

Jesus' testimony is  
spirit of prophecy

(Revelation 19:10)

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**What Is Now (Rev 1:19)**

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## Letter to Churches

God gave Jesus a revelation "to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place" (Rev 1:1) which "He sent . . . by His angel" (:1). John said he heard it introduced "behind me [in] a loud voice" (:10) coming from "one like a son of man" (:13). Since it was the risen Jesus speaking it was not **an** angel (:1) because Jesus has "become as much better than the angels" (Heb 1:4). Therefore, in this sense, Jesus was being sent supernaturally to deliver the message. Angels are "ministering spirits, sent out to render service" (:14). John was to write the letter to the "seven churches" (Rev 1:11) but each section was addressed to "the angel of [that] church" (2:1). It doesn't seem logical that God would have to write a material letter to an angel because "'angels in heaven continually behold the face of My father who is in heaven'" (Mt 18:10). So the recipient of the letter must have had an official ministry. But obviously larger cities would have had multiple congregations and the Bible doesn't say that each city would have had only one mega-church with a single head pastor. One study Bible said "angel" could be the spiritual representation of a church. They would have comprehended this because when a knock at the door and Peter's voice was heard they rationalized, "'It must be his angel'" (Ac 12:15). John saw that, "In His

right hand He held seven stars" (Rev 1:16). Jesus explained, "'the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches'" (:20). The fact that Jesus is holding them signifies that "'no one is able to snatch them out of My hand'" (Jn 10:28) and because it is his right hand it speaks of his power and authority.

## **Lampstands**

On Patmos Christ communicated his revelation "to His bond-servant John" (Rev 1:1). As the last remaining apostle it would be the final encounter with the apostles in this period of Jesus' ministry. He identified himself as "'the first and the last, and the living One'" (:17-18). When John "turned to see the voice that was speaking" (:12) the first thing he saw was "seven golden lampstands" (:12). Christ explained that "'the seven lampstands are the seven churches'" (:20). John saw "in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man" (:13). Christ describes himself therefore as, "'I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore'" (:18). He paid for the church with his blood and has power and authority. He observes what happens in the church and understands why because he is "'the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands'" (2:1). Christ reinforced that he was "'the first and last, who was dead and has come to life'" (:8). Cast "all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for

you" (1Pe 5:6). Jesus was addressing established, second-generation churches who were responding to their individual circumstances in different ways. Because of this covenant relationship he was able to say to each church, "I know your deeds" (Rev 2:2, 4, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

It is apparent that deeds are a high priority. Paul said that each person will be "recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (1Co 5:10). "Whatever good thing each one does this he will receive back from the Lord" (Eph 6:8). Does this mean that your purpose in life becomes accumulating points on your rewards card so you can receive benefits? Why not just kick back and enjoy life? In science class matter was defined as something which takes up space and has weight. Your purpose is not just to fulfill this necessity. Jesus spoke of "he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end" (Rev 2:26). Moses told Israel "Be silent and listen" (Dt 27:9). "Faith comes by hearing" (Ro 10:17). Moses continued saying, "You shall therefore obey the Lord your God" (Dt 27:10). That is how we keep "My deeds" (Rev 2:26). "Faith, if it has no works is dead" (Ja 2:17). Therefore be "zealous for" (Titus 2:14), "learn to engage in" (3:14), "be an example of" (2:7), and "stimulate one

another to love and good deeds" (Heb 10:24). "Deeds that are good are quite evident" (1Ti 5:25). However, they are such that you can "profess" (Titus 1:16) something to be so but your deeds "otherwise cannot be concealed" (1Ti 5:25). God "will render to each person according to his deeds" (Ro 2:6). The Holy Spirit said "'they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them'" (Rev 14:13).

### **Purpose**

"God gave Him [the revelation] to show" (Rev 1:1). It contained "things which are" (:19) currently existing in the churches. John was instructed to "'write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches'" (:11). Apparently no one had come along (except Paul who wrote letters to some churches) to give an evaluation of their condition. An elaborate vision is an unusual method but Jesus said, "'I will build My church'" (Mt 16:18). It demonstrates that Jesus is aware of what is happening and can communicate achievable expectations. Obedience is assumed because he suggested repentance from some of them. There were consequences because the churches had choices. Jesus did this because he said, "'All authority has been given Me in heaven and on earth'" (28:18). Power and authority were "brought about in Christ, when [God] raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand

in heavenly places . . . and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Eph 1:20, 22-23). Therefore he instructed his disciples to teach them "to observe all things that I commanded you" (Mt 28:20).

The meaning of the resurrection of Christ is the same for us today as it was for the first century church. Their shortcomings are similar to ours because of human nature. Perhaps that is why Jesus asked "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8). But to be meaningful you have to know where you stand so you can apply yourself. "According to His great mercy [he] has caused us to be born again" (1Pe 1:3). "When we were dead . . . [he] made us alive together in Christ" (Eph 2:5) and "seated us with Him in the heavenly places" (:6). He "saved us and called us with a holy calling . . . according to His own purpose and grace" (2Ti 1:9) "by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). "We believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Ac 15:11). We are "saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). "Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (1:13). "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" (Ro 8:35).

