

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Rev 21:1-8)

Lesson 1 of 50

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the book of Revelation an exposition of both temporality and eternity are given. An understanding of both is essential to being an overcomer. All trial and affliction is temporary. Struggle and oppression are transitory. The devil is our foe, but only for a while. The forces he rallies are a threat, but not for long. The bottomless pit, when opened, brings great testing to the inhabitants of the earth, but it is limited. The most fierce of all opponents, the first and second beast, Babylon the great, the false prophet, and the great harlot – they are all temporary. For those in Christ Jesus, life is eternal, and every competitive influence temporary. This world is transitory, the world to come is a "world without end" (Eph 3:21). That world is our focus!

A study of last things is not intended to be looking into the facts of the antichrist, fearful things coming upon the earth, and the devil breaking out against the church – all of which are coming certainties. However, they are all within the framework of God’s purpose, will serve His objectives, and have an appointed end. It is what remains after the coming of Christ, after the passing of the present heavens and earth and the consequent resurrection of the dead, after the day of judgment, and after the consignment of the devil and all who are associated with him are cast into the lake of fire – AFTER all of that, what remains are the only things worthy of our focus.

Personally, it has been very troubling to me that the above things, which ought to be obvious, have been rare emphases throughout history, as well as in our times. Most of what is called “Christianity” is focused on what takes place in this present evil world – whether matters of outreach, recruitment, or human experience. It is not that such things are unlawful, for they are not. But unless they are done within the conscience context of “the world to come” (Lk 18:30; Heb 2:5; 6:5), and being forever with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17), they will be skewed and largely ineffective. God will not allow any religious program to truly succeed that leaves Him, His Son,

and His purpose on the periphery of life. Conversely, He will not allow any labor in which He, His Son, and His purpose are central, to fail, for our “labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

How much this perspective is needed among us! Hardship, opposition, and deficiency are all temporary! Temptation, warfare, and disappointment are momentary! A defensive posture, debilitating weakness, and captivity in every form are passing. None of these things, grievous though they be, can be approached as though they will never end.

All spiritual retrogression, however minute or momentous, takes place because this perspective is lost. Those who are drawn into sin have forgotten its pleasures are only "for a season" (Heb 11:25). It is imperative that the church be the "pillar and ground of the truth," majoring on things that make for clarity of vision and maturity in understanding. God is not trying to help us in our lives, or assist us in fulfilling our dreams. Those who say such things are liars, plain and simple. Salvation is aimed at incorporating us in what God is doing, making us “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14), and of the “Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). It is what God is doing in Christ that is fundamental, not what we are doing. The thrust is where we are going, not what we are doing. The never-ending focus is what God is doing, and what He has intended.

Much, if not the majority, of what represents itself as being “Christian” majors on the things that are passing away. Vast religious enterprises are given over to "ministries" that are limited to this world and will quickly pass away when time is no more. Let none imagine that assisting the fatherless and widows in the affliction, doing good to all men, and assisting the needy are unworthy activities. They are most assuredly a part of the ministry of the saved. But they are all hands and feet, not the heart of our work. At no point are such ministries an end of themselves. They are the result of a proper focus, and not the focus itself.

This series of devotions will deal with our status after the present heavens and earth pass away; after Jesus returns in all of His glory; after the resurrection of the dead; after the day of judgment; and after the damned are thrust forever from the presence of the Lord, His Son, and His people. I will labor to make more clear that everything else, no matter what it is, is secondary.

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But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Rev 21:1-8)

Lesson 2 of 50

A DIFFERENT EMPHASIS

Every believer should have a working acquaintance with The Revelation. The book begins by saying, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev 1:3). The words “are at hand” are designed to persuade us that the series of events it describes is already under way.

If you have read the book, you may have probably observed a total absence of a contemporary religious emphases in the book of Revelation. The home, marriage, government, social corruption, and the hardships of earthly life are rarely, if ever, mentioned.

The reason for this absence is NOT owing to our Lord's indifference toward such things. His earthly ministry confirms His compassion toward those who are suffering under the burden of life. In this book, however, we are given a loftier view of things. The only way to overcome the world is to rise into realms where it is no longer the prominent thing. As long as this world dominates our thinking, it will control our conduct and distort our perspective. Our affection must be deliberately set on "things above" (Col 3:1).

