

# The Day of God's Wrath

## Seven-sealed Scroll

God, the Father, gave Jesus Christ information about "things which must soon take place" (Rev 1:1) which constitutes a revelation because it is not something which has been heretofore shared. They are "the words of the prophecy" (:3) "which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants" (:1). Since Christ told John, "Write in a book what you see" (:11) we are to "heed the things which are written in it" (:3). When Christ received the revelation "He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John" (:1) who said "I heard behind me a loud voice" (:10). When he looked behind him he saw "one like a son of man" (:13) and then "fell at His feet like a dead man" (:17). The personage replied, "I am the first and the last, and the living One" (:17-18). He had said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (:8). Since the voice John heard was the ascended and glorified Christ and it was spoken "by His angel" (:1) then it is his one-and-the-same supernatural, spiritual presence. That doesn't mean that an unbeliever can't read it, but does it mean that that person will understand that "every eye will see Him . . . and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him"? (:7).

The scene is around God's heavenly throne where the elders say, "Worthy are You . . . for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Rev 4:11). Then John saw "in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written in the inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals" (5:1). After the Lamb took the book they said, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals, for you were slain, and purchased [men] for God with Your blood" (:9). It was "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). After Pentecost "the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (2:47). He "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession (Titus 2:14). The starting point for all this is that "the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Ps 24:1). God explained to the Israelites that, "The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land" (Lev 25:23-24). Boaz' close relative told him, "You may have my right of redemption" (Ruth 3:6) and therefore Boaz told the elders, "You are witnesses today that I have bought" the land (:9). "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess" (:10) who became part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Consequently Christ paid the ransom for us "having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12) making him "the mediator of a new covenant . . . since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (:15). "A covenant is valid only when men are dead" (:17).

## The First Seal

In Israel when property was purchased it was recorded in a scroll. Jeremiah was told to, "Buy for yourself my field . . . for you have the right of redemption to buy it" (Jer 32:7). He said, "I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses" (:10). Then if the originator of the covenant dies, the will/deed is opened and the instructions in it are

executed to fulfill the inheritance. "In the right hand of Him who sat on the throne [was] a scroll" (Rev 5:1). But it was "like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, 'Please read this,' he will say, 'I cannot, for it is sealed'" (Isa 29:11). Then a disconsolate John was told "'the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals'" (:5). There were sticks on both ends of the scroll, and as the scribe recorded the document, it would be rolled and sections would be sealed with a clay marker having an authentic mark put on it so that only a person with a matching signet ring would be permitted to open the seal. Then "He came and took the [seven-sealed] book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" (:7). He received the title deed to the earth and would proceed with its redemption and to repossess all that is his.

John "saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals" (Rev 6:1). He was the center of attention as the kinsman-redeemer as he broke the seals, however, the title deed of the earth wasn't a description of his inheritance, but rather describing the process of events involved in reclaiming what was his through a series of judgments. Each step is announced by one of the living creatures for something to take place. Firstly, a white horse appeared and "he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer" (:2). "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord" (Pr 21:31). "The day of the Lord is coming" (Joel 2:1) and "there is a great and mighty people" (:2). "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like war horses, so they run" (:4). "The Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2Ki 6:17).

## **The White Horse**

This horse was white. That color has an association with God and Christ was worthy "to 7:9). White is also associated with holiness and righteousness. "It was given to her [the bride] to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts receive glory and honor and power" (Rev 5:11) which originates from the "great white throne and Him who [sits] upon it" (20:11). "Thrones were set up, and the ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool" (Da of the saints" (Rev 19:8). Isaiah prophesied, "'Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow'" (Isa 1:18). David prayed, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps 51:7). Daniel was told, "'Many will be purged, purified and refined" (Da 12:10). There was a multitude "standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes" (Rev 6:9) who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb" (:14).