## Position

Is our spiritual condition mutually exclusive from our humanity? In a sense it is because "if anyone is in Christ he is a new creature" (2Co 5:17). A distinction drawn says to "be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). That is why there is such an emphasis on he "who overcomes" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). We are not "perishing" (1Co 1:18) but "being saved" (2Co 2:15). We have an "inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4). It is a process and you might wonder how you can accomplish this. Jesus said "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (Jn 6:37). "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (10:28). We are "protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation" (1Pe 1:5). "The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2Th 3:3). "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom" (2Ti 4:18). "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (1:6).

Proceed in such a way that you do "not lose heart . . . [for] we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Gal 6:8-9). It can be difficult because "'you will be hated by all because of My name'" (Mt 10:22) and "many will fall away and will betray one another'" (24:10). John, himself, "was on the island of Patmos because of . . . the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 1:9). Consequently Jesus cited the perseverance of the Ephesians and that they did not "tolerate evil men" (2:2). You can wear out if you're not careful. Therefore "consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:3). If you have a purpose you have a goal. Jesus told the Ephesians they "'have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary'" (Rev 2:3).

## **Perseverance**

"In hope we have been saved but . . . [it is] what we do not see" (Ro 8:24-25). Therefore it is "with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (:25). "'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing'" (Rev 3:10). Paul pointed out to the Corinthians that it is "the gospel . . . in which you also stand by which you are saved" (1Co 15:1-2). But he cautioned them to "hold fast the word" (:2). Unless we know for sure we can lose focus. That is why

John said "these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1Jn 5:13). "We know that we are of God" (:19). Paul said "I know whom I have believed and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2Ti 1:12). Jesus told the Pergamum church that "you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith" (Rev 2:13). He told the church of Philadelphia, "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (3:11). How do you hold on and persevere? Jesus warned, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up" (Jn 15:6). He also told the Philadelphia church "you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (3:8). The key to Thyatira's success was "your love and faith and service and perseverance" (2:19). "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus" (14:12). Jesus spoke of "He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end" (2:26). He warned the disciples that "it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved" (Mt 10:22). If you persevere you will overcome. Rewards for the overcomer are listed in Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.

## Ephesus

The first church written to was Ephesus. The city was the largest in the province, was commercially successful because of its harbor, and was free of Roman soldiers. Paul taught there for three years but idolatry was popular. The church set an example for hard work, responsibility and endurance (Rev 2:2-3). They exhibited "perseverance" (:2,3). It does not seem that they could have abandoned the love they had at first. Christ said, "I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (:4). It takes dedication to oppose evil and test false apostles (:2). Their motivation was "for My name's sake" (:3). The church was now decades old but it had "fallen" (:5) because it no longer did what it had previously done. Their behavior had become a way of life. It seems that their work was intellectually based but didn't come from the heart. Paul said "if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and I have all faith . . . but do not have love, I am nothing" (1Co 13:2). Jesus warned about the last days that "because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold" (Mt 24:12). Jesus' solution was to "remember from where you have fallen" (Rev 2:5). It does not mean just to think back to what you have forgotten. It means to always keep in mind (remembering) how you lived

(what you did) "at first" (:5). The concern is comparable to "the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns" (Mt 13:22). He "hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word" (:22). Superficial preoccupation with mundane matters can take the place of being spiritually purposeful in love.

Therefore Jesus called upon them to "repent" (Rev 2:5) and that he would "remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent" (:5). The lampstand is the church itself (1:20). If Christ's presence departed then their effective ministry would disappear. There is a saying "out of sight, out of mind." In Israel "there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel" (Judges 2:10). Then "they forsook the Lord . . . and followed other gods" (:12). Firstly Jesus had encouraged them citing their accomplishments but was now making them "sorrowful to the point of repentance . . . according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything" (2Co 7:9). Furthermore they were to change their behavior as well as their attitude. Jesus instructed to "repent and do the deeds you did at first" (Rev 2:5). He told the church at Thyatira that "he who overcomes . . . [is] he who keeps My deeds until the end" (:26). Paul

said "that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Ac 26:20). Paul also advised that "those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men" (Titus 3:8).

## **Smyrna**

Smyrna was founded by Ionian Greeks who established a notable culture of literature and philosophy. It had an ideal natural harbor on the Aegean Sea. It was destroyed by the Lydians around 600 B.C. and Alexander the Great freed them two hundred years later. The city was rebuilt according to Alexander's plan with right-angled streets where the sea breeze blew down each one. It became a beautiful city with a population of 200,000 at the time of this letter. It was a center of emperor worship having a temple to Emperor Tiberius (26 A.D.). Citizens were required to burn incense there, and if they refused, could be imprisoned and killed. There was also a temple to Cybele who was the goddess of "mother earth" to both the Greeks and Romans. Much immorality was present. There was also a large temple to Jupiter where Zeus was the chief Greek and Roman deity. Jesus cited "'your tribulation and your poverty'" (Rev 2:9). Since the city was very prosperous it implies that there was significant economic persecution. However

being in poverty does not mean that their bank accounts were zero, but that they were like Jesus who "for your sake He became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich" (2Co 8:9). That is why he explained to the church "'but you are rich'" (Rev 2:9). "Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (Ja 2:5). John had elaborated "I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers" (3Jn 2). Paul taught that "in the ages to come He [would] show the surpassing riches of His grace" (Eph 2:7) which are the "unfathomable riches of Christ" (3:8).

