear vision of Babylon and her condition. Revelation 21:9 tells us, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels [a ministry] which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee." It is the angel, or the ministry, who is going to enable people to see the truth. Revelation 21:10 says, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem." John was getting a vision of the church. If you ever get a vision of the church, it is going to come because a ministry presents a message and the Spirit of God enlightens "the eyes of your understanding" (Ephesians 1:17-18).

In this Protestant era (A.D. 1530-1880), people did not have a vision of the truth concerning

the church. Part of the reason is found in Revelation, Chapter 9, which tells of locusts and smoke coming up. When smoke gets in your eyes, you cannot see very well. This smoke was obscuring peoples' vision in that Protestant era concerning the truth about the church. But there came a time, in the proximity of A.D. 1880, when God got hold of some brethren and enlightened their understanding. These brethren heralded a message of truth concerning the unity of God's people. They put out "**judgments**" on that which was false. That is God's ordained manner. The foolishness of preaching (not foolish preaching) is what God has ordained for people to see the surrounding conditions: the conditions of religion and their own spiritual condition.

We came down through the various portions of this Christian dispensation, and now we are down to the commencement of this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day. **Ezekiel 14:21** reads, "**For thus saith the Lord GOD [not man's idea but God's Word]; How much more when I send my four sore judgments [What are those 'four sore judgments'? What was He going to put judgment on?] upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence.**" Four things are enumerated in that verse: "**the sword,**" "**famine,**" "**beast,**" and "**pestilence.**" Isaiah 28:13 tells us, "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." We cannot isolate any context from the greater context or the entire scheme of Scripture. We read in Isaiah 34:16, "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them." For every obscure (unclear) portion of God's eternal Word, there is another Scripture that the Holy Ghost will mate up with it to bring light or understanding to it.

"Four Sore Judgments" Are Poured Out

In our text, "**four sore judgments**" are mentioned, and "**judgments**" being poured out on these things that enabled "**a remnant**" to "**be brought forth**" (verse 22). This brings to mind the law of physics of cause and effect. Spiritually speaking, there is a cause and there is an effect. The cause is these "**judgments,**" and the effect brings the "**remnant**" out. No "**remnant**" was brought out until "**judgments**" were first poured out. God was pouring out these "**judgments**" to bring a people together. Isaiah 1:27 proclaims, "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment." Certainly, in the case of bringing the church back into view in the evening time, it required some judgment.

Where else do we see "**the sword,**" "**famine,**" "**beast,**" and "**pestilence**" mentioned? Remember, We read in Revelation 6:4, "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." There is "**the sword**" our text speaks of (verse 21). Revelation 6:6 says, "And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny." That is a "**famine**" rate. Revelation 6:8 tells us: "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." There is the "**beast**" verse 21 speaks of. We read in Revelation 9:3, "And there came out of the smoke locusts." There is the "**pestilence.**" The same four expressions from our text are alluded to in Revelation.

As we look at these expressions in Revelation, Chapter 6, notice that they are equated with horses. What do the red horse, the black horse, and the pale horse represent? It is necessary to study those because what they represented then, we are facing today in the day and time in which

we live. We read in Zechariah 6:1-5: "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold [Zechariah was receiving a vision], there came four chariots out from between two mountains [between Mount Sinai, the old covenant, and mount Zion, the new covenant] . . . In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses [corresponding to the pale horse in Revelation 6:8]. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens." This is not talking about God's Heaven, but heavenly places, an exalted spiritual position. These horses represent religious spirits. Also, because the symbol of a horse is used, it denotes militancy.

Zechariah 10:3 reads, "Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle." Not only do these horses represent spirits, but they represent militant spirits, spirits that are out for conquest. They are out to conquer men's souls. The colors of these horses also give us an insight into what type of spirit they are. This red horse gave rise to the great red dragon (paganism). This black horse gave rise to the beast that came up and produced the Dark Ages (papalism). The spirit of the pale horse gave rise to the Protestant beast. An understanding of these truths is needful because that is what these **"four sore judgments"** are being poured out on, or against **"the sword, and the famine,"** the **"beast,"** and **"pestilence."**

These horses represent the various militant spirits that gave rise to the religious systems with which the saints have had to contend throughout the Gospel Day. **Verse 21** of our text speaks of **"the sword."** Revelation 6:4 talks about this horse that was red. Power was given unto him; there was given unto him a great sword. What "power" is this red horse, and what spirit does it represent? What does the color red represent in the Scripture? Isaiah 1:18 reads, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The color red represents sin. We need to think of sin as the Scriptures portray sin. What is the besetting sin, the sin of all sins? We read in John 1:29, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin [singular] of the world." Jesus spoke of "sin" in the singular as well in John 16:8-9, stating: "And when he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin [singular] . . . Of sin, because they believe not." The sin of all sins is unbelief. It is the besetting sin. All other sins are an outgrowth of unbelief. Hebrews, Chapter 11, is known as "Faith's Whose Who." In verse 3 of this chapter, we read, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed." Then, the author goes back to the first family and begins listing the faithful: "By faith Abel" (Hebrews 11:4); "By faith Enoch" (Hebrews 11:5); "By faith Noah" (Hebrews 11:7); "By faith Abraham" (Hebrews 11:8). And he continued throughout the annals of the Old Testament.

Hebrews 12:1 states, "Wherefore [or because of what I said previously] seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [from Abel all the way down], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin [singular] which doth so easily beset us." What is "the sin"? All the way through Chapter 11, the author wrote about faith. Therefore, "the sin" is unbelief. Unbelief arose in the morning time through the power of paganism (pagan Rome). The spirit of that red horse (unbelief) gave rise to that paganistic system, which became the first opposing force to the church. Our lesson text lets us know God is putting judgment on that spirit. We need to understand not only historically what produced that system of paganism in the morning time, but we also need to understand, these spirits are no longer merely working through the systems they gave rise to. They have "come out" (Revelation 16:13), and they are working right around the camp of the saints.

Judgment Poured Out on the Spirit of Unbelief

We are seeing a typical portrayal revealing that God put judgment on the spirit that gave rise to that opposing system. He is bringing us to this evening-time message and showing that this message is bringing "**a remnant**" together, "**a remnant**" that began in 1880. To bring "**a remnant**" together, judgment has to be poured out on everything that is false and holding people. He began where the Gospel Day began and poured out judgment on those who had "**the sword.**" Revelation 6:4 says it was "a great sword." What "sword" did pagan Rome have? They had the sword of state; they had civil power. If Nero wanted to chop Paul's head off, no one could stop him. He was the emperor. When they crucified Peter upside down, there was no one to stop them. They were the Roman Empire; they had the sword of state. Romans 13:1 tells us: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers [talking about the civil authorities]. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."

Romans 13:3-4 reads: "For rulers [civil rulers, civil leaders] are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? . . . For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Paul was talking about the sword of state, the power that civil authority has. It is the same as our civil authority today. If you violate certain laws, they will execute you, and rightfully so. They have that power. God ordained civil government to have that power to be able to maintain order. God is a God of order. However, Rome used that "**sword**" against the saints of God in the morning-time portion of the Gospel Day through martyrdom. Thus in our lesson, God was pouring out judgment on that spirit (unbelief) and the system produced by that spirit (paganism).

Unbelief is still a deadly foe today. It works right amongst God's people, if at all possible, telling people God does not mean what He says, that God's Word does not mean what it says, and that God will give an exception. We need to understand, God lays down judgment on a spirit of unbelief, which raises up against His Word. He had to do that because that spirit, which started at the beginning of the Gospel Day with the dragon, has worked throughout the Gospel Day. How do we know that? Revelation 13:2 says, "The dragon [paganism] gave him [the papal beast] his power, and his seat, and great authority." When we come to the Protestant beast, Revelation 13:11 says, "He spake as a dragon." We see that dragon throughout the Gospel Day. Its influence and spirit have permeated and been a part of every system. If people had believed the Word of God, papalism and Protestantism would never have come about. These systems came about because of unbelief. Therefore, God is putting judgment on that spirit of unbelief.

Judgment Poured Out on the Spirit of Apostasy

Next, our text talks about "**famine**" (verse 21), and Revelation 6:6 talks about "a measure of wheat for a penny." This represents a "**famine**" measurement because a penny was a day's wages for the average worker (Matthew 20:2). In normal times, a penny would secure twenty measures of wheat and fifty or sixty measures of barley. But in Revelation 6:6, one measure of wheat costs a penny and three measures of barley costs a penny. This portrays a starvation rate, a rate because of a "**famine.**" What kind of famine is Revelation speaking of? It is not a natural famine. Amos 8:11 reads, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." When would this take place? Amos 8:9 states, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." That "**famine**" took place in the Dark Ages. It was a dark age

when no public message was being heralded. The black horse (Revelation 6:5) that gave rise to the system of papalism is the spirit of apostasy.

Look at Jesus' words in John 12:35. He said: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." When God's people failed to continue to walk in the light, they succumbed to a spirit of apostasy. Apostasy means "a defection from truth." It is when people leave the truth, yet continue to profess that they are standing for it. That is what gave rise to the beast of papalism. God was putting judgment on the spirit of apostasy that produced this terrible "**famine**." That spirit of apostasy is yet fiercely working in our day.

Revelation 6:8 tells us this pale horse (the spirit that gave rise to the system of Protestantism) had power, and it could not only kill with the sword but also with hunger. It had all the power of these previous beasts. Protestantism put armies on the field. Study the Thirty Years' War. They put armies on the field, fighting to kill each other over doctrinal differences. Is not that a great spirit? They killed with "**the sword**," and they are also killed with hunger. There is still a "**famine**" in their land. The true Word of God is not given place down there with the beasts of the earth.

Judgment Poured Out on the System of Protestantism

When Revelation 6:8 speaks of beasts, just as our text in **Ezekiel 14:21** speaks of "**the noisome beast**" and "**pestilence**," this takes us to that system of Protestantism. We read in Revelation 9:3, "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." Revelation 9:7 tells about those locusts, stating, "And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle [they were a militant force produced by a militant spirit]; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold [not real gold, but imitation; not real victory but false, imitation victory], and their faces were as the faces of men."

The "heads" of these organizations are the "faces of men." This gave rise to the Protestant beast, this spirit of the pale horse, which is a spirit of compromise. It is a mixture of truth and error, of light and darkness. It is denoted as pale because it is a mixture. The Protestant era was called a "cloudy and dark day" (Ezekiel 34:12). In our text, we read when the evening time commenced, the Lord dealt with the conditions that produced and promoted false religion. He also dealt with the spirits that gave rise to those systems. "**Judgments**" were poured out on that which produced and promoted false religion, and "**a remnant**" was brought forth because of those "**judgments**."

When those "**judgments**" were "made manifest" (Revelation 15:4), what were they, and what did they produce? This began to be poured out at the beginning of the evening portion of the Gospel Day. Ezekiel 13:13 says, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury." We see the same thing expressed in Revelation 15:1, which calls it "the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." Revelation 15:2 tells us, "And I saw as it were a sea of glass [the word'; James 1:22-23] mingled with fire [under the anointing of the Holy Spirit]: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast [papalism], and over his image [Protestantism], and over his mark [indoctrination]." Revelation 15:4 tells us why they had the victory, stating, "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 judgments are made manifest." Judgment enabled these people to have victory over all these false religious systems. How are His "judgments made manifest"? Titus 1:3 tells us, "But hath in due times manifested his word

through preaching." That is how God manifested it in 1880, when the evening time commenced. Those brethren poured out these vials ("**judgments**") on the various religious systems so the people could get an understanding of the truth.

Vials Full of the Wrath of God

We read in Revelation 16:1-2: "And I heard a great voice out of the temple [the church] saying to the seven angels [the ministry], Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore [Remember, our text said these were '**four sore judgments.**' These '**judgments**' will make people '**sore**' who do not have an honest heart.] upon the men which had the mark of the beast [indoctrination], and upon them which worshipped his image [the system of Protestantism]." How do we know that these vials, full of wrath are judgment? Revelation 16:5 states, "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus." Revelation 16:7 reads, "And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

The word "vials" in the Greek is "bowls." Why is that important? Have you ever tried to pour out part of a bowl? When you tip a bowl, the next thing you know, the whole thing pours out. That is the way God wants His judgment to be poured out. He does not want a portion, and He does not want it spared. He wants it poured out in its entirety, completeness. These "vials" (bowls) full of the wrath of God are Him putting the judgment of His Word on everything false and contrary to the welfare of men's souls. People could not see the truth and come out of Babylon until God raised up a ministry to pour out the truth. Yet today, if people are going to get the victory God wants them to have and see the evil and the errors of the systems that are working against their spiritual welfare, these truths still need to be poured out (preached).

We read in Psalm 119:43, "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments." Judgments are the "word of truth." Psalm 119:160 tells us, "Thy word is true from the beginning [these are parallelisms, where truth is stated in one sense and then restated in another sense to clarify or amplify it]: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." The "righteous judgments" are "thy word." The Word being poured out brings judgment, or shows the falsity of systems, teachings, and doctrines that are contrary to the sound Word of God. When the evening time came, Zechariah 14:7 tells us, "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Psalm 119:130 tells us what light is, saying, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding." When this evening time commenced, God brought back the understanding that had been lost since the morning time. Because of all the falsity that had abounded throughout the various portions of the Gospel Day, God had to pour out "**sore judgments.**" Just as Revelation 16:2 states, those "**judgments**" make people "**sore**" because they do not want their falsity exposed. When the sixth seal was opened, we read in Revelation 6:15, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains." Isaiah 28:15 tells us where they hid themselves: in "lies." However, truth uncovers lies, and many times, especially when the truth of God's Word sounded out at the commencement of this evening time, there were many good people in those systems who had been fed those lies, not knowing they were lies until they heard the truth.

I can relate to this because when I was raised in sectarian religion. There were a lot of things I did not realize were wrong until I heard the truth about them. The truth uncovered them. It

swept away the refuge of lies. It is the message that reveals the falsity of religion. This was exactly what the souls under the altar (in that last portion of the Protestant era) were praying for. Revelation 6:9 states, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar [people in submission to Christ] the souls of them." This is not talking about disembodied people, but about people. The word "souls" in the Scriptures is many times used to describe people (Genesis 12:5; 46:18, 22, 25-27).

Revelation 6:10 tells us what they were crying and praying for, stating, "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" They wanted judgment on those earthen systems of religion, on man-made religion that had built walls and separated God's people. These were a holiness people (they wore "white robes"; verse 11). True holiness yearns for fellowship, for unity. They were grieved over the conditions in sectism where the sectarian walls divided them from other of God's people. They were praying for judgment to be put on those systems so that the walls could come down (just as they did at the walls of Jericho), and God's people could come together. When the evening time commenced, Zechariah 14:7 lets us know light was revealed; understanding came (much of it was light concerning the sin of division and the oneness of the body of Christ).