There was a rider on the white horse who had "a bow, and a crown" (Rev 6:1) but it doesn't say that he was wearing white clothes. The crown in Greek is the word *stephanos* and its shape is that of the garland or wreath which is given as a victor's crown for a prize having won an athletic contest. It could also be a token of public honor as an emblem for a military victory. The rider "went out conquering and to conquer" (:2) which has to do with overcoming and prevailing over your enemies. But sitting on a white cloud "was one like a son of man having a golden crown on His head"

(14:14). Even later John "saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war . . . and on His dead are many diadems" (19:11-12). However, the stephanos which the rider on the horse wore "was given to him" (6:2) as a reward for a worldly achievement and it was not a royal crown which bonifide kings wore. God controls what happens by giving certain authority but draws the line where "they were not permitted to kill anyone" (9:5). A key . . . was given to him" (:1) and "power was given them" (:3). "There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words" (13:5) and "to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (:7). There were "signs which it was given him to perform" (:14) and "it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast" (:15). Jesus warned, "'See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My Name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many'" (Mt 24:4-5). "False Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect'" (:24).

## Four Horses

The rider on the white horse already "had a bow" (Rev 6:2) and it didn't have to be given to him. The bow is an instrument of war but is more like artillery being shot from a distance as opposed to close quarters fighting as with using a "great sword" (:4) which the next rider on the red horse used. Habakkuk questioned God's tactics "that You rode on Your horses, on Your chariots of salvation?" (Hab 3:8). "Your bow was made bare, the rods of chastisement were sworn" (:9). "If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts" (Ps 7:12-13). "Your arrows are sharp; the peoples fall under You" (45:5). Elisha prophesied, "'The Lord's arrow of victory'" (2Ki 2:17). "He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver" (Isa 49:2). But the rider of the white horse had no quiver of arrows so how could he go forth to conquer? It has been suggested that this is a bloodless conquest achieved through diplomacy. "He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week" (Da 9:27). The emphasis is on "conquering and to conquer" (Rev 6:2). It is a worldwide movement promoting peace because the next rider "was granted to take peace from the earth" (:4). But it is not just peace and prosperity because the white color mimics the scriptures of God's purposes in answer to their question, "'When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age?'" (Mt 24:3). Some refer to Jesus' Olivet Discourse as a rendition of a mini-apocalypse, and deception is a significant facet where he warns, "'Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many'" (:11) and others will fool you and "'will mislead many'" (:5) so, "'See to it that no one misleads you'" (:4). They "'will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect'" (:24).

The breaking of the seals precipitates judgment. It is referred to as God's "day of wrath" (Ro 2:5) and "day of reckoning" (Isa 2:12). It is "the day of the Lord's anger" (2:3) and "the day of trouble" (Ps 27:5). It is the "day of the Lord" (Joel 2:1) and "the great day of God" (Rev 16:14). It is a "unique day" (14:7) which is "His day" (Lk 17:24). "It is the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer 30:7). The seven seals represent the entire

tribulation period, however, the seventh is composed of seven trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet is composed of seven bowl judgments. The first four seals take place in the first half of the tribulation period. Horses with riders appear and they represent respectively conquest, war, famine and death. The riders are not personalities per se because they represent impersonal forces and major movements which are to be interpreted together. Prophetically there was a group of four colored horses "whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth" (Zec 1:10). "These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth" (6:5). "With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses" (:2-3). Jesus described this period as "merely the beginning of birth pangs" (Mt 24:8). Then when all the seals will have been traversed the gospel will have been preached to the "whole world . . . and then the end will come" (:14).

## **Day of Judgment**

John cited the event saying "love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment" (1Jn 4:17). Christ "came with thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 15). It develops over time such as "because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Ro 2:5). God will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who . . . obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation" (:6,8) and they will have "tribulation and distress" (:9). Jesus warned, "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short" (Mt 24:21-22). Ezekiel prophesied, "One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind" (Eze 5:12). "Thus My anger will be spent, and I will satisfy My wrath on them" (:13). Revelation states that "a third of the" (Rev 8:7-9) "earth was burnt up" (:7), "sea became blood" (:8), "creatures in the sea died" (:9) and "ships were destroyed" (:9). Also "four angels . . . were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind" (9:15). Zephaniah prophesied, "Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the Lord! On it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom" (Zep 1:14-15). Jesus prayed for protection for us saying, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one" (Jn 17:15). The Greek words "tereo ek" mean to preserve out from within. The same words are used in "I will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10). They were to hurt "only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4). The dragon "persecuted the woman" (Rev 12:13) "but the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of its mouth" (:16). Pretribulationists argue that God wouldn't subject his children to his own wrath so will rapture them beforehand. The solution is "to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10).