Jesus was also aware of "'the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not'" (Rev 2:9). In Philadelphia there were those "'who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie'" (3:9). Jesus pointed out, "'you are of your father the devil . . . for he is a liar'" (Jn 8:44). Their origin was therefore labeled the "'synagogue of Satan'" (Rev 2:9, 3:9). Blasphemy is to revile someone and its seriousness is shown where "'the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death'" (Lev 24:16). Tribulation came from the Jews because they "instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabus" (Ac 13:50), "embittered [the Gentiles] against the

brethren" (14:2), attempted "to mistreat and stone them" (:5), "stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city" (:19), and "formed a mob and set the city in an uproar" (17:5). In accordance with this behavior Jesus warned "'the devil is about to cast some of you into prison'" (Rev 2:10). But he encouraged them saying, "'Do not fear'" (:10). "'Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'" (Mt 5:10). "If anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name" (1Pe 4:16).

### **Pergamum**

Pergamum was twelve miles from the coast, and after 282 B.C. became the capital of Asia Minor. There was an acropolis or citadel 1000 feet above sea level which overlooked the city. On it was a large temple to Zeus which was shaped like a throne. Jesus referred to it saying, "'I know . . . where you dwell, where Satan's throne is'" (Rev 2:13). A throne is a place of authority. Jesus reiterated that Pergamum was the place "' where Satan dwells'" (:13). Paul instructed to "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might . . . that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:10-11). There is a reference to martyrs being killed and having to hold fast to Jesus' name and faith. You can slip

even when you are "caught with the words of your mouth" (Pr 6:2) such as when Jesus told Peter "'before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times'" (Mt 26:34). Adhering to his name is important. Initially "men began to call upon [proclaim] the name of the Lord" (Ge 4:26). Furthermore, "it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered" (Joel 2:32). A person is characterized and his authority is established using his name. You are associated with someone as when the "chief priests [were given power] to bind all who call on Your name" (Ac 9:14). Official status is denoted as when Jesus prayed "'while I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me'" (Jn 17:12).

In addition to the Greek deity there was a temple to Emperor Augustus (29 A.D.) because the city was the administrative center of the Emperor's cult (Roma). However, it was the religious power and authority of pagan priests which challenged the church. It is believed that the Babylonian priesthood moved to Pergamum from Babylon after it was destroyed. That would have involved astrology and the occult. There was also the temple of AEsculapius who was the god of healing. This would have utilized mystical methods. However, Jesus told them it was "'He who has the sharp two-edged sword'" (Rev 2:12). Surgically speaking "the word of

God . . . [is] sharper . . . and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow" (Heb 4:12). By the Cross "He had disarmed the rulers and authorities" (Col 2:15) and "appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1Jn 3:8). He told the seventy disciples "I have given you authority . . . over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you" (Lk 10:19). He told his disciples "these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons" (Mk 16:17).

### **Teaching of Balaam**

John wrote, "The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says . . . I have a few things against you" (Rev 2:12,14). It is hereby expressed since "He has made My mouth like a sharp sword" (Isa 49:2). He explained "there are some who hold the teaching of Balaam" (Rev 2:14). Women of Midian "caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor" (Num 31:16). Balaam "kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel" (Rev 2:14). He "kept" doing it repetitively. Therefore "pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching" (1Ti 4:16). Teaching is doctrine. "Speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1) for "they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their

own desires" (2Ti 4:3). "Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2Pe 2:15). "They have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam" (Jude 11).

Balaam taught them "to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality" (Rev 2:14). This came about when "Israel journeyed and camped in the plains of Moab" (Nu 22:1). Then the king of Moab sent for Balaam saying, "Please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me" (:6). "God said to Balaam, 'Do not go with them'" (:12), but when Balaam persisted he said, "Go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do" (:20). However, "the angel of the Lord" (:23,24,26,31) tried to stop him. I'm sure God tries to divert us at times but we continue on. Afterwards Israelites started to have relations with Moabites. "They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their god. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel" (25:2-3). The ritual, pagan worship practices to Baal were predicated on promoting fertility where cycles of nature were personified. It was supposed to promulgate the health of herds,

crops and society. That is why sexual activity was expected and they "commit acts of immorality" (Rev 2:14). Animals were "sacrificed to idols" (:14). Paul was concerned about "the eating of things sacrificed to idols" (1Co 8:4). He said "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God" (10:20). "You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (:21). "The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him . . . [therefore] flee immorality" (6:18). They were to "abstain from things sacrificed to idols . . . and from fornication" (Ac 15:29). God judged the disobedience and "those who died by the plague were 24,000" (Nu 25:9). He told Pergamum "you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (Rev 2:15). To the Ephesians he said "you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (:7).