We read in Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Division is a sin. Paul said they "serve *not* our Lord Jesus Christ." First Corinthians 1:10 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." That is what happened at the beginning of the evening time. God's people had been divided.

"They Shall See Eye to Eye"

Through the dark and cloudy day, men had caused divisions, bringing in contrary doctrines. Isaiah 52:8 states, "Thy watchmen [a ministry] shall lift up the voice [not *their* voice, but *the* voice]; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion." In 1880, the Lord began to bring again Zion, a people, and a ministry. When the Scripture says they began to "see eye to eye," what does that mean? The eye, according to Revelation 5:6, is the "seven spirits" (or the Holy Spirit working through the seven periods of the Gospel Day). They got back to Holy Ghost leadership. They did not quench the Spirit.

Every preacher will not see every minute point of Scripture just alike, but having the same Spirit will lead them to a unity where they can lift up "the voice" together on the basic truths of the Scriptures. God began to bring again Zion. He began to affect a unity. Ephesians 4:13 says, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith." God's people had been scattered by the doctrines and teachings of men through that dark and cloudy day, but when the evening light broke, God began to bring again Zion. He raised up a ministry that heralded the truth, a ministry that saw the unity of the faith, the oneness of the body of Christ. When this message was heralded, Babylon's walls began to come down, just as they did in Jericho. We read in Joshua 6:20, "So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."

When the trumpet was blown (a picture of the Word of God being sounded) and the people shouted (or rejoiced in the truth, in the message), the walls came down. That is exactly what

happened at the commencement of this evening time. The walls came down, and God's people began to come out. Isaiah 35:10 tells us, "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return [if you look on the pictorial chart, you will see the white horses coming out of those systems, coming back to Zion], and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This began in A.D. 1880 when Brother Daniel Sidney Warner and other brethren began to herald the message on the unity of the faith, the oneness of the body of the believers. The church came back into view, and Christ was restored to His rightful position as head of the church.

Revelation 14:1 reads, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion." Christ was back in His rightful position, and with him were a people who had taken hold of these truths. They comprised Mount Zion, the Church of the Living God. This is crucial to understand because the spirits that gave rise to these systems throughout the Gospel Day are no longer merely housed in those systems. They have "come out" (Revelation 16:13) and are working right in this evening time around the camp of the saints. Their nature is still militant. They are working "to gather them to the battle" (verse 14). Sadly, they are even more deceptive today than they were in the Protestant era. They are working to gather a people against truth. They are working against "**Jerusalem**" (Ezekiel 14:21). In Revelation 20:8-9, we read: "And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle . . . And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints." These spirits are working to bring about an amalgamated system that will encircle the camp of the saints. These spirits are working on the lives and minds of the saints. They are working to mar our peace. They are working against our experience, if they possibly can. What is the purpose? To carry us away from the truth.

Jude 24 reads, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." These spirits have never lost their militancy. John admonished in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [the Greek says 'test'] the spirits." You test the spirit by measuring it to the Word. Every one of these spirits in our text is operating in religion today, just as they did in the Protestant era, the papal era, and the pagan era. They are all working just as they always have. They are religious spirits. Thank God for the victory God brought at the commencement of this evening time of this Gospel Day! Yet, though the truth was heralded, and people saw the truth and came out, those spirits did not quit working. They are yet working.

We read in Revelation 16:15: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked." These spirits are working to strip us of our "garments of salvation . . . the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). They want God's people to walk spiritually naked. They work to strip people of their experience, and they are far too successful in our day. Jesus, speaking to the people in this seventh-seal period of time (the day in which we live), said in Revelation 3:17-18, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." The sobering truth is that if we play around with or are sympathetic to or fellowship with people, places, or things that are dominated by these spirits, we can pick up those spirits and lose our salvation. We can be left with just a profession and a deception.

Malachi 2:15 and 16 both say, "Therefore take heed to your spirit." If we "take heed," we do not have to fall under the powers of deception. We read in Malachi 3:18, "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that

serveth him not." Today we have the privilege of discernment, to not be deceived, to not be duped and taken in by the powers of false religion. Our lesson is a glorious lesson where the dark age and the dark and cloudy day came to an end. God got hold of a ministry and poured out His "**judgments**" and began to bring together "**a remnant**" who would stand for the precious truths of God's eternal Word. Although there is a side to the message that is rejoicing, there is a sobering side. The same spirits that gave rise to those systems in bygone days are still working yet today against you and me. We must take heed. We must be cautious. That is why we are admonished in 2 Corinthians 6:17, "Be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing."

We need to watch where we go, with whom we fellowship and associate, with whom we allow ourselves to get close to and allow to influence us. We also need to be cautious of what we read or listen to: radio programs, printed publications, and magazines. Some magazines are supposed to be the Church of God literature, but if they are full of tradition and sixth-seal teachings that did not have full light and understanding, we should be very cautious in lending our minds to them. We need to be careful about what we feed our minds on. Sadly, there are supposed Church of God people who have nothing more than just a religious spirit. Yet God still has people in those various false religious organizations. That is why we need to herald the message to get them out. We need to continue to expose ourselves to what is right and to people who are right, but not to people who are not right. Why? Because when we associate with people who are not right, the enemy can work to confuse us and cause a wrong spirit to get in.

"They Shall Comfort You"

Ezekiel 14:22-23 states: "**Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted And they shall comfort you.**" If you want encouragement, fellowship, inspiration, and to be "**comforted**," look to the "**remnant**." They are the ones who "**shall comfort you**." This text brings us right up to the evening time, a time when the Lord has a faithful people. **Verse 22** says, "**Ye shall be comforted**," and **verse 23** says, "**They shall comfort you**." When I got saved, I was in a city where there was no pastor, no congregation, and no truth. As far as I knew, there were only about three people in the entire city of thirty-six thousand who knew anything about this truth. I lived with my parents. I loved them, but they did not know the truth. They fought me when I took a stand for truth, and sometimes they physically fought me.

I realized if I was going to do well in my soul, I had to make some moves. I could not stay where I was, in an area with no truth, congregation, or pastor, and in a home that was fighting me. I prayed about where to go and went to a camp meeting in Newark. While I was there, a brother from another congregation offered me a job if I would move there. I packed up everything I had, which was not a whole lot. My clothes and one little bookcase were pretty much my sole belongings. I moved two hundred miles to get into a congregation, sit under a godly pastor, and learn this truth. If I had not done that, I do not think I would be saved today.

First Corinthians 15:33 says, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." If you do not associate with the right people, you will be affected in the wrong way. I had to get to where there were saints of God. I had to get to where I could have fellowship. I had to get out of an environment that was contrary to the welfare of my soul. Ephesians 5:8-9 reads: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." The saints will foster goodness, righteousness, and truth. That is what the church upholds. May God help us realize that there is a very real enemy

who is working most deceptively even yet today through religious spirits. May we be wise and guard ourselves against these moves. "**Comfort**" and fellowship will be found with the "**remnant**" (the church). That is where you will find encouragement, edification, strength, and good instruction. People who were in the dark and cloudy day had been subjected to many things because the light had not been restored. But thanks be to God, when the evening time came, light came! Light began to be revealed and restored, and people who took hold of that light, that message, began to come together as "**a remnant.**" I am glad God still has "**a remnant**" today, and He is going to have "**a remnant**" right on through until Jesus splits the clouds and ushers in eternity. I trust the Spirit of God has made it clear to us.

NOTES:

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FOLLOWING THE GLORY OF GOD

Ezekiel 1:26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

Ezekiel 9:3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house.

Ezekiel 10:18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

Ezekiel 11:23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.

Ezekiel 43:1 Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east:

2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.

3 And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.

4 And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.

5 So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

As we examine these passages, we must look beyond the literal description or occurrences to receive the typical truths being conveyed. These Old Testament prophecies go beyond the time then present and span into this New Testament dispensation. The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:10-12: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you [not for their day, but for our day; not for the *Old* Testament dispensation, but for the *New* Testament dispensation]: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves [the Old Testament brethren], but unto us [the New Testament saints] they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the

Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

The things the prophets "enquired and searched" for were prophesying of "the grace that should come unto you," or the New Testament dispensation. Verse 12 says, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things." Although there certainly is a local, literal application to some extent in these Old Testament prophecies, these writings predominantly were penned and preserved as a spiritual portrayal of realities and occurrences in this New Testament dispensation.

God's Glory Is Wherever His Presence Is

In this section, we will follow the portrayal of what is termed in **Ezekiel 1:28** as "**the glory of the LORD.**" We read in 1 Chronicles 16:27, "Glory and honour are in his presence," letting us know the glory of God is synonymous with the presence of God. Where His presence is, His glory is. Other Scriptures substantiate this truth. When Moses was to go up into the Mount Sinai, he was instructed in Exodus 24:2, "And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him." How sad that in the Old Testament, man could not come into God's presence; only a select few could come at certain times. In this case, Moses was told that he "alone shall come near the LORD." Exodus 24:15-18 reads: "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount." When Moses was ushered into the presence of God, verse 16 tells us, "The glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai." Where the presence of God is, that is where His glory is.

We read in Psalm 102:16, "When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." The prophets made it expressly clear, the reason He is going to "appear in his glory" in Zion is because God dwells in Zion. Joel 3:17 states, "So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain." Amos 1:2 tells us, "And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." Why? Because His presence is there. Zechariah 8:3 says, "Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain [Zion]." Where God's presence is, His glory will be there as well. The Lord of all ages has desired that His glory be in the midst of an obedient people. When Moses was commanded concerning the construction of the Old Testament tabernacle and its furnishings, the Lord instructed in Exodus 25:40, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." Moses was not to deviate, but to build every article in accordance with the pattern, or the message given to him on Mount Sinai. Exodus 40:16 says, "Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he." God's Word in all ages has commanded full obedience. Anything short of full obedience is disobedience. Moses was fully obedient, fully compliant.

Exodus 40:34-35 reads: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." The presence of God moved in, and when the presence of God moved in, the glory of God was manifested. Look at what Solomon was commanded concerning building the temple. We have moved from the legal era to the monarchical period, but the desire of God was the same. First Chronicles

28:11-12 reads, "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit." When Solomon obediently followed the pattern, 2 Chronicles 5:1 tells us, "Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished." Second Chronicles 5:13-14 states, "It came to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as *one* [a picture of unity], to make *one* sound [again, unity] to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God."

The presence of God moved in when Solomon finished the house according to the pattern. When he was fully obedient, fully compliant, the presence of God moved in, denoted by the cloud. Take a broad jump to the Mount of Transfiguration. We read in Matthew 17:1-5: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias [Greek for the Hebrew 'Elijah'] talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son."

The cloud, the shekinah glory cloud, was where the presence of God was manifested. When the presence of God moved in, the glory of God moved in. They go together. The Apostle Paul told the young minister Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:15-16: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Paul was saying, "Follow the pattern, Timothy." In all ages, the Lord has desired that His glory be in the midst of an obedient people. When the Incarnation of Jesus Christ occurred, it was accompanied by the glory of God. When the angels came to the shepherds on the Judaeian hills, Luke 2:7-9 says: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." When Christ made His Advent, the presence of God came down to man, and with that presence came the glory of God.

A portrayal of the church in Revelation is depicted as having the glory of God as its most notable feature. Revelation 21:9-10 says: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels [or ministry] which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues [or the judgments of God], and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." The glory of God was the first feature John noticed. When the evening-time ministry was given the judgments of God to pour out the truth, Revelation 15:8 reads, "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God."

Why is the glory of God so vital? Isaiah 4:5 says, "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion." (Hebrews 12:22-23 says "mount Sion" represents the "church," and the dwelling places in Mount Zion are all the saints. John 14:23 reads, "Jesus answered and

said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode ['dwelling'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*] with him.") God's people are the dwelling places. Isaiah 4:5 continues, "And upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence." The glory in our midst is vital because it is a "defence." The Hebrew word for "defence" is *chuppah*, which comes from the root word *chaphah*. It means "to cover, to encase, protect."

In a library or a museum, something valuable is encased or covered to protect it from the elements. God's glory is a "defence" to us both individually and collectively as a people. His presence provides protection. When Israel came to the banks of the Red Sea after making their flight from Egyptian bondage, the Egyptian army was in pursuit. We read in Exodus 14:19, "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud . . ." What did "the pillar of the cloud" represent? Exodus 40:34-35 says: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud [or the *shekinah*] abode thereon." When God gave Moses the instructions concerning how to construct the Ark, a mercy seat was to be on the top of the Ark, and on both ends of the mercy seat were the cherubim.

God said in Exodus 25:22, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony." The words "there will I meet with thee" indicates the divine presence manifested by the *shekinah* glory cloud, and that is exactly how God met with them: through that cloud, which was overshadowing the mercy seat. Exodus 40:36-38 tells us: "And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night." It was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar by fire by night, but it was always the presence of the Lord. The presence of God provides protection; it provides a line of demarcation.

Exodus 14:19-20 states: "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud [or the *shekinah*, the presence of God] went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them [the Egyptians], but it gave light by night to these [the children of Israel]: so that the one came not near the other all the night." The presence of God is a line of separation, revealing who serves God and who does not. Romans 8:16 tells us, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." God's presence provides protection and identification.

A Picture of Christ at the Institution of the Gospel Day on the Day of Pentecost

A sad progression is portrayed in Ezekiel. Where did the glory first appear? What did it appear with? **Ezekiel 1:26** reads, "**And above the firmament that was over their heads** [over the heads of the cherubim] **was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone.**" That "**sapphire stone**" was a heavenly blue, or sky blue, color. Exodus 24:10 also speaks of a throne, saying, "And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven [a clear sky blue] in his clearness." The picture of this throne shows an elevated position, a position of honor, a position of rule, and portrayed on this "**throne**" was "**the likeness as the appearance of a man**" (**Ezekiel 1:26**).

Who is God the man? We read in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:14 says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Verse 17 reads, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is God the man, or the Person of the Triune Godhead who was made flesh. This is a prophetic portrayal of Christ in the morning time of the Gospel Day, and related to Him is **"the glory of the LORD"** (verse 28).