## Comes to Judge

Peter desired that God "may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you" (Ac 3:20). The purpose is that "times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (:19). Paul told the Thessalonians would they not be "in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" (1Th 2:19). It would be a "period of restoration of all things" (Ac 3:21). However, those who don't "repent and return, so that [their] sins may be wiped away" (:19) "will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2Th 1:9). "The Judge is standing right at the door" (Ja 5:9) "who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom" (2Ti 4:1). He will be "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel" (2Th 1:8).

Paul's revelation was that "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2Ti 4:8). "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Rev 3:11). Christ's appearing is called an *epiphaneia*. It is bringing forth into light causing something to shine. An epiphany is a sudden, intuitive perception into the reality of something. "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1Pe 5:4) and "at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (4:3). "When He appears we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1Jn 3:2). This is because we "abide in Him . . . and [will] not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (2:28). This is possible as we are "children of God" (3:1). The "Father has bestowed [this] on us . . . [and] for this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him" (:1).

## God Judges

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Gal 6:7). God has built a cause-and-effect into life which automatically judges. "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near" (Dt 32:35). "I will repay", says the Lord" (Ro 12:19). "God is not one to show partiality" (Ac 10:34). There is "no injustice with God" (Ro 9:14). He is "the one who impartially judges according to each one's work" (1Pe 1:17). "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things" (Ro 2:2). "How unsearchable are His judgments" (Rev 15:3). "Righteous and true are your ways" (:3).

What you do makes a difference because it determines whether you will "inherit the kingdom" (Mt 25:34). What qualifies is if you help feed, clothe and house people, and visit people when they are sick or in prison (:35-36). They "were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (Rev 20:12). It should make one take notice that his actions are actually recorded. "Whatever good thing each one does, he will receive back from the Lord" (Eph 6:8). "You recompense a man according to his work" (Ps 62:12). Paul quotes this regarding "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteousness judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" (Ro 2:5-6). Jesus says "My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev 22:12). "By perseverance in doing good . . . [you receive] eternal life" (Ro 2:7). "This is the promise which He

Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (3:16). But "He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1Jn 5:12).

## **God is Just**

God is "the Judge of all" (Heb 12:23) but "not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn 5:22). He is "the One who has been appointed by God a Judge of the living and the dead" (Ac 10:42). "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). "There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known" (Lk 12:2). Is there a time for this? "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Ro 14:10). "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (:30). He "is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "He ordered [the Apostles] to preach to the people and solemnly to testify" (Ac 10:42) about it. "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven . . . dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2Th 1:7-8). "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish" (Jn 10:27-28). "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2). However, "He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Mt 25:41).

## **Judge of All**

Is God's judgment complicated because there are so many different people and religions? Perhaps it can be simplified to just the Jew and the Gentile. God "desires all men to be saved" (1Ti 2:4). It is evaluated when we all "appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2Co 5:10). "All the nations will be gathered before Him" (Mt 25:32). It is "on the day when . . . God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). God has clearly revealed his divinity and power such that it is obvious and "they are without excuse" (1:20) if they don't concur. This is at the "great white throne" (Rev 20:11). "The dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (:12). "He will separate them from one another" (Mt 25:32) and "say to those on His right, 'Come . . . inherit the kingdom'" (:34) and "those on His left, 'Depart from Me'" (:41). "Those who did the good deeds [will go] to a resurrection of life, [and] those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:29). We know God is fair because he "does not show partiality" (Dt 10:17) and "in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Ac 10:34-35).

Judgment and reward are synonymous because "My reward is with Me" (Rev 22:12). God will "render to every man according to what he has done" (:12). He will "search the heart, . . . test the mind . . . [and] give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds" (Jer 17:10). Each will "be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done" (2Co 5:10). There are principles God judges by. "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:7-8).