## **Thyatira**

Thyatira was a prosperous city with many trade guilds. Each had its own patron deity and there was idolatry and immorality. The guilds controlled the city's commerce, so if you didn't participate in the pagan worship, you couldn't join the union and then could not find work. The most popular god was Apollo, the sun-god, who was known to rule by force and also known to keep his followers from misfortune. There was

also a temple to Artemis-Diana, the love goddess. Then there was a temple outside the city to a sorceress and fortuneteller named Sibyl Sambathe. Jesus had a criticism of this church saying that "you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev 2:20). "Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel" (1Ki 16:29) and "he married Jezebel . . . and went to serve Baal" (:31) and "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him" (:33). Jezebel implemented Phoenician worship and had 450 prophets to Baal and 400 to Astarte at the court of Ahab. Characteristics of these Canaanite religions were degeneracy, barbarity and licentiousness. Mysticism and demonic influence were prevalent. Jehu spoke of the "harlotries . . . [and] witchcrafts" of Jezebel (2Ki 9:22). The Thyatiran Jezebel claimed prophetic inspiration from God but it is not said that she was a member of the church. However Jesus said to the church "you tolerate the woman" (Rev 2:20) and "hold this teaching" (:24) and accuses "those who commit adultery with her" (:22). He advises them to "repent of her deeds" (:22) which include "the deep things of Satan" (:24).

The perspective of this letter is of "The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire" (Rev 2:18). John saw that "His eyes were like a flame of fire" (1:14). Also, when John "saw heaven opened" (19:11) he said "His eyes are a flame of fire" (:12). Daniel said "his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches" (Da 10:6). It symbolizes his penetrating knowledge of man's motives and thoughts. God is "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). He knows "the hearts of all men" (Ac 1:24). "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind" (Jer 17:10). Therefore, he said to this church that "all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and the hearts" (Rev 2:23). He also cautions "I will give to each one of you according to your deeds" (:22). This is the "burden" (:24) he places on them. However Thyatira's Jezebel was given "time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality" (:21). "God will bring every act to judgment" (Ecc 12:14). God's "eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds" (Jer 32:19). Jesus told the churches "I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev 22:12).

## Sardis

Sardis was located on a narrow plateau 1,500 feet above sea level near a river and next to a mountain range. It was a strategic military stronghold and there were fertile fields nearby. It was once wealthy and known for its textile industry and wool dyeing. Pagan worship was common and their patron deity was Cybele, the mother goddess. Its excesses and immorality were well known. The city's position fostered complacency which led to being conquered.

Jesus revealed to the church in Sardis that "you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" (Rev 3:2). It seems that they were lackadaisical (languid-lacking liveliness and interest). He said, "I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God" (:2). It was not in a worldly way but in a spiritual context. In Isaiah God said "this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote" (29:13). If their deeds had been "completed" the results would have substantiated the accomplishment. Paul points out that "He who began a good work in you will perfect it" (Php 1:6). Furthermore Christ "will also confirm you to the end" (1Co 1:8). But they were oblivious to their situation and were told "you are dead, wake up, and

strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die" (Rev 3:2). They were "not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God" (Col 2:19). They were "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2Ti 3:5). They were "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (:7). Paul explained "while they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly" (1Th 5:3). Jesus had told them things "'were about to die'" (Rev 3:2). He warned "'if you do not wake up, I will come as a thief'" (:3). "'If the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert'" (Mt 24:43). "'For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will'" (:44). "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (2Pe 3:11)? Paul said they were "not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief" (1Th 5:4). "So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober" (:6) "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" (2Pe 3:14). They had a reputation of being alive. Just because you attend church it could be that

you are alleged to be a Christian. However, it is "he who does the will of My Father" (Mt 7:21) who will enter heaven. Jesus will say to some who expect entry "I never knew you; depart from Me" (:23).

### **Walk in White**

As a solution Jesus advised to "remember what you have received and heard" (Rev 3:3). What they had received was "the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (Ja 1:21). To "wake up" (Rev 3:2,3) is imperative. "It is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed" (Ro 13:11). Furthermore, what you remember you are also to "keep" (Rev 3:3). This is done by laying aside "the old self" (Eph 4:22), "every encumbrance" (Heb 12:1), and "all that remains of wickedness" (Ja 1:21). "Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality" (Col 3:5). "Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph 4:24) "who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10). As a result "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1Jn 1:7).

Jesus said, "You have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments"

(Rev 3:4). There were only some with a right relationship. God had chosen Israel as a brand from the fire (Zec 3:2). Joshua, the high priest, was "clothed with filthy garments" (:3) and the Lord said, "Remove the filthy garments from him" (:4). Then he explained, "I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes" (:4). In Revelation he explains "they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev 3:4). Furthermore, "he who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments" (:5). "It was given to [the Bride of Christ] to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev 19:8). "When [the priests] enter at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments" (Eze 44:17) for "they shall not gird themselves with anything which makes them sweat" (:18). Sweat symbolizes human effort and Paul acknowledged that he "be found in Him, not having righteousness of my own . . . but that which is through faith in Christ" (Php 3:9). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). They are "clothed in white garments" (Rev 3:5). "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14).