Hebrews 1:1-3 reads: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners [speaking of the Old Testament dispensation] spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days [this New Testament dispensation] spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed the heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his [his Son; verse 2] glory." When **Ezekiel 1:26** speaks of the one occupying **"the likeness of a throne"** or **"the appearance of a man,"** and this man was **"the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord"** (verse 28), this is a picture of Christ at the institution of this Gospel Day on the Day of Pentecost. Ezekiel 1:4 says, "A whirlwind came out." This is just as Acts 2:2 tells us. When they were all gathered together in that upper room on the Day of Pentecost, "There came a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind. Then, Ezekiel 1:4 speaks of "a fire."

The same is found in Acts 2:3, which tells us "cloven tongues like as of fire" came on the scene, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). Romans 8:10 tells us this is "the Spirit of life," and then Ezekiel 1:5 says, "Also out of the midst thereof [of this fire, that which was produced by the Holy Spirit] came the likeness of four living creatures [the redeemed]." The redeemed were produced by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Thus, the church was instituted, and when the church was instituted, we see Christ portrayed on His throne. We read in Hebrews 8:1-2: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest [the 'High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus'; Hebrews 3:1], who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched." This is speaking of the institution of the true church.

Ezekiel, Chapter 1, portrays the church being instituted on the Day of Pentecost, and it was accompanied by the presence of Christ and the glory of God. It is portrayed in Acts, Chapter 2, as well as in Ezekiel 1:4-5. When **Ezekiel 1:28** says **"the glory of the LORD"** appeared, it was a manifestation in the morning-time church. In Acts, Chapter 3, at the gate Beautiful, the disciples came up to the temple at the hour of prayer, and God used Peter to heal a man lame from his mother's womb. Acts 3:10 states, "And they knew that it was he [speaking of the lame man] which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him." Peter saw an opportunity to preach. In Acts 3:12-13, we read: "And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus."

When the lame man was healed at the temple gate, people saw the glory of God. It accompanied the morning-time church. As the brethren in the morning time were Spirit-led, the glory was manifested. Ezekiel 3:13 states, "I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures [the redeemed] that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels [the message] over against them, and a noise of a great rushing." Acts 2:2 says, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind." Verse 4 tells us it was "the Holy Ghost." When that came on the scene, Ezekiel 3:12 says "the glory of the LORD" was there. Prophetically, the first appearance we see in Ezekiel's prophecy is that which typifies the morning time and the morning glory of the Gospel Day.

A Lawless Spirit Produced a Dark Age

Prophetically, as time progressed, something began to occur. Ezekiel, Chapter 8, tells that the circumstances became dismal and dark. We read in Ezekiel 8:10, "So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, poured upon the wall round about." All the things mentioned in this verse ("creeping things, and abominable beasts") were unlawful under the Levitical law (Leviticus 11:41-43). This is a typical picture of the rise of a lawless spirit. What was the outgrowth of that lawless spirit? They tried to put things in the wall (the wall is "salvation"; Isaiah 26:1). They tried to put things that were unlawful into an experience of salvation. What did that produce? Ezekiel 8:12 says they were "in the dark." It produced a dark age.

This dark age caused people to turn their backs toward the temple of God, a picture of apostasy, and the outgrowth of that apostasy was the Dark Ages. To see what happened during those Dark Ages, look at **Ezekiel 9:3**, which reads, "**And the glory of the God of Israel [the glory and the presence are synonymous] was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house.**" The glory of the Lord was "gone up" because of the conditions. God's presence and glory will not tolerate just any spiritual condition. When darkness moves in, God moves out. Apostasy produced darkness, and "**the glory of the LORD**" was gone. Because of the conditions, "**the glory**" did not stay where it was.

Sleeping represents apostasy in Matthew, Chapter 13.

We must remember two things: (1) if we lose the presence, or the glory of God, we have lost it all, and we are just going through an empty, irrelevant form; and (2) we must also recognize what happens when we lose the presence of God. When Jesus gave the seven prophetic parables in Matthew, Chapter 13, the second parable, the Parable of the Tares (represents the period from A.D. 270 to A.D. 530), the second period of the Gospel Day. That was a transitional period, a period of apostasy. Matthew 13:24-25 states: "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying. The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field [Christ sowing the Word of God in the morning time]: But while men slept [a picture of apostasy], his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." Sleeping in this parable is a picture of apostasy. (For a more full treatment of these prophetic parables, see my book on *The Seven Prophetic Parables of Christ*.)

Look at the account of Samson. When Samson disobeyed and lost the presence of God, Judges 16:20 says: "And she [Delilah] said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him." Once the presence of God was gone, Judges 16:21 tells us, "But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." Notice the progression. When apostasy set in, it did the same thing it did to Samson: blind, bind, and grind. The Philistines put out Samson's eyes, and apostasy puts out people's spiritual eyes. They lose their vision of truth. They are *blind*. Once that happens, then the enemy can *bind* them in any way he wants. Once people become the enemy's servants, then they *grind*. What a sad picture! Why did this happen to Samson? Isaiah 4:5 tells us, "The glory shall be a defence." Samson lost the glory, and he lost his defense.

At one time, the presence of God came on Samson, enabling him to use the jawbone of an ass to slay a thousand men (Judges 15:15). Yet, in the account with Delilah, when the Philistines came, he was helpless. Through disobedience, Samson lost the glory; he lost God's presence; he lost his defense. Consider the high priest Eli, who was also disobedient. God told him to restrain

his sons, and he would not (1 Samuel 3:13). When "the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel" (1 Samuel 4:2), Israel brought the Ark with them into the battle. They needed the presence of God. We read in 1 Samuel 4:4-5: "So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." Shouting alone is no indication of victory. Thank God for being able to shout out victory, but some people can shout, yet they do not have any victory.

First Samuel 4:6-8 states: "And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness." The Philistines had heard what the glory and the presence of God did, but sadly, this time the conditions were different. The Philistines believed "God is come into the camp," but when Phinehas' wife (who was with child, near to be delivered) heard that the Ark was taken and that her husband and father-in-law were dead, 1 Samuel 4:21 tells us, "And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband."

The name "Ichabod" in Hebrew means "there is no glory." Israel lost their defense because there was no glory, and they were beaten in battle. Disobedience took the defense during the day of apostasy, and it will do the same yet today. When 1 Samuel 4:21 says, "The glory is departed," this is a type of the morning-time apostasy. Look where the Ark was taken. First Samuel 5:1-2 reads: "And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house [temple] of Dagon, and set it by Dagon." Dagon was a fish God worshiped by the Philistines, an idol that was half man and half fish. The priests of Dagon would hollow out the head of a fish and put the fish head on top of their heads, letting the tail stream down their backs. That is a type of Roman Catholicism. If you look at the pictures of the popes of Rome, you will find a miter on their heads with the streamers trailing down their backs, just as the fish head that the priests of Dagon wore while serving a false God. Revelation, Chapter 13, tells that the papal beast worships the dragon (paganism). First Samuel, Chapter 4, portrays a typical picture (the type of Roman Catholicism) as well as a literal picture (Old Israel losing the presence of God and thus losing their defense). **Ezekiel 9:3** reads, "**And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up.**" This is a typical picture of the Dark Ages of the Gospel Day.



In **Ezekiel, Chapter 10**, we see "**the glory of God**" again, but it is in a different position. **Ezekiel 10:18-19** says: "**Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.**" Remember, the cherubim are the redeemed. What does this depict?

The progression has brought us up through the Gospel Day. Now we have typically advanced to the age of Protestantism, letting us know that during the age of Protestantism, "**the glory of the LORD**" was not in "**the house**," or the temple. It "**departed from off the threshold of the**

house, and stood over the cherubims" (verse 18). During the age of Protestantism, God was not in **"the house,"** or in their collective unit, but He was with **"the cherubims"** (the individual saints, or the redeemed).

What began as a reformation, which was indeed a move of God in the sixteenth century, ended with the rise of the Protestant beast. The glory of God was not with the Protestant beast; it was a work of the flesh. Galatians 5:19-20 says the "works of the flesh" include "heresies" ('sects'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*). As a whole, Protestantism was a man-made system that had departed from the Word of God. We read in **Ezekiel 10:19, "And the cherubims [the redeemed] lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth [they did not have the spirit of that beast] in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them [they walked in what understanding they had, and it lifted them up], and every one stood at the door of the east gate."** The **"east"** represents the source of all light. The presence and glory of God during that Protestant era was with those who were walking in the light. Though it was an age of sectarian religion, though that beast was the predominant, prevailing condition, God still had a people in that day, people who embraced **"the wheels"** (the particular part of the truth each saint had an enlightenment concerning the message available to them) and who were lifted up above that earthen level. They personally enjoyed the glory of God in their lives.

We must recognize it was individual according to the people. **"The glory"** was with those individuals who were facing in the direction of light, those who were walking in the light. The words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:8 are applicable here. He wrote, "For ye were sometimes darkness [they had been in a dark age], but now are ye light." When that sixteenth-century Reformation heralded the truth of Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith," light came. Thank God, there were people who embraced that light! Although many of those reformers later became sectarian and bitter, putting armies on the field against one another. Though they caused the beast to rise in this period, there were still those who had embraced the light. It was the same in the second segment of Protestantism (the Wesleyan era). There were people who embraced the message of holiness, and although Wesley's successors raised up an earthly organization, there were still souls under the altar with white robes (Revelation 6:8-11). They were living the holiness message. The message lifted them up. They had the presence of God and the glory of God in their lives, though the conditions were certainly not ideal.

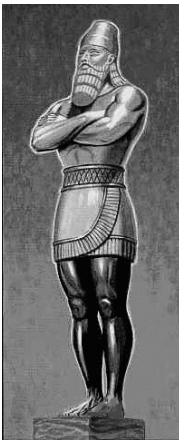
There were people who continued to "walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8); otherwise, the evening time would not have had the message of Revelation 18:4, a message to "come out of her, my people." There were people in Babylon who were God's people, who were walking in what light was available to them. We read in 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, [Walking in the light is walking in understanding (Psalm 119:130). There have been people in every age who walked in what understanding they had, and God honored that.] as he is in the light, we have fellowship." The word "fellowship" in Greek is *koinonia*, and it means "share in common." What do we share in common? The preceding verses tell us it is "life." "Our hands have handled, of the Word of *life*; For the *life* was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal *life*" (1 John 1:1-2). We share in common that God life. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." There were those who had that life. Romans 8:10 says, "The Spirit is life," and that Spirit is His presence. Wherever God's presence is, that is where His glory is. The glory was with **"the cherubims"** (the saints) in that Protestant era. Although that system did not walk in light, there were saints who did walk in the light they had at that point.

Notice the progression from the morning time, through the Dark Ages (papalism), and to the cloudy day (Protestantism). **Ezekiel 11:23** reads, **"And the glory of the LORD went up from**

the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain." When did this occur in this typical vision? Ezekiel 11:17-20 tells us: "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

The New Testament "Temple of God"

We are now again advancing in this typical portrayal of the Gospel Day. The people had been scattered in the "countries" (verse 17), or nations (representing denominationalism, or that day of sectarian religion, Protestantism). We have advanced to the evening-time portion (commencing in A.D. 1880), and now we read God is gathering people out of the "countries where ye have been scattered." In verse 20, He said, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." This is what the Apostle Paul quoted in 2 Corinthians 6:16, saying, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." He said "the temple of God" in this New Testament dispensation is a "people," but it is not just any people. To whom was Paul writing in this Epistle? Second Corinthians 1:1 says, "Unto the church of God." Paul was writing to a specific people, to a people who had embraced the truth. We read in 2 Corinthians 6:16-17: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God [the temple of God today is not an edifice, not a literal structure, but it is a people]; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them [there is the presence of God]; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." When will He be their God and they will be His people? When they come out and separate themselves from man-made organizations (Ezekiel 11:16).



The Image

What does **"the mountain" (Ezekiel 11:23)** represent? When Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing dream, Daniel 2:1 tells us, "His sleep brake from him." It woke him up and troubled him badly. He could not remember what the dream was about. So he called all of Babylon's magicians, soothsayers, and wisemen, telling them to interpret the dream. They said, "Tell us what it was." He said: "I do not know what it was. You tell me." They could not. They could not give him the message, and Babylon still does not have the message today! Daniel, a man of God, said, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets" (Daniel 2:28). God gave Daniel the dream and the interpretation. The dream was of a metallic image comprised of four metallic portions, which serve as a prophetic timeline from the day of Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon) down to the Advent of Christ and the institution of the church. Daniel 2:35 states, "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold [the four different metallic components that represented the four different kingdoms], broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind [the Holy Spirit] carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone [Christ] that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

"The stone" is Christ. Peter, preaching to the Sanhedrin, told them in Acts 4:10-11: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,

whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone." He was speaking of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He is the stone. Daniel 2:35 tells us "the stone . . . became a great mountain," and Daniel 2:44 says, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." The mountain is the kingdom, or the church. The kingdom and the church have been synonymous since Pentecost.

We read in Revelation 21:9, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels [not a celestial being but a messenger, symbolic of a ministry; Galatians 4:13-14 and Revelation 22:8-9] which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues [pouring out the judgments of God to reveal the truth, to uncover things], and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." To understand who is the bride, the Lamb's wife, we must consider Revelation 19:7-8, which says: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come [not going to come but a present reality], and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her [His wife] was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." If the wedding garment is "the righteousness of saints," it only stands to reason those wearing the garment (the bride, or the wife) are the saints.

Consider 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11, and notice how many times Paul employed the expression "you" in these verses to understand to whom he was speaking. We read in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3: "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 subtilty, so *your* minds should be corrupted." Paul was concerned that the serpent, or that spirit, would beguile the second Adam's wife, the church. He addressed this letter "unto the church of God" (2 Corinthians 1:1). That is who the "chaste virgin," the bride, the Lamb's wife is. Revelation 21:9-10 states: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain." To receive a vision of the truth takes an angel, a ministry, with a message to let the Spirit of God have something to use to enlighten your understanding.

God was going to show John the bride, the Lamb's wife. That "great and high mountain" represents "the bride, the Lamb's wife," the church. We are following the glory of God. It appeared in the morning time with the Advent of Christ in His rightful position after the church was instituted, but through the Dark Ages, it moved out. Through the dark and cloudy day, it dwelled with the individual saints, not with that system of Protestantism. Now, in this evening time, the glory of God is back in the mountain, back in the church. The church has now become visible.

Isaiah 2:1-2 tells us: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days." This is a prophetic expression of the New Testament. Biblically, what are the last days? When did they commence? We read in Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past [speaking of the Old Testament dispensation] unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." When Jesus Christ came, He ushered in a new dispensation. Biblically, that is when the last days commenced. This was spoken of by the Hebrew writer in the proximity of A.D. 63-69.