## Judgment

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Gal 6:7). "In due time their foot will slip" (Dt 32:35). They are "selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (Ro 2:8), for there is "the truth of God" (1:25). "The Lord is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame" (Zeph 3:5). They are "indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph 2:3) and "obey unrighteousness" (Ro 2:8). They are "sons of disobedience" (Eph 5:6) and "storing up wrath" (Ro 2:5) for themselves because they are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). "He who does not obey the Son . . . the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn 3:36). God "inflicts wrath" (Ro 3:5) on the unrighteous and "wrath and indignation" (2:8) "will come upon the sons of disobedience" (Col 3:6). "'I will repay', says the Lord" (Ro 12:19). "God is not one to show partiality" (Ac 10:34). There is "no injustice with God" (Ro 9:14). He is "the one who impartially judges according to each one's work" (1Pe 1:17). "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things" (Ro 2:2). "How unsearchable are His judgments" (Rev 15:3). "'Righteous and true are your ways'" (:3).

There is "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Ro 2:5). "The Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning" (Isa 2:12). God said it is "'the day when I rise up as a witness'" (Zep 3:8). It is "the day of the Lord's anger" (2:3). "The day of the Lord is coming" (Joel 2:1). "That day is great, there is none like it" (Jer 30:7). It is "indeed great and very awesome" (Joel 2:11). "The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:17). "It will be darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18). They said "to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us . . . from the wrath of the Lamb'" (Rev 6:16). "They will not escape" (1Th 5:3). "The earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness" (Joel 2:12). "Who can endure it?" (:11).

God is "the Judge of all" (Heb 12:23) but "not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn 5:22). He is "the One who has been appointed by God a Judge of the living and the dead" (Ac 10:42). "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). "There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known" (Lk 12:2). Is there a time for this? "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Ro 14:10). "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). "My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all my burning anger" (Zep 3:8). "'Therefore wait for Me,' declares the

Lord" (:8). "You who are longing for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you?" (Amos 5:18). "Wait for His Son from heaven . . . who rescues us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10). "Perhaps you will be hidden" (Zep 2:3).

### **Day of God's Wrath**

The day of the Lord is characterized by divine wrath. It is "that hour which is about to come upon the whole world" (Rev 3:10). "All the earth will be devoured" (Zep 3:9). "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble" (Joel 2:1). There will be "men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world" (Lk 21:26). "All the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came" (Rev 11:18). One purpose was "to destroy those who destroy the earth" (:18). It "is about to come upon the whole world, to test" them (Rev 3:10). They are "those who dwell on the earth" (Rev 3:10;6:10;8:13;11:10;13:8,14;17:8). "The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (6:17). Is the divine wrath also poured out on the church? It is inconceivable that the church would be exempt from this retribution if it is experienced everywhere. "It is the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer 30:7). However, "in that day it will be said to Jerusalem: 'Do not be afraid, O Zion'" (Zep 3:16) for "he will be saved from it" (Jer 30:7). "In the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle" (Ps 27:5). Fortunately, "we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Ro 5:9). "God has not destined us for wrath" (1Th 5:9). He "rescues us from the wrath to come" (1:10). "I also will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10).

John wrote the prophecy to the church in Philadelphia saying, "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door" (Rev 3:8). "You have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (:8) and "have kept the word of My perseverance" (:10) and therefore "I will keep you from the hour of testing" (:10). Philadelphia was only one of the seven churches the letters were written to which would imply that those promises wouldn't necessarily apply to the other churches. 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. The "hour of testing" (:10) is prophetic of the future which many compare to the period where "he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week" (Da 9:27). It is a certain future "hour" (Rev 3:10) similar to that "My time is not yet at hand" (Jn 7:6) but that "the time is near" (Rev 1:3) and will be that "My time is at hand" (Mt 26:18). However, the praeterist believes that Revelation only figuratively describes the events that took place in John's lifetime. Furthermore, the historist takes Revelation as God's prophetic program from the apostles to the end of the age which would be a panorama of church history. But the futurist postpones the events to seven years before and just after the Second Coming. Also, the dispensationalist sees the temple being rebuilt and sacrifices being restored.