## Philadelphia

Jesus addresses the church in Philadelphia as "He who . . . has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens" (Rev 3:7). This is from the prophecy which says "I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, when he opens no one will shut, when he shuts no one will open" (Isa 22:22). It refers to "a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders . . . [where] there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His Kingdom" (9:6-7). This was implemented when Jesus said to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19). Notice that God orchestrates his plan. Jesus said, "the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing" (Jn 5:19).

Keys are to doors. Jesus told them, "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut" (Rev 3:8). John noticed that something was opened to him and wrote "behold, a door standing open in heaven" (4:1). You can't see anything until the door opens. Stephen said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up" (Ac 7:56). He saw "the

Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (:56). Jesus had said, "I am the way and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (Jn 14:6). He also stated, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved" (10:9). The opening is the part of the door structure that one enters through. He said, "I am the door of the sheep" (:7). "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice" (:3). Peter heard God's voice and Jesus explained it was from "My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 16:17). He continued saying, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build My church" (:18). Consequently by receiving the "keys of the kingdom" (:19) Peter unlocked the revelation by declaring for them to "repent and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Ac 2:38). Furthermore "all the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (10:43).

Philadelphia was 952 feet above sea level and was likely considered a fortress city. It was an agricultural center, manufactured textiles, and produced leather. Its location was as a gateway to the high central plateau and it was on an important trade route. Jesus said, "I have put before you an open door" (Rev 3:8). It would mean that it was a door of opportunity for spreading the gospel (1Co 16:9, 2Co 2:12,

Col 4:3). It was put there because they had "a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My Name" (Rev 3:8). They had also "kept the word of My perseverance" (:9). He had said, "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance" (Mt 13:12).

## **Laodicea**

Antiochus II rebuilt the city in 250 BC and named it after his wife Laodice. Should any significance be attributed to this name? To evaluate it one should be "accurately handling the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). You would build an interpretation "line on line" (Isa 28:10) as a mason would stretch out a line to build a wall and then raise it for the next layer. The compound word "Laodiceans" is composed of the two Greek words "laos" and "dice." The first means "people" and the second "judgment or vengeance" which transfers to English as "the people of my judgment." That first word is also a part of the noun "Nicolaitans" mentioned of Ephesus regarding its "deeds" (Rev 2:6) and Pergamos regarding its "doctrine" (2:15). The first part of that word is "nikos" which means "conquest" implying "conquering the people." Jesus spoke of the detrimental effect of the "teaching of Baalam" (:14) and those "in the same way [who] hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (:15). Little is known of the latter

sect though the Greek meaning may be "rulers of the people." The doctrine may have led some people to make compromises with society wherein they rationalized they could practically function in both the church and idolatry at the same time. Their lives would have been corrupted and they would have been defeated. Some interpreters find the principle in a scripture and apply it to similar situations. Idolatry is worship of a false god instead of the true God, so if anything diverts attention from God to itself, it can be considered an idol. If someone's deeds undermine proper behavior and are deliberate then he is responsible. Jesus warned that "'the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them'" (Mt 20:25). That is why Peter instructed the church elders to lead by example and not "yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge" (1Pe 5:3). So it is possible that the complacent and independent attitude of the Laodicean church is the result of it having been "conquered" by tolerating worldly methods imposed by those seeking control. The church is to be a "holy priesthood" (1Pe 2:5) and not an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

### **Lukewarm**

Laodicea was on the Lycus River at the junction of two fertile valleys and at the intersection of three busy trade routes. It was militarily defensible and eventually became the

capital of that Roman region. It became wealthy and its banks stored the gold which was refined locally by a special process. Perhaps this is why Jesus said "'You say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'" (Rev 3:17). He instructed "'I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich'" (:18). In the valley they had developed a special breed of black sheep. Also they had invented a process of weaving without using yarn and produced a popular outer garment called a "trimeta." Jesus advised for them to buy "'white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed'" (:18). They had a famous medical school and it was known for its ear salve and eye ointment. However, they attributed their success to worshipping the healing God Asclepios. Jesus instructed to buy from him "'eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see'" (:18).

Jesus begins this message with him being the "'Beginning of the creation of God'" (:14). Laodicea was only six miles from Colossae and is mentioned four times in the epistle to the Colossians. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col 1:15-16). "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold

together" (:17). "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (Jn 1:3). The Laodiceans felt self-sufficient and had lost their spiritual perspective. They had become "lukewarm" (Rev 3:16) and Jesus instructed them to "be zealous and repent" (:19). He said, "You do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (:17). They did not even realize that their communication with him had broken down and the relationship had deteriorated. He said, "I stand at the door and knock" (:20). He had even announced his presence with "My voice" (:20). We shouldn't be so preoccupied with our normal lives that we ignore the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:14). It is our responsibility to open the door (Rev 3:20). Then fellowship will be renewed and Jesus will "come in to him and dine with him" (:20).

# **The Kingdom of God**

## **Eyewitnesses**

In a court proceeding secondary or incidental evidence is not nearly as incriminating as firsthand testimony. In one case they "were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2Pe 1:16) when they "heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (:18). Christ "received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him" (:17). They concluded that "we have the prophetic word made more sure" (:19) and "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will" (:21). Peter therefore concludes that "we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (:16). Tales are fictitious stories. "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God" (2Jn 9). They "from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Lk 1:2). John said "we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us" (1Jn 1:2). "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (:5). Luke reports that "the things

accomplished among us . . . were handed down to us" (Lk 1:1-2) in conjunction with "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also" (1Jn 1:3). It is "what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life" (:1).