Can we go back any further to see when the last days commenced? Peter, preaching on the Day of Pentecost, said in Acts 2:16-17, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [quoting Joel 2:28]; And it shall come to pass in the last days." Peter said, "This is that"—in essence, saying that this is the last day. When did it begin? In A.D. 33. Isaiah 2:2 tells us, "And it shall come to pass in the last days [talking about this New Testament dispensation, this Gospel Day], that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains."

Thank God, the Church of God is "in the top." You cannot get any higher than the top of the mountain. What is the house of the Lord? Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:15, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God." The house of the Lord is "the church of the living God."

Again, Isaiah 2:2-3 continues: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house [Mount Zion] shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills [all the low-mingled hills of Babylon]; and all nations [the different denominations] shall flow unto it [they are coming from the winepress (Revelation 14:19), the Word of God]. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up [when you go to Zion, you are going 'up,' and when you go to the Church of God, you are going 'up'] to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths [these had been lost sight of as a public message through the Dark Ages and the dark and cloudy day, but now the glory of God was back '**in the mountain,**' and '**the mountain**' was back in public view]: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

The Glory of God Is Back "in the Mountain"

Zion and Jerusalem are figures of the church (Hebrews 12:22-23). Follow series number five of the Revelation through. It begins in Revelation 12:1 with a beautiful woman of light clothed with the sun. She had put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). She had all of God's luminary agents: the sun, the moon, and the stars. She was "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). She was "with child" (Revelation 12:2). Galatians 4:26 calls her "the mother of us all." She was bringing forth spiritual converts, a portrayal of the morning-time church in her pristine glory. As soon as she appeared on the stage, Revelation 12:3 says, "There appeared another wonder." The Greek word is *semeion*, which indicates it is a sign or a symbol. Therefore, another symbol appeared: a great red dragon, the first opposing force of the church. Verse 7 says, "There was war." That "great red dragon" represents the powers of pagan Rome, which fought against the church.

Revelation 12:11 says, "They overcame." God's people cast that dragon down. Paganism was defeated, but the devil was not done. In Revelation 13:1, another beast rose up, and this was the papal beast that made "war with the saints" (Revelation 13:7). But that beast received a deadly wound (Revelation 13:3), and the dark night of Roman Catholicism was forever ended in A.D. 1530. In its place, another beast came up out of the earth (Revelation 13:11). This religious system of Protestantism came out of the minds of men. Revelation 13:16 states, "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark." Everyone in that period was indoctrinated with the Protestant teachings, but in Revelation 14:1, John's vision progressed, and he said, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb [Christ] stood on the mount Zion."

The church was back in visible view, and with the Lamb were people who had embraced the message. They had the Father's name (God) in their forehead (in their minds). They had the true doctrines. They had the doctrine concerning the oneness of the body of Christ, the unity of believers, the message of the church. The church was back in visible view, and Christ was back in His rightful place as head of the church (Colossians 1:18). **Ezekiel 11:23** tells us, "**And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain.**" That "**mountain**" represents the church in the evening time (Revelation 14:1; 21:10).

As we see the various portrayals of the glory of God, the picture being drawn before us is that apostasy, darkness, and man-made teachings and organizations cause the glory of God to move out and prevent it from occupying its rightful position. That happened through the various portions of the Gospel Day, but in this evening time, it is back in an exalted position. It is back

to a "**mountain**," back to Mount Zion, back to an exalted position. "A city that is set on a hill [the Greek word is *oros*, which means 'mountain'; in other words, sitting on Mount Zion] cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14). The glory of God was in an elevated position in the morning time, and it is in an elevated position in this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day. I trust we can see this typical portrayal of following the glory of God. Having the glory of God in our lives individually and in our assemblies collectively is vital. It is the only defense we have from the enemy. The enemy is always working to remove people from God's presence, and sadly, in various portions of the Gospel Day, he was far too effective; but now we are in the evening time. Zechariah 14:7 says, "At evening time it shall be light."

God is bringing understanding. In 1880, D.S. Warner and other brethren had the eyes of their understanding enlightened; they began to see the truths concerning the church. They brought a message that had not been public since the morning time, and people began to come to the light. Jesus said in John 3:21, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." The honest-hearted will come to the light. That is why the light must be heralded, why the message must be preached. The only way John received a clear vision of Babylon (in Revelation, Chapter 17) and the church (in Revelation, Chapter 21) was through an angel with one of the vials (an evening-time ministry with a message).

God still has a ministry, and the ministry still has a message. This message will continue to do what God intended it to do. He said in Isaiah 55:11, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The message began to gather people in 1880 when this evening time commenced. It is still gathering people yet today, and it will continue to gather people until the last saint is out of Babylon. Jeremiah 51:2 says that God is going to "empty her [Babylon's] land." When Jesus splits the clouds, there will not be one saint left in Babylon. They will all be home in Mount Zion.

"Open Ye the Gates of the City"

We must never lose sight of the fact that Ezekiel was receiving "visions" (Ezekiel 1:1; 40:2). He was never physically transported anywhere, no more than Christ was when He was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:3-9) and the revelator (Revelation 4:1-2) when he was on the isle of Patmos. Ezekiel was carried by the Spirit *in his mind*. **Ezekiel 43:1** says, "**He** [the Holy Spirit] **brought me** [through a vision] **to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east.**" The language of visions is symbolic; so it is telling us that those who are seeking and walking in the light are who are looking "**toward the east.**" This verse reveals there is a "**gate**" connected to this "**east.**" The source of light is "**the east**"; so what is this "**gate**"? Isaiah 26:1 states, "In that day [the Gospel Day] shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city." This is the same city the angel showed John—"the holy Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:10). Hebrews 12:22-23 explains what that is representing, saying, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly." All these represent different facets of the church. Isaiah 26:1 continues, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls." When the angel told John he was going to show him this bride, the Lamb's wife, he changed symbols. Revelation 21:10 reads, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city." He said he was going to show him the bride, the Lamb's wife, but he showed him a city, and that city had "a wall great and high" (Revelation 21:12). This reveals that the "city" is the same thing as "the bride, the Lamb's wife."



**The gates are
praise.**

Again, Isaiah 26:1-2 reads: "In that day [this Gospel Day] shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city [the new Jerusalem]; salvation will God appoint for walls ['its wall' (singular); *The Septuagint*] and bulwarks. Open ye the gates [the gates of the city], that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Prophetically, this is talking about people who were out in Babylon yet kept true to all the truth they knew during that dark and cloudy day. They walked in what light they had and were hungering for more. They were looking for greater light, greater victory. Isaiah 26:2 tells us, "Open ye the gates." The gates of what? Revelation 21:12 tells us, "And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates." This city has gates. How do we open the gates? What is another aspect of the gates? Isaiah lets us know the gates are praise. When we who have come to the truth have light (understanding), and we are walking in that light, we can have praise. We read in Isaiah 60:18, "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." One way the gates get opened to others who are still down in the mingled hills of Babylon is when we begin to praise God for the light and truth that we have.

Many times Brother D. S. Warner and other brethren with a buckboard wagon full of singers and saints headed into a town and began singing. They began at one end of town, and by the time they arrived at the other end of town, they had drawn a crowd. After the singing, Brother Warner would preach. People were so impressed with the message, often the next night, they were invited to move into a schoolhouse or other building. There they would hold meetings, and soon a congregation was established. This was brought about because of the saints coming in on a wagon, shouting and praising and singing. When Isaiah 26:2 says, "Open ye the gates," it is so "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Jesus said, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light" (John 3:21). Honest-hearted people in Babylon will come out.

Jeremiah 51:2 reads, "And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land." God is going to empty Babylon of every saint. It started in 1880 when Brother D. S. Warner and others began to publish the message concerning the oneness of the body of Christ. "The righteous nation which keepeth the truth" was those in sectarian religion who were walking in what light they had. They were the souls under the altar (Revelation 6:9) who were burdened over the conditions of being separated from their brethren. They were the ones who prayed for judgment to be put on the beast that came up out of the earth so the walls of sectism could come down, and God's people could come together. **Ezekiel 43:1** is telling us that those who are seeking and walking in the light will find "**the gate**." The truth will open up to them, and they will enjoy "**the glory of the God of Israel**" (**Ezekiel 43:2**). When people who are seeking and desiring truth embrace that light, it will serve as a "**gate**" and open up to them, enabling them to move to where they can enjoy "**the glory**" of God.

It is crucial to notice what "**the glory**" is associated with in these verses. **Ezekiel 43:2** says, "**Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east.**" To understand or enjoy "**the glory**" of God requires walking in the light (1 John 1:7). This goes back to being obedient and compliant—the only way people can enjoy the presence and "**glory**" of God. Obedience produces the "**glory**" of God, and walking in the light is obedience. This evening time is a time of light. Zechariah 14:7 says, "At evening time it shall be light." Psalm 119:130 says "light" is "understanding." In this sixth-seal period, when people began to understand they did not have to be bound in sectarian bondage, separated by sectarian walls, subject to earthen, man-made rule, when they saw that light and heard the clarion call of "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4), people who came leaping and shouting home to Zion. They followed the light.

"His Voice Was Like a Noise of Many Waters"

Ezekiel 43:1 says, "**He brought me,**" and the Lord desires to bring people to light in this evening time. How does He do that? **Verse 2** reads, "**And his voice was like a noise of many waters.**" The Lord desires to bring a people *out* and to bring a people *in*. We read in Deuteronomy 6:23, "And he brought us *out* from thence, that he might bring us *in*." Some folks who get stirred up with sectarian or other organizations, even some who tout themselves to be the Church of God, might see things with which they are displeased and unhappy and they may come *out* of those systems, but they do not come *in*. God not only wants us to come *out*, but He wants us to come *in*. Ephesians 4:13 tells us, "Till we all come *in* the unity of the faith." Some people come *out*, but they are too contrary to get along with anybody. They will not come *in*. However, following the presence of God and "**the glory**" of God means you must follow the message.

When **Ezekiel 43:2** tells us "**his voice was like a noise of many waters,**" who does this represent? Where else do we see this kind of expression? There is a tremendous correlation between Ezekiel's vision and the revelator's vision. Revelation 1:15 states, "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters." Revelation 1:11 says this is speaking of the "Alpha and Omega," who is "Jesus" (Revelation 22:13, 16). This one whose "**voice was like a noise of many waters**" is Jesus. It is the "**voice**" of Christ. How do men hear the "**voice**" of Christ? How are they enlightened to hear a "**voice**" that tells them both to come out and come in? Jesus said in John 5:24-25: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is [present tense], when the dead [not the physical resurrection but 'dead in trespasses and sins'; Ephesians 2:1] shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." To "hear the voice" (verse 25) is to hear His Word (verse 24). When Ezekiel talks about the "**voice,**" it is the voice of Christ, and the voice of Christ is His Word.

When this "**voice**" was heard, **Ezekiel 43:2** tells us, "**The earth shined with his glory.**" Ecclesiastes 12:7 reveals that "the earth" represents man. We are an earthen vessel (2 Corinthians 4:7; 5:1). "**The earth**" He was talking about is the physical portion of man, and this is right where the Lord desires to bring man in this evening time. He wants to bring them to light through His Word. When people move accordingly, it produces "**his glory.**" When did "**his glory**" appear in the Exodus? In Exodus, Chapter 14, when Egypt was closing in, God told Moses, "Raise your rod." When Moses obeyed the word, the pillar of the cloud by day moved right in between Israel and the Egyptians; the glory was a defense (Exodus 14:19-20). When Moses built everything according to the pattern shown him in the mount, the glory of God came in (Exodus 40:33-35). When Solomon did everything according to the pattern, the glory of God moved in (2 Chronicles 5:1, 13-14). When the morning-time church operated according to the pattern, the glory of God came in. Likewise, when the evening-time church got back to "that which was from the beginning" (1 John 1:1), the glory of God moved in. It only moves in as people gain understanding and move in accordance with that light. When they obey, the presence of God moves on the scene, and with the presence comes the glory. This is where the Lord desires to bring mankind in this evening time.

Again, **Ezekiel 43:2** reads, "**And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east** [it is correlated with light]: **and his voice was like a noise of many waters** [the voice of Christ]: **and the earth shined with his glory.**" These earthen vessels shine with "**his glory**" when we receive light, or understanding, and walk in that light. Prophetically, people who

had been bound up in sectarian bondage in the dark and cloudy day saw the light, and they saw a way out. God was bringing them again Zion. Isaiah 52:8 states, "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice [the same 'voice' **Ezekiel 43:2** talks about; the voice of Christ is heard by the bringing of the Word]; with the voice together [not their voice, but 'the voice'] shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion." Those words express two aspects of unity. When he speaks about "eye to eye," the eyes represent the Spirit of God (Revelation 5:6). Here was a ministry, at the commencement of this evening time, who saw "eye to eye." Not that they saw every jot and tittle of Scripture alike, but they all had the same Spirit. They were all under the guidance of the same Spirit of God. They had "the unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3), and that is where all unity must begin.

You cannot unify with a spirit that is not the Spirit of God. Romans 8:9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." You cannot have unity unless you first have "unity of the Spirit," which means that each must possess the Holy Spirit. That is the first rung of unity. Then Isaiah tells that they lifted "up the voice . . . together." When the Lord brought "again Zion," they progressed past having only the unity of the Spirit to having "the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). They taught the message of the oneness of the body of Christ. As the understanding of the saints became enlightened, Isaiah 35:10 tells what happened, stating, "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." When they were able to get loose from sectarian bondage, they came back to the church that Jesus built.

Ezekiel 43:2 says, "**The earth shined with his glory,**" and we see something very similar in Revelation 18:1, which reads, "And after these things I saw another angel [symbolizing a ministry] come down from heaven [having a divine call], having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory." A true, God-called ministry will have two things: light and glory. They have great power that comes from obeying the Word of God, and with that power, "the earth was lightened with his glory." A true, God-called ministry brings light, or understanding, to people. When people receive understanding and then walk in that understanding, it brings glory.

"The Glory of the Lord Came Into the House"

What was the angel's message? Revelation 18:2-4 tells us: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice [the voice of a ministry with a strong message], saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven [the voice of the Holy Spirit], saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Verse 1 says, "The earth was lightened with his glory." The evening-time message brings light and glory. **Ezekiel 43:4** says, "**And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.**" In this evening time, the Lord has a "**house**" again that has "**the glory**" of God. Remember, it moved out of the "**house**" in the Dark Ages; it was not in the "**house**" in the cloudy day, but in the evening time, the Lord has a "**house**" again that has "**the glory.**"

Hebrews 3:6 tells us what the "**house**" is, stating, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we." The saints comprise the "**house.**" First Timothy 3:15 reads, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The "**house**" is a people who

are grounded in truth; they are "the pillar" to uphold the message. Speaking of the "**house**," Haggai 2:9 reads, "The glory of this latter house [typically speaking of the evening-time church] shall be greater than of the former [the morning-time church]." It is greater because the light of this day is "as the light of seven days" (Isaiah 30:26). We have the light of not only this period but of all the other periods previously. We have "the light of seven days," and this light (understanding) enables us to have the presence of God. As we comply with that light, it brings "**the glory**" of God to the church.