In Christ, God has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). We have been “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), and He has been “carried up into heaven” (Lk 24:51). Solemnly, we are admonished to “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col 3:1). That is where our “affection” is to be deliberate and determinately “set” (Col 3:2). There is where our “reward” is found (Matt 5:12). There is where the greater part of the family of God is located (Eph 3:15). There is where we have “a better and enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). There, in heaven, is where our names are written (Heb 12:23). Our inheritance is there (1 Pet 1:4).

The book of Revelation sets before us heaven’s view of things on the earth. The churches are assessed by Jesus from heaven, and from heaven’s point of view (Rev 2-3). The devil is viewed from heaven’s point of view (Rev 12:9-12; 20:2), and his ultimate destruction is boldly announced (Rev 20:10). The governments and kings and rulers of the earth are seen from heaven’s point of view (Rev 6:15; 17:2; ; 18:3), and their ultimate demise is also announced (Rev 19:18-20). Furthermore, Jesus is declared to be their King – “King of kings (Rev 17:14; 19:16). The false church is viewed as “The mother of harlots” (Rev 17:5), a “whore” (Rev 17:1,15,16; 19:2), and a defiling city (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5,18; 18:2,20,21), and its destruction is forthrightly announced (Rev 14:8; 18:2). Those who are aligned against Christ and His people are depicted as gathering a massive army to fight against the King of kings – a battle that is not even fought, because they are summarily destroyed before ever a blow is struck (Rev 19:19-20; 20:9). Our enemies are described as “beasts” (Rev 11:7; 13:1-10), the “kings of the earth and their armies” (Rev 19:19), and Satan’s demons (Rev 9:20; 16:14). The arch foe, Satan is

identified as an “OLD serpent” (Rev 12:9), and a devouring “dragon” (Rev 12:3-4,7,9,12,13,16,17; 13:2,4,11; 16:13; 20:2). None of these enemies – not a solitary one – survive! All of them are destroyed! None of them will ever show up where the saints of God end up.

The church is presented as surviving all of Satan’s assaults. It is set forth as ultimately triumphant, having reached its determined goal, and freed at last from all conflict, all enemies, and all threats.

What this series of devotions is about, is the time when that victory will be realized. It is set before us to assure our hearts that our labor is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58), and there is no such thing as an invincible enemy. The Lord tells us how “the good fight of faith” concludes – and it is all good, all glorious, and all refreshing!

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SOVEREIGN CONTROL

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” (Verse 1, Rev 21:1-8)

In the Revelation, the church is presented as surviving all of Satan’s assaults. It is set forth as being ultimately triumphant, having reached its determined goal, and freed at last from all conflict, all enemies, and all threats.

Thus the Revelation confirms the absolute control and government of God and His Christ. Only a God who is in absolute control of all things can bring all things to a conclusion! Only He can guarantee the safe arrival in glory of all who trust in Him! That is why He is called “the Most High God” (Dan 5:18), “Lord God Almighty” (Rev 11:17), and “who is above all” (Eph 4:6).

This is why David confessed, “Thine, O Lord , is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord , and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honor come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (1 Chron 29:11-12). Jesus taught us to pray, “For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Matt 6:13). **MEN SHOULD NOT THINK, REASON, AND SPEAK AS THOUGH THESE THINGS WERE NOT TRUE!**

The destiny of all things is in God’s hand, and cannot successfully be opposed or contravened. In a moment Satan can be either bound or loosed, without any resistance whatsoever (Rev 20:2,3,7). He will finally be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). Satan is never depicted as fighting God, resisting what God requires of him, or intruding into areas where he is forbidden – never! Even when Jesus was in a humble state, Satan made no effort to confront Him militantly. No demons ever attempted to enter Him, hinder Him, or stop Him from doing what God had sent Him to do.