These apostles felt responsible to communicate what they had experienced and learned. John stated "these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete" (1Jn 1:4). Peter relates it is the "second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder" (2Pe 3:1). "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1Jn 5:13). Luke acknowledged that "many have undertaken to compile an account" (Lk 1:1) of these things and he, himself, "investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write [it] out for you in consecutive order" (:3) "so you may know the exact truth" (:4). As long as you are "certain . . . [and] practice these things . . . the entrance into the eternal kingdom . . . will be abundantly supplied to you" (2Pe 1:10-11). "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who

is true" (1Jn 5:20). However, not everyone agrees with this teaching. "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us" (1Jn 4:6). John found only "some of your children walking in the truth" (2Jn 4) "as we have received commandment to do from the Father" (:4). He then stated "I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is how you are walking in truth" (3Jn 3).

### **Kingdom at Hand**

"The word of God came to John" (Lk 3:2) and he began "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (:3). Consequently "all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ" (:15). Jews were cognizant of this as Simeon was "looking for the consolation of Israel" (2:25) and Anna "continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (:38). "With many exhortations he preached the gospel to the people" (3:18) intimating that "'all flesh will see the salvation of God'" (:6) and saying, "'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 3:2). Jesus reminded them that by John "'the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it'" (Lk 16:16). Jesus, himself,

"began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 4:17). He said, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (Lk 4:43). He was "teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel" (Mt 4:23). The "gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations" (24:14). This will result in an obedience in accordance with the prayer, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (6:10). "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (Rev 11:15).

"The people were in a state of expectation" (Lk 3:15) and even the apostles asked, "Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Ac 1:6). After all, for forty days Jesus had been "speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (:3). Even the Pharisees had questions and Jesus answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed" (Lk 17:20). He told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36) and "as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm" (:36) meaning that, as it stands, it is not a threat to the government. But rather "the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Lk 17:21).

It is implemented from the inside out because "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev 1:6). "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (5:10). It was furthered "when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God" (Ac 8:12). It was promulgated for two years when Paul was "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ" (28:30-31).

### **Kingdom is Near**

Historically a king has been the focus of power and authority over a territory. He reigns because what he decides has to be obeyed since he has the ability to enforce his edicts. God told them he was the "Creator of Israel, your King" (Isa 43:15). They were to "remember also your Creator" (Ecc 12:1). There doesn't automatically have to be a king for "in those days there was no king in Israel" (Jdg 18:1). Then God told Samuel "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them" (1Sa 8:7). God warned them of how a king would take advantage of them (:11-17) but they "refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, 'No, but there will be a king over us'" (:19). An example of man's dominion is Nimrod and "the beginning of his kingdom

was Babel" (Ge 10:10) or Babylon. Satan "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Lk 4:5) and said "'it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish'" (:6). However, "the kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations" (Ps 22:28). "He rules by His might forever; His eyes keep watch on the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves" (66:7). It is "the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations" (145:12-13).

The kingdom of God seems all-encompassing so how is it appropriated? Jesus said, "'The kingdom of God is in your midst'" (Lk 17:21) which means "'Do not go away'" (:23) since it "'is not coming with signs to be observed'" (:20). It is near because it "'is at hand'" (Mt 4:17). Jesus told them, "'To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables'" (Mk 4:11). It is a mystery because another translation of Luke 17:21 is that the kingdom is within you, and being inside (not outside), means that you understand. It is "His kingdom" (2Ti 4:1) since Jesus referred to it as "'My kingdom'" (Lk 22:30). It is the "kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5) and

will become "the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev 12:15). As representatives "He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing" (Lk 9:2). They were to say, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (10:9). "All the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all" (6:19). He told the Pharisees, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:28).

### **Enter the Kingdom**

Peter put it into perspective referring to "I am in this earthly dwelling" (2Pe 1:13) and that the "laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent" (:14). "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). Paul also remarked he would "prefer rather to be absent from the body and be at home with the Lord" (:8). There is an "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord" (2Pe 1:11). It was explained that Jesus "has been taken from you into heaven" (Ac 1:11). Paul anticipated that the "Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom" (2Ti 4:18).

Jesus told them, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20). "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter" (7:21). Again he emphasized, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3). "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter" (:5). By water it means "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you . . . from all your idols" (Eze 36:25). Christ "gave Himself up for her [the church] . . . having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Eph 5:25-26). "He saved us . . . according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). "Unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3). Is being there simply a matter of location? A compromise mentioned by Jesus is that "there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power" (Mk 9:1).

Jesus told the apostles, "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just

as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you" (Lk 22:29). "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 16:19). Jesus told the disciples, "Let the children alone . . . for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (19:14). "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32). Even a scribe was getting close, for "when Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God'" (Mk 12:34). The King said, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt 25:34).