Following "**the glory**" of God gives great insight into conditions. Revelation 15:1 speaks about seeing "seven angels having the seven last plagues." This did not occur until the evening time in 1880 because Revelation 16:2 tells us, "And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image [Protestantism]." That had to be a period after the Protestant era. That brings us to the evening time. The very first judgment was poured out on Protestantism and on those who worshiped in that system. Revelation 15:8 speaks of "the temple," and 2 Corinthians 6:16 explains "the temple of the living God" is "my people." The temple of God is a people, but it is not just any people; it is a people who walk in the light. Look at whom Paul was addressing in this Corinthian Epistle: "unto the church of God" (2 Corinthians 1:1). The temple of God is the Church of God.

We read in Revelation 15:8, "And the temple [or the Church of God] was filled with smoke [a picture of the glory of God] from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple." Previously, people did not understand how to come out of Babylon and come into the church. When the seven vial angels (or a ministry in the evening time) poured out the judgment on false religion, the eyes of their understanding were enlightened (Ephesians 1:18), and they saw the truth. That is when they came to Zion. The emblems here are very similar to what we read in Exodus, Chapter 40, when the glory of the Lord came in after Moses built everything according to the pattern and also when Solomon built everything according to the pattern. The same portrayal is given in the evening-time church.

When John received a vision of the church, what was her most outstanding quality? What was the first thing he mentioned? He was told in Revelation 21:9, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," and Revelation 21:10 tells us, "And he carried me away." It takes a combination of a ministry with a message and the enlightenment the Spirit of God brings with that message. The most outstanding feature is found in Revelation 21:11, which states, "Having the glory of God: and her light [the church's light] was like unto a stone most precious." Christ is that stone. We read in 1 Peter 2:5-6: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house [those who are 'born again'; 1 Peter 1:23], an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion [quoting Isaiah 28:16] a chief corner stone, elect, precious." This precious stone is Jesus Christ.

Coming back to Revelation 21:11, we find the church was measured (understanding and obedience) to the light of Christ (or to the Word). **Ezekiel 43:5** says, "**So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.**" That is the only way we will see the vision. First, the message must be preached, and second, we must have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: [so that] The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Ephesians 1:17-18). The only way our eyes are going to get any light is by the Spirit, but He has to have a message to work with. We can see that repeatedly in Revelation. When John commenced that apocalyptic writing, he said in Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice." He did not hear

the voice until he was in the Spirit. We are not truly going to get the full impact and import of His Word unless we are in the Spirit. The Revelation began when John began to hear the voice. Then he began to get the message from Christ.

Revelation 4:1-2 says: "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit." That is how John received the vision, how he could see what God wanted him to see. To get a clear vision of Babylon, Revelation 17:1 reads, "And there came one of the seven angels [or a ministry] 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." Then Revelation 17:3 says, "So he carried me away in the spirit." It takes a correlated effort of a ministry with a message and the Spirit of God to enlighten the eyes of men's understanding. You will never see Babylon until you hear a message and the Spirit of God makes it clear.

When John received a vision of the church, Revelation 21:9-10 states: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit." It takes the Spirit. Thank God for this evening time, the time when the Lord has a people who have yielded to Him and who will listen and hear "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:22). Because of that, **Ezekiel 43:5** says, "**So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.**" What a glorious time to enjoy this evening time of the Gospel Day! The Lord desires His people to enjoy His "**glory**," but conditions must be met to do so. The saints, as a whole, did not enjoy His presence when the Dark Ages were the prevailing condition, nor when people were bound by man-made teachings in the Protestant era. (Some individuals enjoyed it, but the predominant condition was not such.) Thank God, when the evening-time portion of the Gospel Day arrived, a collective, visible "**glory of the LORD**" could both be seen and enjoyed. We must guard it, prize it, and protect it because it will protect us. The "**glory**" will be a defense for us.

Sadly, many congregations once enjoyed the glory of God in an outstanding manner, but today they no longer enjoy the glory. Some of the places are shut down, and buildings have been sold. Campgrounds have grown over with weeds because people failed to walk in the light. Light is progressive. First John 1:7 tells us to "walk in the light." You cannot stand still and walk at the same time. Walk means to progress, to advance, to move. Light is a moving object. Paul said in Philippians 3:13, "I count not myself to have apprehended," and we must not either. As long as time continues to stand, God will reveal more light. He will give more understanding, which will bring more responsibility, but as we walk in that light, it will bring more glory into the camp. I believe God desires to manifest His presence and His "**glory**" not only in our lives but in our midst and in our worship services in a greater way than what we are enjoying. God has more for us, but He works through human vessels. It was the "earth" that was lightened with his glory.

I have been in places where people got lit up, and when they got lit up, they raised up. They came out of their seats; they praised God; they glorified God. Sisters would walk the aisles and wave their hankies; brethren would shout and jump. God is just the same today. God desires His presence in our midst in a greater way. He desires his glory to be manifest in a greater way. We need to be compliant, obedient, and have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith. When He says testify, we need to testify; if He says shout, we need to shout. The glory of God not only benefits us, but it also serves as a witness to others. It helps open the gates so others who are keeping the truth can see where truth is, where the presence of God is, where the glory of God is, and they can see their need. There is a vital lesson in following the "**glory**" of God. We need to make sure we keep it keen in our lives and in our assemblies.

NOTES:

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE GATHERING OF THE REMNANT

Ezekiel 14:22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

Ezekiel 34:11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

This portion of the prophetic passage portrays an encouraging picture. The Lord, speaking through the Prophet Ezekiel, proclaimed in **Ezekiel 14:22**, "Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant." In our companion text, the Lord said in **Ezekiel 34:11-12**: "I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. . . . so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." We have been studying Ezekiel's typical portrayal of the progression of the Gospel Day. In these particular texts, we see a depiction of the gathering of the "remnant." There is a beautiful picture portrayed in these passages, one that is vital to the day and time in which we live. As we consider the latter portion of this segment of Ezekiel's prophetic writing, there is much typical repetition (or parallelism) regarding the Gospel Day, just as there is in Revelation. That is not by accident but by divine intent. Revelation, Chapters 14-19, deal with the realities and truths concerning the evening portion of this Gospel Day. Out of the twenty-two chapters in the Book of Revelation, six chapters deal exclusively with the evening time, and the other chapters include the evening time with the other portions of the Gospel Day. That speaks to the great importance God attaches to understanding this critical evening-time portion of the Gospel Day. Likewise, this latter portion of the Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 33-48, has a predominance of a typical visionary portrayal of the evening portion of this Gospel Day as well. This is what we feel burdened to consider as we continue the thread that runs through this prophetic writing paralleling the Gospel Day, this Christian dispensation.

In this portion of the prophetic writing, we find similar expressions dealing with the same time period of this Gospel Day. When God finds it necessary to be repetitive in the Scriptures, there is a divine purpose. He desires to emphasize those truths specifically. Repetition is needful because we are forgetful creatures. We must constantly be reminded (especially in our day when

deceit and deception are rampant, a day when the enemy is working in such deceitful ways), it takes a spiritual person to discern the enemy's maneuvers. The working of the enemy was overt in past periods of this Gospel Day, working through terrible persecutions and outward oppositions. He worked through governments to bring a force behind their religious movement, such as in the Dark Ages. In Revelation, Chapter 17, the woman (Babylon) has decked herself with pearls and precious stones. She has dressed herself up to look like she stands for truth. At a casual glance, she looks as if she is holding forth truths, but it is a work of deceit! God's people need to see through that deceit!

Psalms 147:5 says, "His [God's] understanding is infinite." As human creatures, our understanding is finite. His is unlimited; ours is limited. Isaiah 46:10 tells us that the Lord is the One "declaring the end from the beginning." He knows what is going to occur before it ever happens. In many places throughout prophecy, the Lord spoke concerning how His people would be scattered. This was always a result of their spiritual condition. Whether in the Old Testament or the New, the scattering came about because of disobedience, as a consequence of their spiritual condition. Keep in mind, although God spoke throughout many prophetic writings concerning His people being scattered, which had a literal application in the Old Testament dispensation, we must never lose sight of what is written in 1 Corinthians 10:11. Speaking of the Old Testament occurrences, it reads, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples." The Greek word for "ensamples" is *tupos*, which means "a type," and a type serves as a representation. It is a representation, or symbolism, of another event (usually to come). These Old Testament types are portraying New Testament realities. First Corinthians 10:11 continues, "They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are [present tense] come." They were written to admonish and warn us of how the enemy has worked in bygone days, while realizing, "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The way the enemy has worked in past times is the way he continues to work in present times. We must understand his workings.

Knowledge Is Crucial

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices [in the Greek, *devices* means 'thought-out plans and schemes']." Satan is a master schemer, and his ultimate intent is to dupe, deceive, and damn the souls of men. Thank God for His "great . . . faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:23). He does not want us to be "ignorant." The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:4, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Salvation is wonderful, but unless you come to a "knowledge of the truth," you can never stay saved. Satan has so many "devices" that he employs, trying to work against the souls of mankind, but "the knowledge of the truth" enables us to not be ignorant of Satan's devices.

Knowledge is crucial. Hosea 4:6 reads, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." A lack of knowledge can be spiritually disastrous. God does not want us to have a lack of knowledge. He wants us "to come unto the knowledge of the truth." How did He ordain for that to occur? We read in Jeremiah 3:15, "And I will give you pastors [the word 'pastor' means shepherd; one role of a pastor is to act as a shepherd, herding, guiding, feeding, and protecting the sheep] according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." To "come unto the knowledge of the truth," it is crucial to recognize the avenue through which God sends the knowledge is His pastors and the preaching of His Word.

The Scriptures are replete in letting us know why God's people would be scattered. Previously, we studied the earlier portions of the Gospel Day and learned what produced the condition was

first an apostasy, a defection from truth, produced by a spirit of lawlessness that got hold of the people. Later, the Protestant era was nothing more than a work of the flesh (sects are a work of the flesh; Galatians 5:19). It was all produced by a failure to walk in the light and to obey. As a consequence of that disobedience, that walking in the flesh, God's people became scattered. We read in Jeremiah 9:16, "I will scatter them also among the heathen." Certainly, that happened in a literal sense in the Old Testament dispensation. Israel was scattered to the Assyrians and the Babylonians, but we are dealing with the type. Just as God's people went into Babylonian captivity in the Old Testament dispensation, so it occurred in the New Testament dispensation as well. God's people went into spiritual Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah 13:24 reads, "Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness." Ezekiel 6:8 tells us, "Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries." Ezekiel 11:17 states, "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered." Ezekiel 12:13-14 says: "My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them." Where was God going to scatter them? In Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:21 tells us, "And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it." What winds? Ephesians 4:14 tells us it is "every wind of doctrine." All the different doctrinal stances and teachings in sectarian organizations are what is typically being spoken of here. We read in Ezekiel 20:34, "And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand." Ezekiel 28:25 states, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered." Ezekiel 29:13 says, "Yet thus saith the Lord GOD; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered."

Ezekiel 34:5-6 and **12** reads: "And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. . . . **As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.**" We read in Ezekiel 36:19, "And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them." Joel 3:2 says, "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." Israel was scattered because of disobedience. We must also recognize that it was not just the people, but it was because of the failure of the leadership to stay true to God and the message.

Likewise, God's people were "**scattered**" in this New Testament dispensation because a ministry did not stay true. Look at the typical picture portrayed in Ezekiel 34:1-6, which reads: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; [Whenever there is a rank apostasy and disobedience and the consequences of God's judgment come through, the responsibility ultimately lays at the feet of the leadership, or the ministry. It begins in the pulpit. The old adage is, 'Like priest, like people.' You are what you eat.] Woe be to the shepherds

of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."

What a sad condition! It resulted from a failure of the ministry to be true to the souls of men and their spiritual welfare. It is yet today when God's people are scattered. Rather than feed the flock, many of them feed themselves. They fleece the flock. In our land, we have many megachurches with supposedly thousands upon thousands of people. Their pastors fly around in private jets and live in million-dollar mansions. They are feeding themselves; they are fleecing the people. That is certainly contrary to what the Scriptures set forth. This failure of leaders to be true ministers, true shepherds, caused the people in the dark and cloudy day to be in a very unscriptural state. It brought a scattering, and through the Dark Ages and the dark and cloudy day, God's people were scattered into all these various man-made organizations.

Today there are some forty-five thousand supposedly Christian denominations, according to The Center for the Study of Christianity. How can that be when Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church [singular]"? If only one church was built by Jesus, then I submit to you, the rest were built by man under the guidance of a spirit of the devil. When we deal with these organizations, bear in mind we are not talking about individuals. Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." We are not against people, but we are against systems produced by spirits that are contrary to God's eternal Word, systems that are duping, deceiving, and damning multiplied millions. Therefore, the truth must be sounded out, and the enemy must be exposed so that we are not ignorant of Satan's devices and so that others who are enveloped in those things can have the eyes of their understanding enlightened (Ephesians 1:18) and be able "to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

Just as the people being scattered was prophesied of by the Lord, many of the same Scriptures we have read promised a gathering, a "**remnant**," a promise that the "**scattered**," separated, divided condition would not always exist. In this Christian dispensation, there was a time when being "**scattered**," having sectarian walls that divided brethren and sisters from one another, was the only condition available. It was the predominant condition, but we have progressed to the portion of this Christian dispensation when God is sounding out the truth and bringing His people back together as one body. He is bringing them out of the various realms of man-made religion, letting them hear the clarion call of truth, and He is gathering a "**remnant**" back together as one body of Christ.

A Scattering and a Gathering

The same Scriptures that spoke of a *scattering* also promised a *gathering*. Thank God, not everyone in that cloudy day was overcome with the sectarian spirit, and not everyone in sectarianism today is dominated by that devilish spirit. Some of God's people are still scattered in those realms. Ezekiel 6:8 reads, "Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape [they are going to get out of that '**scattered**,' separated, divided condition and be able to come back together as a part of the body of Christ] the sword among the nations [typical of denominations], when ye shall be scattered through the countries." God's people were "**scattered**," not

only in the Old Testament dispensation but in this New Testament dispensation through sectarian religion, God's people were "**scattered**" into various denominations, but He said, "Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape" (Ezekiel 6:8). I am so glad I escaped! I am glad I came out!