### **False Christs**

Where does the antichrist fit into the tribulation? Jesus warned that "false Christs and false prophets will arise" (Mt 24:24). The Greek word is pseudochristos. Then there is another Greek word antichristos which John uses to say that "you heard that antichrist is coming" (1Jn 2:18). Anti here means against or opposed to Christ. It can

also refer to that prophesied person in the future who appears in place of Christ as a counterfeit. Curiously in the same verse John says that "even now many antichrists (Greek plural antichristoi) have appeared" (:18). Even though the "abomination of desolation" (Mt 24:15) is predicted, a preview of antichrists is currently underway because "from this we know that it is the last hour" (1Jn 2:18). "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (2Th 2:7). It is "the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world" (1Jn 4:3). Man was created as body, soul and spirit. When you "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (:1) you are measuring the spiritual truthfulness of a person using discernment. You can also question a person and "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (:2). "False prophets" (1Jn 4:1) as well as "many deceivers have gone out into the world, [and] those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ . . . [are] the deceiver and the antichrist" (2Jn 7). These antichrist precursors embody the deceiving spirit and nature of that future representative. John cites that they were from the church saying "they went out from us" (1Jn 2:19) by deserting the congregation. What substantiates their position is that "if they had been of us, they would have remained with us" (:19). "It will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction" (2Th 2:3). John therefore advises, "Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished" (2Jn 8).

"Do not love the world nor the things in the world" (1Jn 2:15). "They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them" (4:5). "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us" (:6). "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God" (2Jn 9). "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son" (1Jn 2:22). Be "the one who abides in the teaching" (2Jn 9) and if anyone "does not bring this teaching, do not receive him" (:10). "Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning" (1Jn 2:24). "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). "You have been born again . . . through the living and abiding word of God" (1Pe 1:23). We "have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know" (1Jn 2:20) the truth. "By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (4:6). But "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). The coming of the lawless one is "with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved" (2Th 2:10). They "believe what is false" (:11) and will "be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness" (:12).

## **The Antichrist**

Jesus said that at the end of the age there would be wars, famines, earthquakes, killing, betrayal, deception, hatred and lawlessness (Mt 24:3-12). However, "It is not yet the end" (:6) but "merely the beginning of birth pangs" (:8). One sign of that period when "there will be great tribulation" (:21) is "when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place"

(:15). "On the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate" (Da 9:27). This causes horror, makes appalled, lays waste, ruins and destroys. "He will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering" (:27). A prophetic type points to this as when in 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes set up an altar in the temple to the pagan god Zeus Olympius and sacrificed a pig on it.

Jesus warned, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand" (Lk 21:20). Gabriel told Daniel, "The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined" (Da 9:27). Jesus had said, "Not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (Mt 24:2) and that "your house is being left to you desolate!" (23:38). Then in 70 A.D. Titus, the son of Roman Emperor Vespasian, attacked and destroyed Jerusalem. This is a prophetic fulfillment but there is also another future application concerning the one who "will make a firm covenant with the many for one week" (Da 9:27). It is prophetic of "a beast coming out of the sea" (Rev 13:1) who is called the Antichrist. "That lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2Th 2:8). It is "even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate" (Da 9:27).

Some think that it is a picture of Christ who "will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering" (Da 9:27) because "He is the mediator of a new covenant . . . since a death has taken place for the redemption" (Heb 9:15). But this is not the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of "a covenant previously ratified by God" (Gal 3:17). Upon Jesus' sacrifice "the Sanhedrin repaired the veil and continued animal sacrifices. Isaiah prophesied God's response saying "their soul delights in their abominations, so I will choose their punishments, and I will bring on them what they dread" (Isa 66:3-4). Some see progressive states of the prophecy being fulfilled. Paul refers to "the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2Th 2:4). He makes people "to worship the first beast" (Rev 13:12) and to "cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (:15). Nonetheless, "the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world . . . and then the end shall come" (Mt 24:14). "The one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved" (:13).

## **Tribulation**

John received "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:1) which was composed of "things which must shortly take place" (:1). They are "the words of this prophecy" (:3) pertaining to "the time [which] is near" (:3). Firstly it is addressed to "the seven churches which are in Asia" (:4). John was instructed to "write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (:19). They apply in a contemporary way locally to those Asian churches and prophetically to "the mystery" (:20) to be unveiled. Some Bible students interpret the seven churches figuratively as dispensational history representing the stages of growth of the church through time. That would mean that Ephesus was the starting point but