### **Inherit the Kingdom**

Jesus' disciples asked, "When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Mt 24:3). One sign is "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (:7). Nations are countries or ethnicities but kingdoms are realms that are ruled over and not necessarily limited to countries. Nonetheless "you will be hated by all nations because of My name" (:9). "They will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you" (:9). "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (:12). It seems that this means more than just navigating through

circumstances so you don't get killed. The gospel of the kingdom is to be preached (:14). It is a process to be prayed for saying, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (6:10). The gospel is the "good news" of the kingdom representing the kingdom itself. It is a "testimony to all the nations" (:14) which is followed by "the end" (:14). Jesus pointed out, "How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mk 10:25). Peter then cited, "We have left everything and followed You" (:28), but if you endure to the end (Mt 24:12), you will receive "a hundred times as much . . . and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mk 10:30). However, Jesus warned the Pharisees, "Because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Mt 24:13) "it shall be charged against this generation" (Lk 11:51).

Paul encouraged the Colossians to give "thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light" (Col 1:12). The king said to them, "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt 25:34). They "through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). "The kingdom of

heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Mt 11:12). It denotes to catch away or pluck something by force suddenly exercised. A person must deliberately decide and act upon it. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1Co 6:9). You don't qualify if you are unjust or wicked. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (15:5). "The deeds of the flesh are evident" (Gal 5:19). "Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (:21). "No immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5). "We have obtained an inheritance" (1:11) which is "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (:18). It is "the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15) and "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4).

### **Forfeited the Kingdom**

Will Israel inherit the kingdom of God? God had specifically chosen them as he "rejected" (Ps 78:67) some and "did not choose" (:67) others. He made a covenant with them telling Moses to say, "If you indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then

you shall be My own possession among all the peoples for all the earth is Mine" (Ex 19:5). "Your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth" (Isa 54:5). He "chose the tribe of Judah" (Ps 78:68) and "also chose David His servant" (:70). God's purpose was to "shepherd Jacob His people" (:71) "according to the integrity of His heart" (:72). "You shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). Balaam prophesied, "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel!" (:5). "He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him?" (:9).

However, Israel broke the covenant by committing spiritual adultery because "she was a harlot there" (Jer 3:6). Israel had been "faithless" (:6) and "her treacherous sister Judah saw it" (:7). God's response was, "You adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband! Men give gifts to all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers to bribe them!" (Eze 16:32-33). He said, "I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant" (:59). "You were sold for your iniquities, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away"

(Isa 50:1). "I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce" (Jer 3:8). "She is not my wife, and I am not her husband" (Hos 2:2). Furthermore, "the former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled" (Dt 24:4). Therefore, the ten northern tribes of Israel were taken captive by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. after which they were dispersed into most of the known world never to return to their land.

In addition, "Her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also" (Jer 3:8) and "did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception" (:18). Consequently in 606 B.C. the southern kingdom was taken into captivity. Then after seventy years the exiles were permitted to return where they resumed the name of Israel as the designation for their nation. "Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you . . . and will establish an everlasting covenant with you" (Eze 16:60). It would be "so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation" (:63). "Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king;

and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days" (Hos 3:5).

### **Restore the Kingdom**

Paul addresses Israel's destiny asking, "God has not rejected His people, has He?" (Ro 11:1). He answers "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew" (:2). Paul then reveals that "at the present time [there is] a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (:5). Then he asks "if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (:15). They again will be branches of the "rich root of the olive tree" (:17). Therefore "if they do not continue in their unbelief, [they] will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again" (:23). He then reveals a "mystery" (:25) that "all Israel will be saved" (:26). At that time they were enemies of the gospel (:28) but by "God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (:28-29). In verse 27 he quotes a prophecy proving God's intention from Isaiah 59:20 saying, "'A redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob.'" It pertains to a covenant saying, "'As for Me, this is My covenant with them'" (:20). It involves "'My Spirit which is upon you'" (:21) and that God's words "'shall not depart

from your mouth, nor from the . . . mouth of your offspring's offspring . . . from now and forever" (:21).

It coincides with the prophesy saying, "Behold, days are coming . . . when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31). However, it will "not [be] like the covenant I made with their fathers" (:31). Nonetheless, that covenant is significant saying, "To your descendants I have given this land" (Ge 15:18), "the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (17:8). It will be fulfilled "when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah . . . [and] will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it" (Jer 30:3). "In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance" (3:18). "I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone . . . and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation . . . and they will no longer be two nations" (Eze 37:21-22). "I will . . . cleanse them . . . and they will be My people, and I will be their God" (:23).

They will proclaim, "O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel" (Jer 31:7). "Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth" (:8). "At the time when I gather you together; indeed I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore our fortunes before your eyes" (Zep 3:20). "That day is great, there is none like it" (Jer 30:7). "It is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it" (:7). However, it will be difficult, for "I have heard a sound of terror, of dread, and there is no peace" (:5). "This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, 'declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (Jer 31:33).