Jeremiah 51:6 says, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul." God is gathering a people. He began to "**gather**" when this evening time commenced in the proximity of A.D. 1880, and He has been gathering out a people ever since. We read in Ezekiel 11:17, "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people [out of the people who are in sectarian bondage], and assemble you out of the countries [or nations, denominations] where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel [the Promised Land]." In this New Testament dispensation, Israel is a spiritual nation. Jesus said in Matthew 21:42-44: "Did ye never read in the scriptures [quoting Psalm 118:22], The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: [Peter told who that stone is. When he preached to the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:10-11), he also quoted Psalm 118:22, saying this 'stone' is 'Jesus Christ of Nazareth'.] this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you [taken from old, literal Israel; Matthew 21:23 tells us He was addressing 'the chief priests and the elders' of old Judaism], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone [Jesus Christ] shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

The kingdom was taken from old Judaism, a literal nation, and "given to a nation." What nation was this? "Bringing forth the fruits." John the Baptizer told what kind of "fruits" this is speaking of, saying, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). The "fruits" needed to be brought forth (spoken of in Matthew 21:43) are repentance. Matthew 21:44 tells us, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." The stone is Christ. How are we to come to Christ? David penned in Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." When you come in old-time, Bible repentance and fall on the "stone" (Jesus Christ; Acts 4:10-11) with "a broken spirit . . . and a contrite heart," that is when you are ready to receive a kingdom experience. The kingdom is an experience (Romans 14:17).

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:10, "Thy kingdom come. [When does it come?] Thy will be done [His will is to 'be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth'; 1 Timothy 2:4] in earth [earthen vessels'; 2 Corinthians 4:7]." When His will (our being saved) is done in our earthen vessel, that is when the kingdom comes. That is when we begin to "reign in life" (Romans 5:17). That is when we become "kings and priests" (Revelation 1:6). Again, Matthew 21:43 reads, "The kingdom of God [or this experience that Jesus came to bring; this reigning experience from God] shall be taken from you [old literal Judaism], and given to a nation." It is no longer a *literal* nation, but now it is a *spiritual* nation. It is composed of people who "brought fruits unto repentance." It is a people who have fallen on the stone with a broken and contrite spirit. It is a spiritual work. When God's will (salvation) is done in their earthen vessels, they have a kingdom experience and become a part of this nation. It is not a literal measurement.

We read in Romans 2:28-29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly [the measurement used to be an outward measurement—a literal birth, lineage, and circumcision—but all that changed with Jesus Christ, with this new dispensation]; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew [a New Testament Jew], which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit." It is a spiritual circumcision, a spiritual work. The Apostle Paul talked about that circumcision further in Colossians 2:11-12, saying, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands [it is not physical], in putting off

the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ [a spiritual work]: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God." It is an "operation of God" through "faith." It is a spiritual work that destroys "the body of the sins of the flesh" and makes a man a new creature.

When we become that new creature, Galatians 6:15-16 tells us who the nation is that God gives the kingdom to. It reads: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision [the measurement is no longer external, or physical], but a new creature [the new measurement is a spiritual measurement]. And as many as walk according to this rule [the 'rule' is being 'a new creature'], peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The New Testament "Israel of God" are those who "walk according to this rule": being new creatures in Christ Jesus. That is the nation; that is the new Israel. It is a spiritual work done in the heart and life of an individual. If you study the word *Israel* in Genesis, Chapter 32, when Jacob wrestled with Christ, you will find it means "prevailed with God; power with God" (Genesis 32:28). When do we prevail? When do we have power? When we become a new creature.

The promise of our text not only portrays a *scattering* but also a *gathering*. Ezekiel 20:34-35 and 41 says: "I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. . . . I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen." God is working to "**gather**" a people. We read in Ezekiel 28:25, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob." Here we see He "gathered" the people "from the people among whom they were scattered." That is the work He desires and is doing today.

All God's People Will Be Gathered Out of Babylon

Ezekiel 34:13 tells us, "**And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land.**" Even as there was that "**cloudy and dark day**" (**Ezekiel 34:12**), the Protestant era, the Lord was still "the God of hope" (Romans 15:13). God almost always gives hope, and He promised throughout all the time when they were "**scattered**" that there would be a time of gathering. Micah 2:12 states, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee." This is good news! Before Christ splits the clouds in His Second Advent, all the saints will be gathered back to Zion. Jeremiah 51:2 says, "And will send unto Babylon fan-ners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land." God is going to empty Babylon of every saint before He comes again. Speaking of Babylon, Revelation 18:22-23 reads: "And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride [Christ and the church] shall be heard no more at all in thee."

When Christ splits the clouds, there will not be any part of the bride (or members of the body of Christ) left in Babylon. They will all be gathered out. What wonderful news! What a wonderful period in which you and I are privileged to live! Again, Micah 2:12 reads, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, *all* of thee." Isaiah 66:20 tells us, "And they shall bring *all your brethren* for an offering unto the LORD out of all the nations [denominations] upon horses, and in chariots, and

in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts." When some people hear the truth, they grasp it immediately. They come like "upon swift beasts." As soon as they hear the truth, they are ready; they embrace it; and they come right out. Others come "upon mules." Mules move slowly, and if you try to force a mule, he will drop his back haunches. When that happens, he is not going anywhere and neither are you. Some people cannot be pushed or pulled. They will come slowly. That is why we need to have patience. Luke 21:19 says, "In your patience possess ye your souls." Not everyone embraces it as quickly as others do. The good news is, "And they shall bring all your brethren . . . out of all nations [denominations] upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem." That is the church. God is going to bring them all to the church. Some will come quicker than others, but *all* your brethren will come in this evening time.

Look again at Micah 2:12, which reads, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely [not might, could, should, ought, but *surely*—this is a positive promise] gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together [in this evening time, God is putting together all His people—the saints, the sheep—that have been scattered] as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men." When God gets the sheep all together, it will produce rejoicing because we were lost, "**scattered**," separated, and in bondage, but praise God, we have been gathered home to Zion! Thank God, He is gathering a people in this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day!

While we certainly realize there was a literal aspect in these prophecies of the time then present, our burden is to deal with the typical realities of this Gospel Day. We also recognize that there are great typical truths portrayed in our lesson text. Ezekiel 34:10 states, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them." **Verse 11** reads, "**For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.**" Verse 10 clearly says, "I will deliver my flock." **Ezekiel 34:15** tells us, "**I will feed my flock.**" Notice, what He feeds them gives insight that this is not just a literal prophecy. **Ezekiel 34:16** says, "**I will feed them with judgment.**" Literal sheep are not fed "**with judgment**"; that is what you feed a spiritual flock.

Who is the "**flock**"? Ezekiel 34:17 reads, "And as for you, O my flock . . ." Ezekiel 34:19 says, "And as for my flock . . ." Notice that word "flock" is in the singular: *one* flock. Acts 20:28 lets us know what the flock is, stating, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock [singular], over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God." The "**flock**" is the Church of God. That is who God will "**feed them with judgment.**" First Peter 4:17 tells us where "**judgment**" is found: "at the house of God," and 1 Timothy 3:15 lets us know that "the house of God . . . is the church of the living God." "**Judgment**" begins at the church. God will "**feed**" the "**flock**" with "**judgment**" through the church. The "**flock**" is not a physical locality, not a literal building, but a spiritual body.

Come back to **Ezekiel 34:12**. It speaks of "**the cloudy and dark day**," or a day of mixture. On a literal cloudy day, one minute the sun is shining, and the next minute it begins to get dark. It can be very bright, but then everything gets dark. What happened? The clouds are covering the sun. A spiritual cloudy day is a mixture of confusion, compromise, and truths. It spiritually portrays a mixture of light and darkness. We read in Joel 2:2, "A day of darkness [the Dark Ages] and of gloominess, a day of clouds [the cloudy day] and of thick darkness." Here we see not only a dark day but also a cloudy day portrayed. When the clouds move in the wrong direction to block the light, it becomes "thick darkness." This mixture of light and darkness, truth and error,

confusion and compromise, is portrayed in Zechariah 14:6-7 in this manner: "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of this Gospel Day], that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night."

A day of cloudiness is part light and part darkness. What caused this? It was because a ministry failed to continue to stay true and walk in the light. First John 1:7 tells us, "But if we walk in the light ['understanding'; Psalm 119:130], as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." If we walk in the understanding that He has given us, we have fellowship with both God and every other member of the body. This cloudy day came about because people failed to continue to walk in the light. Jesus warned in John 12:35: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light [whenever a movement, a ministry, or a people fail to walk in the understanding God gives them, they will go back into darkness], lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

People who are enveloped in spiritual darkness do not see the condition they are in or the fate they are headed for; they are deceived. Darkness has them blinded. These movements that worked during that cloudy day, separating and scattering God's people, came about because of a failure to continue to walk in the light or keep pace with the truth God had revealed to them. Revelation 8:10 talks about "the third angel," or the ministry that the Lord used to bring the sixteenth-century Reformation and end the age of papalism (A.D. 1530-1730). We must remember that there was no public ministry and no public message during the Dark Ages. So "the third angel" has its prophetic setting in the fourth period of the Gospel Day. Therefore, 1530-1730 is the first segment of the Protestant era, and Revelation 8:10 reads, "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp."

This ministry had a great message. It was "a great star" (stars symbolize the ministry of the church throughout the seven periods of the Gospel Day; Revelation 1:16, 20). Stars are luminary agents, agents that bring light. God's ministry are the agents who bring light. What happened? After the great darkness during the Dark Ages, they had great light, but as the sixteenth-century Reformation progressed, "there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp [a true message on 'salvation'; Isaiah 62:1]." They did not continue to occupy "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6) because they failed to continue to walk in the light (1 John 1:7). When they went down, something else came up.

Revelation 13:11 says John "beheld another beast coming up out of the earth." The religious system of Protestantism came up out of the minds of fallen men. Failure to stay true to the message caused it. We read in Revelation 9:1, "And the fifth angel [the second portion of the Protestant era; A.D. 1730-1880] sounded [a ministry sounded], and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth." Again, this is a picture of a ministry that fell from the exalted position they occupied in Christ Jesus to a man-made level, and gave rise to an earthly organization. All of that came about because they failed to follow the light. Failure to walk in the truth caused man-made systems to come up out of their minds, building sectarian walls that "**scattered**" and divided brethren.

"At Evening Time It Shall Be Light"

Our text has prophetically advanced to this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day that commenced in A.D. 1880. Zechariah 14:7 says, "At evening time it shall be light." Psalm 119:130 tells us, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding." At the beginning of this evening time (A.D. 1880), God's people began to understand they should not be separated from one another. God did not desire His people to be "**scattered**," following man-made creeds that

built barriers between brethren. Through the Dark Ages and **"the cloudy and dark day,"** the church was out of public view. Yet, God still had a people. Although the predominate conditions may not have been favorable, He has always had a people. In the Dark Ages, Revelation 12:6 tells us, "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her." At the height of the Dark Ages, the Pergamene period (A.D. 530-1530), the "two witnesses" (Revelation 11:3) fed God's people "of the hidden manna" (Revelation 2:17). God sustained His people in that dark age.

During **"the cloudy and dark day,"** God's people were **"scattered."** Ezekiel 11:16 reads, "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." When the predominate condition was the Protestant beast ruling the religious landscape, God promised to be to them "as a little sanctuary." He was true to the saints in the Protestant era. They were **"scattered"** among "the countries" (Ezekiel 11:17), or "all nations" (Joel 3:2), both depicting denominations. *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a *nation* as "a historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture, and a language in common." This same definition, these same features, could be ascribed to denominationalism. They have a "developed community of people" (the denomination); they have certain bounds, certain rules (a defined "territory"); they have their own system, their own support ("economic life"); and they have "a distinctive culture, and a language in common" (they each have their own doctrine).

Our text typically portrays a people making a break from those conditions because light (understanding) has come. The church is coming back into visible view as the people are responding to the message, coming out of the conditions they were **"scattered"** in, and coming together as a visible, unified body of Christ. The wise man spoke of it in figurative terms in Song of Solomon 8:5, saying, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" The last time the church was visible was in the morning time. Then, in Revelation 12:6, "the woman fled into the wilderness," into a place of seclusion (in the catacombs and caves). There was no visible church from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1880. But in 1880, light (understanding) came. The message began to be heralded, and a people began to come back together. The church came out of the hidden, secluded place of the wilderness and back into visible view.

Ezekiel 11:17 and 20 tell us: "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered . . . That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Keep that expression in mind because we are going to see when that came to pass. Ezekiel 37:27 states, "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." When were these prophetic truths realized? Not in the Old Testament dispensation. Ezekiel 36:21 says, "But I had pity for mine holy name [notice the emphasis on 'name' in these verses], which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen [throughout the Dark Ages and the dark and cloudy day, they 'profaned' the name of God], whither they went."

Ezekiel 36:22-28 reads: "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes: O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land [these verses are often used to speak of initial salvation, and certainly that

applies, but it is also typical of the realities experienced in the evening-time portion of the Gospel Day when He would gather His people out from among the heathen where they were scattered]. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

These prophetic prophecies reach forth into the New Testament dispensation, especially in the evening time. Many times, God said, "I will bring you out; I will be their God, and they shall be My people." We see that mentioned in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, which tells us: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The temple of God in this New Testament dispensation is not a building or a physical structure, but a "people." Second Corinthians 1:1 tells us who he was addressing in this Epistle and who those people are: "the church of God." That is whom He was writing to when He said, "I will be their God."

Second Corinthians 6:17 says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." This applies to this evening time of the Gospel Day. Revelation 18:4 tells us how they would come out, stating, "And I heard another voice from heaven [the voice of the Holy Spirit], saying, Come out of her, my people." That is the message that was heralded at the commencement of this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day (A.D. 1880), and through that message, the Holy Spirit issued a call. The message was to bring a people back together by calling them out.