that they had already "left your first love" (2:4). The letters were written because Christ knew believers would have challenges and difficulties and must become "him who overcomes" (:7). If you follow this line of reasoning the last-day church would be Laodicea which was "neither cold nor hot" (3:15) and said "'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'" (:17). The letter was sent "to the seven churches" (1:11) in Asia and would have been circulated for all to read. Each church had individual issues but the overall message would be studied. Of interest to some would be "things which will take place" (1:19) in the "near" (:3) future. For instance, Smyrna was "about to suffer" (2:10) persecution to be "tested" (:10) and "have tribulation ten days" (:10). On the plus side the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only ones that Christ's revelation had nothing "against" (2:4;:14;:20;3:2;:15). But specific warning and counsel apply to each church individually so you can't generalize and apply everything to everyone. For instance, Jesus told Philadelphia, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (3:10). Many prophetically refer to this as when "there will be great tribulation" (Mt 24:21) which defines the Great Tribulation. The church of Philadelphia is supposed to be spared according to some people's exegesis. But Smyrna was told "the devil is about to throw some of you into prison" (2:10) and they should "Be faithful until death" (:10). "For the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Mt 24:22).

Jesus prophesied, "There will be a great tribulation such as not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" (Mt 24:21). Luke records, "There will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people" (Lk 21:23). One of the elders said, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation" (Rev 7:14). Jesus told them, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). He "disarmed the rulers and authorities . . . [and] triumphed over them through Him" (Col 2:15). The Bible is a spiritual book, so what is tribulation? James said to regard it as advantageous "when you encounter various trials" (Ja 1:2) because they require faith to be victorious (:3). Peter said to "not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you" (1Pe 4:12) because then you "share the sufferings of Christ" (:13). Paul said that God's defenses would enable you to "stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11). He said the conflict was "against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (:12) and we would need faith to defend against "the evil one" (:16). Jesus prayed that the Father would "keep them from the evil one" (Jn 17:15). Satan takes advantage of every opportunity but God said, "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution" (Dt 32:35). God doesn't punish every little mistake because he is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness" (Ps 103:8). But "the anger of the Lord burned against Israel" (2Sa 24:1) and then "Satan stood up against Israel" (1Ch 21:1) which "incited David" (2Sa 24:1) "to number Israel" (1Ch 21:1). Moses told Israel that intermarriage would "turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you" (Dt 7:3-4). Eschatologically speaking "destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape" (1Th 5:3).

## Great Tribulation

Paul confessed that "among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Eph 2:3). Therefore "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:18). But God supplied a solution that "even when we were dead in our transgressions, [he] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Eph 2:5). "Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Ro 5:9). "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation" (1Th 5:9). "Since we are of the day . . . [we put on] a helmet, the hope of salvation" (:8). Nevertheless, James observes to "consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas 1:2-3). The concordance describes trials with the Greek word *peirasmos* meaning temptations and testing. It is derived from *peirazo* (Gr.) meaning "to make proof of and put to the test." Paul strengthened "the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Ac 14:22). "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2Ti 3:12). The concordance defines tribulation as affliction or distress. Jesus encouraged them saying, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). He said, "Keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Lk 21:36). Tribulation sounds more severe than trials. Paul spoke proudly of the Thessalonians "for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure" (2Th 1:4). Jesus told the church in Philadelphia that since you "have kept My word, and have not denied My name [and] you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:8,10). The believers in Macedonia and Achaia reported that the Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:9-10). We are being saved but will also be protected from "that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10).

## Affliction

Does the serious tribulation begin at a certain scheduled time? "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" (Ac 1:7). "Of that day and hour no one knows" (Mt 24:36). "You do not know which day your Lord is coming" (:42). "The Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (:44). But there is a schedule, because in Jesus' situation, he recognized that "the hour has come" (Jn 17:1). Christ told the church in Philadelphia, "I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world" (Rev 3:10). He didn't say that to the other churches. When did they think that would be? There were "the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what

Israel should do" (1Ch 12:32). The churches had the Old Testament for reference, and by then, the gospels and Paul's letters had been circulated. Jesus said, "I am coming quickly" (Rev 3:11). Would they have interpreted that as coming within their lifetime, or did they have insights into prophetic leaps into the future? Daniel was told, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (Da 12:9). There is an announcement coming instructing to, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). "Therefore be on the alert" (Mt 24:42).