### **A Remnant will Return**

"That day is great, there will be none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer 30:7). It is said to be the time of the Great Tribulation. They will say, "Why has the Lord done thus to this land?" (Dt 29:24) and the reply will be, "Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord . . . [and] went and served other gods" (:25-26). "The Lord uprooted them from their land in anger and

in fury and in great wrath, and cast them into another land, as it is to this day" (:28). "A destruction is determined" (Isa 10:22). "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand" (14:24). "I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zec 14:2). However, "in a little while My indignation against you will be spent" (Isa 10:25). "Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations" (Zec 14:3). "O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel" (Jer 31:7). There will be "in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped" (Isa 10:20). "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob to the mighty God" (:21) for "only a remnant within them will return" (:22). "It will happen on that day that the Lord will recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people" (Isa 11:11). "He will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (:12). "The Lord will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land . . . and it will be in the day when the Lord gives you rest" (14:1,3). "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; and my salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion, and My glory for Israel" (46:13-14).

“It shall be when all these things have come upon you . . . and you call them to mind . . . and you return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and soul . . . then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity . . . and will gather you again from all the peoples” (Dt 30:1,2,3). He “will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it” (:5). Also He “will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord . . . so that you may live” (:6). It will be the “favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa 61:2). “They will rebuild the ancient ruins” (:4) and “be called the priests of the Lord” (:6). “Instead of your shame you will have a double portion” (:7) and “I will faithfully give them their recompense” (:8) and “make an everlasting covenant with them”(8). This is not accomplished without a struggle. “I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army” (Rev 19:19). There was a “white horse and He who sat on it” (:11) and “armies which are in heaven . . . were following Him on white horses” (:14). “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush

and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will endure forever" (Da 2:44).

## **Kingdom of Heaven**

Revelation 20:1-6 presents the millennium and it is a time of peace because Satan is bound for a thousand years (:2). It is a period of theocratic government because they reigned with Christ for a thousand years (:4,6). Jesus said, "In the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28). John saw "thrones and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them" (Rev 20:4). "In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains . . . and all the nations will stream to it" (Isa 2:2). "Behold, the Lord God will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him" (40:10). "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all" (Ps 103:19). "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations" (145:13). In the millennium (and afterwards) you could say that Christ fulfills the functions of the executive, legislative, and judicial functions of government. "For the Lord is our judge,

the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King" (33:22).

The Messianic kingdom was prophesied with, "'Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever'" (2Sa 7:16). "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace; on the throne of David and over his kingdom" (Isa 9:7). It is because "a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders" (:6). It is a matter of authority, power, dominion and rule. "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations" (Ps 22:28). "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me" (Isa 61:1) "to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God" (:2). "His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zec 9:10). "He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples" (Isa 2:4). "With righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth" (11:4). "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet" (Isa 62:1). "The law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (2:3). The eventuality is that "'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord'" (Rev

11:15). But there was a tension between the current and future realities of the kingdom. We know that scripture teaches that the kingdom is already present because John said he was a "fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus" (Rev 1:9). Paul stated, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and translated us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13). Jesus explained, ""When you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near . . . [and] this generation will not pass away until all things take place"" (Lk 21:31-32).

### **Kingdom is Lord's**

Paul spoke of Christ "who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom" (2Ti 4:1). "The kingdom is the Lord's" (Ps 22:28) and "His sovereignty rules over all" (103:19). His authority "rules over" (22:28) and "keep[s] watch on the nations" (66:7). His power is seen through his "mighty acts" (145:12) and "He rules by His might forever" (66:7). It is an "everlasting kingdom" (145:13) administered from "His throne in the heavens" (103:19). His "dominion endures throughout all generations" (145:13). This rule is over creation in general and man in particular. But there is also a future application in a

messianic sense. Christ came and "the government will rest on His shoulders" (Isa 9:6) and "there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace" (:7). It will be "on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness" (:7). They brought David to Samuel and God said, "'Anoint him; for this is he'" (1Sa 16:12). Samuel did so and "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward" (:13). They said, "'The Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel'" (2Sa 5:2).

"The Lord has sworn to David . . . of the fruit of your body I will set upon the throne" (Ps 132:11). "'One will go forth for Me to be ruler of Israel'" (Micah 5:2). "'I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king'" (Jer 23:5). "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (Jn 7:42). "Of all my sons . . . He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel" (1Ch 28:5). "Solomon has even taken his seat on the throne of the kingdom" (1Ki 1:46) and God told him, "'I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David'" (2Ch

7:18). Paul stated that Christ "was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh" (Ro 1:3). Jesus, himself, cited the importance of this continuity saying, "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright and morning star" (Rev 22:16). He asks the Pharisees, "How does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,'" (Mt 22:43) for "if David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" (:45). The reference is "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'" (Ps 110:1). Jesus was proving that he was the Messiah and "no one was able to answer Him a word" (Mt 22:46).

Prophetically it is "when He sits on the throne of His kingdom" (Dt 17:18). Nathan prophesied, "Your throne shall be established forever" (2Sa 7:16). "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom" (Isa 9:7). It was according to what the angel told Mary that Jesus "will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Lk 1:32). Daniel predicted that "His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him" (Da 7:27). The angel explained regarding Jesus' birth that "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His

kingdom will have no end" (Lk 1:33). "Having been exalted to the right hand of God . . . [he] received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Ac 2:33). Being exalted would be occupying a "supreme place." "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). "All things that the Father has are Mine" (Jn 16:15).