The Church Is in the Father's Name

Recall, God spoke repeatedly in Ezekiel, Chapter 36, of His name (verses 21-23). What took place when people heard the call? The church came back into visible view out of the wilderness. What Scripture portrays this event? Revelation 14:1 states, "And I looked, [John was receiving a 'vision'; Revelation 9:17. This portion of the vision was after he saw the 'great red dragon,' paganism (Revelation 12:3), after he saw 'a beast rise up out of the sea,' papalism (Revelation 13:1), and after he saw 'another beast coming up out of the earth,' Protestantism (Revelation 13:11).] and, lo, a Lamb ['Jesus'; John 1:29] stood on the mount Sion [the 'church' (Hebrews 12:22-23) had come out of the wilderness and was back into public view; a message had begun to be heralded], and with him an hundred forty and four thousand [a figurative expression], having his Father's name written in [not *on*, but *in*] their foreheads." This is speaking of the truth concerning the church because the Father's name is what the church is to be kept in (John 17:11-12). Too many people say, "The name is not important." A name is extremely important when it comes to ownership. Your name is on the titles of your vehicles, the deed to your property, and your bank account. You keep those things in your name because that denotes your ownership, your control. Those things are your property. Likewise, the church is to be kept in God's name to denote He is the owner; He is in control; it is His property. Jesus said, "I kept them in thy name" (John 17:12).

My father's name was Borders, and when I was born, I became a Borders. They did not have

to vote on me. They did not gather around the bed and say: "We are going to vote on this boy. Should he be a Borders or a Smith or a Jones?" No, my father was a Borders, and when I was born, I became a Borders. I was born in the hospital, but that was not where I belonged. Many people were spiritually born (born again) in different places, but that is not where they belong. After I was born in the hospital, I was brought home to be with the family. That is what God is doing. He is bringing His children home to the family. When I married my wife, she did not become Mrs. Earl. She became Mrs. Borders because we keep them in the father's name (the family name). We had five children, and we did not vote on any of them. We did not have to decide what their family name would be. All five of them were born as Borders. They became a part of the family because they were born into it. That is how people become part of the family of God and the Church of God today. They are born in it.

We read in Psalm 87:5-6: "And of Zion [the 'church'; Hebrews 12:22-23] it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people [the Lord keeps the membership role], that this man was born there." You become a part of the family of God, the Church of God, when you are born into her. Jesus made it clear when speaking with Nicodemus. Nicodemus had a hard time grasping it, and sadly, many people have a hard time grasping it yet today. Jesus said in John 3:5, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [the word'; Ephesians 5:26] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." You enter by a spiritual birth, and that which you enter into is kept in the Father's name (John 17:11-12; Ephesians 3:14-15). The Father is God (Ephesians 1:3). We are a child of God. We are part of the family of God. It is the Church of God (Acts 20:28). Why? He owns it, He controls it, it is His possession. We are not our own. We are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Revelation 13:16 states, "And he causeth all [all the people in the Protestant era], both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads." The "mark in their right hand" is "the right hands of fellowship" (Galatians 2:9). During the Protestant era, to be in fellowship required their "mark," or their indoctrination. The mark was "in" (not *on*) their foreheads. What is "in" your forehead? Your mind. During the Protestant era, if you did not have that "mark" (or the doctrines of that organization) in your mind, they did not give you the hand of fellowship. Thus, you did not buy or sell (preach, teach, or sing).

Sadly, during the Protestant era, Revelation 13:16 says "causeth all," letting us know everyone was affected by those false teachings to some extent, even God's people, because there was no public message being heralded on the oneness of the church. But when the scene changed in Revelation 14:1, we read, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb [Christ] stood on the mount Sion [the church is back in visible view; Christ is now in His rightful position as head of the church], and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name [the name is God] written in their foreheads." They understood the message concerning the Church of God, the oneness of the body of believers. The unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:13) and the church came back into visible view, and saints came leaping and shouting to Zion. God began to "**gather**," and thank God, He is still gathering "**a remnant**" in this final period of the evening time of the Gospel Day. What a wonderful message we have! What glorious days in which we live! Thank God, we are not in the days of the Dark Ages. We are not in "**the cloudy and dark day**," but we are in the evening time, a time when "it shall be light" (Zechariah 14:7). May God help us ever to walk in the light as He is in the light, to enjoy this precious "fellowship" (1 John 1:7), and to be a light to the world (Matthew 5:14) so we can help others to come to this precious light or understanding of this precious truth.

The Eighth Beast "Is of the Seven"

In Ezekiel, Chapters 25-32, judgment was pronounced against seven surrounding nations: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Zidon (Cedesyria), and Egypt. (This is the same number that appears in Amos' prophecy.)

1. Ezekiel 25:2 "Son of man, set thy face against the *Ammonites*, and prophesy against them."
2. Ezekiel 25:11 "And I will execute judgments upon *Moab*."
3. Ezekiel 25:14 "And I will lay my vengeance upon *Edom*."
4. Ezekiel 25:16 "I will stretch out mine hand upon the *Philistines*."
5. Ezekiel 27:3 "And say unto *Tyrus*."
6. Ezekiel 28:21 "Son of man, set thy face against *Zidon*, and prophesy against it."
7. Ezekiel 29:2 "Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of *Egypt*, and prophesy against him, and against all *Egypt*."

All these seven nations were enemies of God's people. They were a type of what we see portrayed in Isaiah 4:1, which reads, "And in that day [the Gospel Day] seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach ['sin'; Proverbs 14:34]." It is not the name that takes away the reproach. The letter to Sardis in Revelation 3:1 says, "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Although the name is vital when it comes to proprietorship, ownership, control, and inheritance (the reason He wants things kept in the Father's name), the name alone will not deal with the reproach (sin).

The seven women wanted to eat their own bread. Yet, Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51). When Jesus said in John 6:54, "Whoso eateth my flesh ['the Word'; John 1:14], and drinketh my blood ['the blood is the life'; Deuteronomy 12:23, and 'the Spirit is life'; Romans 8:10]," He was talking about the Word and the Spirit—the two vicars who feed the church. (You can see that in Revelation 12:6 when they fed the church during the 1260 years of papal darkness.) The "seven women" of Isaiah 4:1 want to eat their "own bread" (their own words, teachings, and doctrines) and wear their "own apparel." They do not want "the robe of righteousness" or the "garments of salvation" (Isaiah 61:10). This is a portrayal of the false church throughout the seven periods of the Gospel Day. These seven nations God said to put judgment on are a type of these seven women. They serve as a type of religious falsity throughout the entirety of the Christian dispensation.

Today, we are facing another foe. We read in Revelation 17:11, "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven." Previously, throughout the Gospel Day, God's people faced this falsity of religion through various forms *individually*, but today we are facing them *collectively* as an amalgamated force—the eighth beast. In the evening time, judgment is being poured out not only on the seven, but also on the eighth. Judgment is being poured out on the mother. Revelation 17:5 tells us, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." This is speaking of the system of Roman Catholicism. There was another system that Revelation 13:11 speaks of "coming up out of the earth"—the harlot system of Protestantism.

Both the mother and the daughters are described as being "harlots." Ezekiel 16:44 tells us, "Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter." The mother (the system of papalism) and the daughters (the religious system of Protestantism and all the various denominations that comprise it) are both harlot systems. The daughter is as the mother. Neither will allow the Bridegroom (Christ, the Husband) to

truly be the head. Ezekiel 16:41 reads, "And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more." When verse 44 says, "As is the mother, so is her daughter," it is speaking of harlotry.

Ezekiel 14:22 states, "**Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth.**" They are to be "**brought**" out of the religious system that held God's people in bondage. Keep in mind, we are studying prophecy that reveals truth in a typical manner (as a representation, or symbolism) of spiritual truths. Typically, we see a sad-and-stirring state in false religion and most particularly in Protestantism because we have now advanced to the evening time. Predominantly, that which held God's people in bondage was mostly Protestantism at that juncture. Ezekiel 34:1-6 begins to reveal the conditions and what produced those conditions in sectarian religion. It reads: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

"The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, [In that '**cloudy and dark day**' of Protestantism, they were scattered in various sectarian organizations. Sectarian walls had been built between God's people and separated them.] because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field [during the dark age and '**the cloudy and dark day,**' the beasts—papalism and Protestantism—ruled the religious landscape], when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them." There is the sad condition during "**the cloudy and dark day,**" and it is yet that way today in those organizations and in that system of religion.

Beginning in A.D. 1880, Brother Daniel Sydney Warner and other brethren began to be used by God to reveal the conditions in Babylon and to bring God's people back to a position of unity. We read in Revelation 18:1, "And after these things I saw another angel." The Greek word for "angel" means a messenger; it is symbolic of a ministry, not a celestial being. (Read Revelation 22:8-9.) Again, Revelation 18:1 reads, "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven [a divine call], having great power [when God guides, He provides, and when He calls, He equips]; and the earth was lightened with his glory." Yet today a true ministry will have a powerful message that will bring light, or understanding, to the people and will produce glory.

Revelation 18:2-4 tells us: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon [confusion] the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations [denominations] have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her [they are harlots], and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 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 plagues." God uses the ministry to enlighten people to the condition, but to truly hear the call to come out, there has to be "another voice." It is the voice of the Holy Spirit that witnesses the truth to the heart and helps mankind see they need to make a move. If people stay in those sectarian organizations, they become what they eat. Eventually, they will imbibe that spirit. They will become "partakers of her sins," and then they will "receive . . . of her plagues."

The sixth-seal brethren, or the ministry at the beginning of this evening-time era, had a clear message. We also see that in **Ezekiel 34:11**. It reads, "**For thus saith the Lord GOD** [this is not some man's idea, not a human theology, but these are divine words from the Lord]; **Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.**" God is searching and working to bring His people out of all those various organizations of men where they are not getting their souls truly fed. We read in **Ezekiel 34:12**, "**As a shepherd seeketh out his flock . . .**" Notice that is in the singular. Acts 20:28 says "**the flock**" is "the church of God." In the Scripture, there is only one true "**flock**"—the Church of God. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church [singular]."

All these other organizations came up out of the minds of men. The beast that came up out of the sea and the beast that came up out of earth are organizations that came up out of the minds of men. We read in **Ezekiel 34:12-13**: "**As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries** [various systems or organizations], **and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.**" God said, "**I will bring them out from the people.**" God's people are a called-out people. Isaiah 62:12 tells us, "And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." God is working a work that commenced in the sixth seal (1880) to amass a "**remnant**," to bring a people out.

"I Will Feed My Flock"

In our text, notice one of the predominate, reoccurring themes mentioned when God brings a people to "the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). **Ezekiel 34:13** says, "**Feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers.**" Then, **Ezekiel 34:14-16** reads: "**I will feed them in a good pasture . . . I will feed my flock . . . I will feed them with judgment.**" Ezekiel 34:23 states, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them." There is a repeated emphasis that in this evening time, when people come to the true church, one very distinct earmark is, they will be able to get their souls fed.

How does God feed his flock? We read in Jeremiah 3:15, "And I will give you pastors [that word means shepherds] according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." God feeds the flock through the ministry, through pastors. Paul said in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves [to 'the elders'; verse 17], and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, [God's church is not run by committees, deacons, trustees, a district superintendent, or bishops, but by those whom the Holy Ghost made 'overseers.' God does not call *overlookers*; He calls *overseers*. What is their primary role?] to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." We read in 1 Peter 5:1-3: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God [the elders are to feed the Church of God] which is among you, taking the oversight [that is part of the role; as he sees, he declares what he sees, and he feeds the people accordingly] thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

God's ordained means of feeding the church is through a God-called ministry. Sadly, sectism

and false religion have demeaned this calling by their lives and their conduct to where the masses have little or no respect for the ministry. In God's sight, they are still His ordained avenue to be the overseers and to feed the Church of God. One clear distinction between Babylon and the church is the true man of God still feeds the flock. In a prior study, we found the reason the morning-time brethren were initially so successful is revealed in Ezekiel 3:17, which reads, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman." It was a God-called ministry in that early morning time.

God is the only One yet who can truly make a minister. There may be those who desire the call, but that call is still divine; it can only come from God. Jeremiah 3:15 tells us, "I will give you pastors," and Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us why pastors were given, stating, "And he gave . . . pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [or completing] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." A God-called ministry was the reason the morning-time church was so successful initially. Ezekiel 3:17 continues, "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." The ministry received "the word," or the message, from God. We do not see that in the subsequent chapters, which typify the Dark Ages and also "**the cloudy and dark day.**" A faithful ministry is not portrayed again in Ezekiel's prophecies until the portion portraying the evening time.

Ezekiel 33:1-7 reads: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me."

Several truths are revealed in this passage, truths that reveal why the sixth-seal ministry was so effective initially and truths concerning the role the ministry fills in this evening time. This expression, "I have set thee," again reveals the divine call and placing. In Acts 20:28 we read, "The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." This is the divine plan. Ephesians 4:8 says He "gave gifts," and Ephesians 4:11 tells us He gave "some." This was not so during the Protestant era. Ephesians 4:8 states, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts." Christ is the head of the church, and He "gave gifts"—those who are needed to fill the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These are all New Testament offices, and they are just as vital today as they were in the first century. They have never become obsolete or unnecessary.

We read in Romans 11:29, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The gifts God saw necessary for the successful operation of the church in the first century are still necessary for this twenty-first century. When things are in divine order, God gives "gifts," but that was not so during the Protestant era. We read in Revelation 11:10, "And they that dwell upon the earth [Protestantism] shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another." This is speaking of those who caused the Word and the Spirit to basically be inoperative; their effectiveness was killed by the Protestant system; they laid "dead . . . in the street" (verse 8). The "earth" is a picture of sectarian religion, the "beast" (Revelation 13:11) that came "up out of the earth." The religious system of Protestantism has its schools, colleges, seminaries, and credential committees. They determine, or apportion, the gifts. Throughout "**the cloudy and**

dark day," gifts were given by the various sectarian organizations that comprise the system of Protestantism.

In this evening time, we are back to a divinely-called ministry. Some might feel that verses 2 and 7 in Ezekiel, Chapter 33, contradict each other. Verse 7 says, "I have set thee a watchman," and verse 2 says, "If the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman" It is God who does the calling, but in this evening time, God has people who recognize the call. A man cannot pastor if people will not recognize his calling. These verses reveal God issues the call, and the spiritual people whom He sets that man over recognize and acknowledge that call, allowing him the freedom to operate in the realms of that call.

The Responsibilities of the Watchman

The term "watchman," employed in Ezekiel 33:2, 6, and 7, is the Hebrew word *tsaphah*, and it means "one whose task it is to keep a close watch." This is drawing from and using literal, Hebrew occurrences as imagery. In the literal sense, in the old economy, the watchmen stood in a special position, an elevated position, so they could see the enemy afar off and see the conditions. We read in 2 Samuel 18:24, "And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked." The watchman was in an elevated position ("the roof") where he "lifted up his eyes, and looked." He was a "watchman." He was to watch, to look, to see what was occurring, what was approaching, and what needed to be sounded out. He occupied a unique position.