Tribulation was already present. Paul acknowledged that the Thessalonians had "received the word in much tribulation" (1Th 1:6). Jesus taught "affliction or persecution arises because of the word" (Mt 13:21). John said that he was a "partaker in the tribulation . . . because of the word of God" (Rev 1:9). Paul taught the word and cited "all of our affliction" (2Co 7:4) and asked them to "share with me in my affliction" (Php 4:14). He said "do not lose heart at my tribulation on your behalf" (Eph 3:13). They were "servants of God . . . in afflictions, in hardships, in distress" (2Co 6:4). He explained "our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life" (1:8). He acknowledged the "great deal of affliction . . . and their deep poverty" (8:2). He cited the "persecutions and afflictions which you endure" (2Th 1:4). Nonetheless "near is the great day of the Lord" (Zep 1:14). "Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it" (Jer 30:7). "The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it?" (Joel 2:11). "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will" (Mt 24:21). "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (:22). John "saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Rev 6:9). "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation" (7:14). Therefore you shouldn't generalize from what was said in Revelation about being kept from "the hour of testing" (3:10).

### **Suffered Affliction**

Paul addresses the subject "with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him" (2Th 2:1). Jesus had said, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:3) which concurs with "thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1Th 4:17). That location has been previously described as heaven. John reports that "I saw heaven opened" (Rev 19:11) "and the armies which are in heaven . . . were following Him on white horses" (:14). "The powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky" (Mt 24:29-30). "He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect" (:31). "So shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (:27).

Paul wanted to help the Thessalonians about "a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come" (2Th 2:2). Apparently there was false doctrine circulating concerning "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (:1). The coming is synonymous with the day of the Lord. It seems that their tribulation was so severe that they thought the Great Tribulation had arrived and they had missed "the coming . . . and our gathering together to Him" (:1). Paul recounted that they had

"endured the same suffering" (1Th 2:14) and "persecutions and afflictions" (2Th 1:4) which "we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer" (1Th 3:4). Paul didn't want them to be "quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed" (2Th 2:1) and had sent Timothy to them "to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith" (1Th 3:2). Paul comforted them saying that God would "repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you" (2Th 1:6-7). This would be "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution" (:7). "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). It will be "when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day and to be marveled at among all who have believed" (:10). Those Thessalonian saints and believers mentioned are they "who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) who are the same "saints [present] on that day" (2Th 1:10). "For just like the lightning . . . so will the Son of Man be in His day" (Lk 17:24). "In that day the Lord will be the only one" (Zec 14:9) "for it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord" (:7). They knew the "times and epochs" (1Th 5:1) where "the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (:2). It would be as stalked by a robber because they are obliviously saying, "Peace and safety" (:3). But that "day should [not] overtake you" (:4) because you are "of the day" (:8) and "are not in darkness" (:4). The "coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) will be "on that day" (2Th 1:10). Even though they knew "the times" (1Th 5:1) Christ warned, "Be on the alert, then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" (Mt 25:13). "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes" (Lk 12:37).

### **Hour of Testing**

Jesus said, "I will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10). This has a temporal connotation. To "keep from" is a phrasal verb composed of a verb and preposition. A preposition is a word which begins a prepositional phrase which contains an object of the preposition and certain modifiers. It describes a grammatical relationship with the verb in the containing clause as well as a semantic relationship with the other words in the sentence. The latter can be either spatial, temporal or logical. The "from" adjunct to the verb "keep" can represent spatial movement as with designating a starting point and then going somewhere. It could also represent separation in time as with the example "an hour from now." Jesus foretold his death saying, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour" (Jn 12:27). "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son" (Gal 4:4). The hour of time is synonymous with the purpose or essential characteristic of the situation. To "save from" is similar to "keep from." Jesus prayed to be delivered from an experience within a period of time. Accordingly, to be kept from "the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10) is to be protected from the experience of testing and not removed from its period of time. Testing reveals the true character of someone by breaking something down as if to demonstrate failure. It was to "test those who dwell upon the earth" (:10) "that you may be tested" (2:10). It is a "fiery ordeal . . . for your testing: (1Pe 4:12). "The testing of your faith produces endurance" (Ja 1:3) so you can even "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5). Therefore the lexical and contextual makeup of "keep you from the hour" (Rev 3:10) must be considered. The verb means to "protect" or "preserve" which would be from what was experienced during the time period rather than meaning that a person

would be temporally removed from the period itself. Therefore protection from "the hour" would not be by physically removing believers but by supernaturally preserving them.