We see much the same thing in 2 Kings 9:17, which reads, "And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company." The "watchman" was in a tower, in an exalted position. He was lifted up above the rest of the people. He was above the rest of the city so he could see what others could not see and so he could convey what needed to be conveyed and warn when a warning was necessary. Isaiah 21:5-9 tells us: "Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield. For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed: And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights:

"And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen." Verse 6 says the "watchman" is to "declare what he seeth." The watchmen saw what others could not, and they were responsible to warn the people. Come back to Ezekiel 33:3, which states, "If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people" Verse 7 lets us know what blowing the trumpet represents, stating, "Hear the word at my mouth, and warn them." Blowing the trumpet is sounding out the Word, preaching the message the people need for the current situation. The watchmen saw what others could not see and were responsible to blow the trumpet and warn the people.

I want to emphasize the role of the watchman. Verse 7 says, "Hear the word at my mouth." The watchman is in contact with God. Look at John's vision in Revelation 4:4, which says, "And round about the throne [closest to the presence of God] were four and twenty seats [the Greek word *thronos* means 'thrones']: and upon the seats [thrones] I saw four and twenty elders." The "elders" are those who feed the flock, who preach the Word of God, who have the oversight, who are the overseers (the watchmen). Here they are symbolically portrayed as being right "round about the throne," or close to God. The watchman is to be in contact with God. He receives the message at the Lord's mouth.

Isaiah 21:11 reads: "The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" That reveals only the watchman on the wall sees and knows the true condition. That is why he has a responsibility to convey it to the people. Only the watchman in the position he occupies, under divine direction, can see and know what the true condition is. No one else does until the watchman declares it. Isaiah 21:12 says, "The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye." This reveals that we should "enquire" of the watchman. We read in Isaiah 62:6, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem [the 'church'; Hebrews 12:22-23], which shall never hold their peace day nor night."

A faithful watchman will always sound out what God reveals to him. Isaiah 62:10 states, "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway [The way of holiness; Isaiah 35:8]; gather out the stones." The message and the messenger (or watchman) who declares it does so with the sole purpose of enabling people to have and maintain victory, a holiness experience. A true ministry is working to "gather out the stones." In 1 Peter 2:5, we read that we are "lively stones" to build "up a spiritual house," the church. The only way God can build this spiritual house up is to "gather" those "stones" (those who have a real experience) out of Babylon.

It takes hearing the message from the watchman to come to Zion and build up a spiritual house. Isaiah 62:6 and 10 tell us the watchmen "shall never hold their peace," and they "lift up a standard." That is the standard of holiness. Song of Solomon 3:3-4 tells us "the watchmen" fill a vital role, stating: "The watchmen that go about the city found me [that is how people are discovered, by seeing their condition]: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth." The watchman was the one who found them and helped them to find Christ. Song of Solomon 5:7 states, "The watchman that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me."

We are dealing with imagery. The first time the watchman did not smite her, but this time she had been negligent. In Song of Solomon 5:3, when the call came from her beloved, she said, "I have put off my coat; . . . I have washed my feet." Or, "I am not going to trouble or inconvenience myself." She was negligent and indifferent to the approach of Christ. The second time she came in contact with the watchman, the message smote her because of the condition she was in. Thus, she gained help. In this evening time, we see again a faithful God calling a ministry. Revelation 18:1 tells us, "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven [a divinely-called ministry], having great power; and the earth [men, especially those caught up in the system of Protestantism that came 'up out of the earth'; Revelation 13:11] was lightened with his glory." When people saw the light on the falsity of the organizations of men, they were enlightened. Thank God, they heard the call of the "voice" of the Spirit (Revelation 18:4) and came out.

In Ezekiel 3:17, the morning-time brethren were successful because they heard "the word" at His "mouth" and sounded out that message. We see the same in this evening time in Ezekiel 33:7. They "hear the word at my mouth, and warn them." However, as Chapter 33 progresses, we see one hazard of this evening time not previously mentioned in Ezekiel's writings. We read in Ezekiel 33:30-33: "Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath

a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."

This sad condition is exhibited today. Many people who have been blessed to come to a knowledge of the truth will not hear the words (the voice) of a true watchman in the way they ought. They will come, they will assemble, yet they will not live what is preached. Once the power of apostasy began to work, we read in Ezekiel 33:30 of the "talking against thee." This was not mentioned previously in Ezekiel. You can see it in 2 Peter 2:10, which states: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government [the *New Analytical Lexicon* says 'constituted authority'; they are not against the civil government but divinely-ordained government]. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." Jude wrote the same thing in verse 10, saying, "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." Yet, in the midst of all this, God still has a faithful ministry, just as He did at that initial point of the sixth seal. Once again, He feeds His people through a divinely-called ministry. Ezekiel 33:3 and 7 says to "warn the people." Joel 2:1 reads, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm." First Corinthians 14:8 reveals the need for the trumpet to make a certain sound—so ones may "prepare" for "the battle."

"I Will Feed Them With Judgment"

Where does God feed His people and on what does He feed them? In the true church, God says, "**I will feed**" (**Ezekiel 34:14**). Notice *how* He describes where He will feed them. He said in **Ezekiel 34:13-14**: "**And I will bring them out from the people** [God's people cannot stay in those places where they were scattered and still be fed] . . . **and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers . . . I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be.**" What is that "**fold**"? Isaiah 2:2 tells us, "And it shall come to pass in the last days . . ." That is a Biblical expression of this New Testament dispensation. How do we know that? On the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 33), Peter said, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [Joel 2:28]; And it shall come to pass in the last days" (Acts 2:16-17). Biblically, the last days commenced in A.D. 33; that is when this Christian dispensation of which Isaiah was speaking began. Isaiah 2:2 continues, "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." Verse 3 says, "We will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." Hebrews 12:22-23 reveals that "Sion [Zion]" and "Jerusalem" represent the New Testament church.

When Isaiah 2:2 says "in the top," it is speaking of an exalted position. Ephesians 2:6 reads, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places [the Greek says 'the heavenlies'] in Christ Jesus." The sheep (the fold) are to be fed "**upon the high mountains of Israel**" (**Ezekiel 34:14**), or Mount Zion. Isaiah 2:3 lets us know *what* God feeds them there in the top of the mountain: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." He feeds them the Word of God. **Ezekiel 34:16** states, "**I will feed them with judgment.**" This lets us know the prophet was not speaking literally, but he was dealing with representations, with spiritual realities. In this evening time, Revelation 15:4 tells us, "Thy judgments are made manifest." The context of this is in this evening time when the seven vial angels had the seven last plagues full of the judgments of God.

How does God make His judgments manifest? Titus 1:3 reads, "But hath in due times mani-

fested his word *through preaching*." We read in Psalm 119:43, "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments." Judgment is the Word. Psalm 119:160 says, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." In this exalted spiritual position the church occupies, above "the weak and beggarly elements" (Galatians 4:9), we are being fed the judgments of His Word. God is putting out His judgment, letting us know His mind, His will, and His determination on matters so that we might maintain a victorious spiritual experience. Notice, this is in conjunction with **Ezekiel 34:13**, which tells us, "**I . . . will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers.**"

God feeds the Word of God in conjunction with "**the rivers.**" We can see what that represents in John 7:37-39. It says, "In the last day, that great day of the feast [the Feast of Tabernacles], Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly [the inward parts] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" The "rivers" are the "Holy Ghost." God feeds His flock the Word of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit from a God-called ministry. It is a Living Word. It is not a dead letter. Second Corinthians 3:6 tells us, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." It takes an anointed message to have an impact on a soul.

"There Shall They Lie in a Good Fold"

Ezekiel 34:13 says, "**I will . . . feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.**" Verse 14 lets us know, "**There shall they lie in a good fold.**" Those who once were in sectarian realms can remember that it seemed we were all alone. It seemed nobody else was interested in the truth. When you find truth and a true congregation, they are "**inhabited places.**" Ephesians 2:21-22 states: "In whom all the building [speaking of the church] fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The church is not only "**inhabited**" by the saints who have come leaping and shouting home to Zion and to a knowledge of the truth, but it is also "**inhabited**" by God through the Spirit. The presence of God is in the midst.

In this fold, we are not alone! It is not a small fold. In John's vision of the evening-time church, Revelation 7:9 reads, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." It is not a small fold, but it is "a great multitude" that "no man could number." We read in Revelation 5:11, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands [the Greek word for 'thousands' is *myriads*, which means 'an innumerable number']." God told Abraham that his "seed" would be as "the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Genesis 22:17). Paul wrote in Galatian 3:29, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed." It is "an innumerable number."

After the sheep are in a "**good fold**" and fed, **Ezekiel 34:15** states, "**I will cause them to lie down.**" At least four conditions must be met for sheep to "**lie down.**" They must be free from (1) fear, (2) friction with others, (3) flies and parasites, and (4) hunger. John 8:32 reads, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Are God's people free from fear? Second Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." We have freedom from fear. What about freedom from friction? Matthew

5:23-24 tells us, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." God's people are free from friction with one another. Second Corinthians 7:11 tells what real repentance brings, stating, "What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves."

What about flies and parasites, things that live off of others? First John 4:4 reads, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." This represents false spirits. We are free from flies and parasites (false spirits). Concerning freedom from hunger, Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger [not *did* hunger, but *do* hunger, speaking of the present tense] and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

All these benefits are found in Zion. We read in Psalm 87:5-7: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people [He is the secretary of the church], that this man was born there. Selah. As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee." Everything needed for man's spiritual and eternal welfare is found in Zion, the Church of the Living God. So far we have seen spiritual substance ("**I will feed my flock**"), and we found He is going to gather a people together who will be "**inhabited**" (satisfaction and safety enable them to lie down). One more attribute is described in **Ezekiel 34:16**, which states, "**I will . . . bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.**" This is the same thing Peter spoke of in 2 Peter 1:3, which reads, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life [physical] and godliness [spiritual]." Ephesians 6:10 says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." We find strength, both physical and spiritual for all that we need!

Our text portrays the gathering of the "**remnant**." This commenced in A.D. 1880 and is continuing yet today. It reveals how God's people were scattered. **Verse 12** says, "**So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.**" They were "**scattered**" because of the shepherds. In the song, "Thy Children Are Gathering Home," by C. W. Naylor, verse 2 says, "*False shepherds divided and scattered the flock, And hirelings ruled o'er them for gain.*" Thank God, that period came to an end. God's will is portrayed in **verse 11**, which reads, "**I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out,**" and as **verse 13** denotes, "**I will . . . gather them.**" Then our text gives a beautiful description of the benefits people receive when they "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

Thank God, "**the cloudy and dark day**" (**Ezekiel 34:12**) has ended, and we are in what Zechariah 14:7 denotes as the "evening time." It is a time of light, of understanding the precious, precious truths of God's eternal Word. Verse 1 of the song, "The Reformation Glory," written by C. W. Naylor, says, "*For the cloudy day is ending and the evening sun is bright, With a shout of joy we hail the light.*" What a beautiful spiritual picture is portrayed in these texts! Ezekiel, Chapter 34, portrays the event that began in 1880, when the evening-time message began to be heralded, and thank God we still enjoy it today. Our next volume will examine the prophetic passages that typically address more fully the evening-time portion of this Gospel Day, the foes we face, and the victory gained. This evening-time message will continue to be heralded until time reels into eternity. May God ever help us to walk in its light!

EPILOGUE

The Book of Ezekiel is indeed a treasure trove of truth. It is as Jesus proclaimed in Matthew 13:44 when He spoke of a "treasure hid in a field." The truths contained in the forty-eight chapters of this prophetic writing are an exhaustless mine. As I mentioned at the beginning of this volume, we have attempted to confine our study to one thread of truth that runs throughout this astounding prophetic book. The thread we have followed is *A Visionary and Typical Portrayal of the Gospel Day*, which we have used as a subtitle for our volumes.

It is our intention to divide this study into two volumes. We are concluding *Volume I* with the consideration of "The Gathering of the Remnant," which typically portrays the evening-time portion of this Gospel Day. We wanted to progress this far in this particular volume to provide a presentation of all the major segments of this Christian dispensation. *Volume I* begins in Ezekiel, Chapter 1, portraying the institution of the New Testament church on the Day of Pentecost and progresses to Chapters 14 and 34, depicting the gathering of God's people and the reappearance of a visible Church of God in this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day.

Volume II will be very unique and similar to *Volume V* of our book *The Book of Revelation Explained*. *Volume V* is extremely unique in that Chapters 15-19 of Revelation all deal with the evening-time portion of the Gospel Day. *Volume II* of *The Prophecies of Ezekiel* will also solely deal with the visionary and typical truths depicted that describe the spiritual realities in this evening-time portion of the Gospel Day. It makes a profound divine statement to see how much the Lord desires we understand this vital portion of the Christian dispensation. We are concluding this volume with "The Gathering of the Remnant" so that the next volume may completely be given to the realities described by the Prophet Ezekiel concerning the glorious realities of this evening time.

We trust the Lord will bless this volume and use it both for the glory of God and for the spiritual edification of the church. We earnestly covet your prayers as preparation begins on *Volume II* of *The Prophecies of Ezekiel—A Visionary and Typical Portrayal of the Gospel Day*.

The Prophecies of Ezekiel

Volume 1

The Book of Ezekiel is like a beautiful tapestry, consisting of many varied and colorful threads that are divinely and delicately woven into several intricate and detailed patterns. However, it is but one artistic, inspired piece, though it contains magnificent threads. In this writing, divine inspiration has led us to follow one thread through this astounding prophetic book: the typical and visionary view of the Gospel Day portrayed in these prophecies.

It is the burden and desire of the author that the Spirit of God may use this book to enlighten the eyes of understanding of the saints to the precious and vital truths being conveyed in this prophetic Book of Ezekiel. We trust that this book will be a blessing to you and an enhancement to your spiritual growth.



Brother Borders is married to his wife of forty-eight years, Sandra, who has faithfully labored with him in the ministry. They have five children, nineteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Earl R. Borders was born and raised in Ashland, Kentucky. At the age of eighteen, he was privileged to come in contact with some saints of God and "be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). On December 20, 1972, having just turned nineteen the preceding month, the Lord called Brother Borders into the ministry. He has continued in the ministry for fifty years.

Brother Borders is the pastor of The Church of God in Summersville, WV. He is also the author of twenty-eight books. Brother Borders has had the great privilege of sitting under the ministries and working with Pastor Emerson A. Wilson and Pastor Roger L. Decker, both of The Church of God, God's Acres, Newark, Ohio. He feels a tremendous debt of gratitude to both of these brethren.