It took Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled the entire world, a while to learn this, but He finally did: “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26). In fact, after he had been humbled, forced to live like a beast for seven years, eating grass for nourishment (Dan 4:31-33), his reason returned to him and he said, “I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?” Dan 4:34-35). Those who glibly say, “God does not force anyone to do anything,” would not get by with blurting that out to Nebuchadnezzar. He was absolutely forced to do something he did not want to do, nor did he consent to doing it.

After Daniel was delivered from the lion’s den, king Darius, who also ruled the whole world, published a decree: “That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end” (Dan 6:26). There is no acceptable reason for any professing Christian not to know and accept this!

Every personality, whether a descendant of Adam, or among the angelic order, is unquestionably subject to God. God can turn a king’s heart like a river of water (Prov 21:1). He can harden hearts (Ex 10:1). He can make a king obstinate (Deut 2:30). He can pour out a spirit of deep sleep upon the people (Isa 29:10), and also cause them to live (Ezek 37:5). He can cause people to be blinded (John 12:40), or open their eyes so they can see (Gen 21:19; 2 Kgs 6:17; Eph 1:18-19). God Almighty is really “the Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28). Ultimately, this world is not run by Satan, ISIS, Putin, or Obama. It is ONLY true of the True God: “But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psa 115:3). You may disagree with the way He is governing the world, but there is really not anything you or anyone else can do about it. It is well past time for the church to acknowledge and proclaim that God is over all. Rather than disputing God’s Sovereignty, you should trust in it. Putting your faith in Jesus Christ also relies on, and implicitly trusts in this fact: He “is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim 6:15). This affirmation permeates the entirety of the Revelation.

THE DURATION OF TRIALS DETERMINED

Even the duration of our trials are determined in heaven. How vividly this has been affirmed in this book. “. . . ye shall have tribulation TEN DAYS . . . And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for A LITTLE SEASON . . . And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies THREE DAYS AND A HALF. . . And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them . . . And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there A THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND THREESCORE DAYS . . . Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but A SHORT TIME . . . And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue A SHORT SPACE . . . and bound him A THOUSAND YEARS . . . and after that he must be loosed A LITTLE SEASON . . . they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall

reign with him A THOUSAND YEARS" (2:10; 6:11; 11:9,11; 12:6,11; 20:2,3,6).

In my judgment, it is a serious error to fasten upon the measures of time that are mentioned. While there can be no doubt that specific durations are involved, it is the control of the Lord that is the point. Whether it is three and a half days or a thousand years, it is the King of glory who determines the duration. Furthermore, all of those periods are associated with temporality, whether for weal or for woe. In the Revelation God is not providing us a calendar, but a perspective. He is not outlining a detailed schedule, but affirming God's control of time itself. No temptation can go beyond its assigned border – and each temptation comes with a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13). No trial will last longer than God has determined. It is still true, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts 1:7). That is why we read phrases like "the fulness of time" (Gal 4:4), "the fulness of times" (Eph 1:10), "appointed time" (Hab 2:3), "set time" (Gen 21:2; Psa 102:13), "selfsame day" (Ex 12:41), "the time is fulfilled" (Mk 1:15), "the time came" (Dan 7:22), "He hath appointed a day" (Acts 17:31), etc. It is why life is referred to as a "course" that is started and finished (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:7), and "My times are in thy hand" (Psa 31:15).

When we speak about when God will be with men, it is important that we comprehend and delight in this perspective.

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ENTERING THE ETERNAL REALM

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Verse 1 (Rev 21:1-8)

Now, by means of a revelation of a Divine appointment that is surely coming, we enter into the eternal realm – "a new heaven and a new earth." Not a refurbished heaven, but a "NEW" one. Not a rejuvenated earth, but as "NEW" one. In Scripture, which reflects the mind of the Lord, "NEW" speaks of something that is fundamentally "new" – different from anything that was before it. It is the revelation of something of a different order, or kind. It is not comprised of the remnants of what is "old," combined with some different things. Here are some samples of how this word is used in the Word of God.

NEW HEART AND NEW SPIRIT: "A NEW HEART also will I give you, and a NEW SPIRIT will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek 36:26). This is a prophecy of the kind of people "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10). They think differently, are motivated differently, judge differently, and are going to a different destination.

NEW SONG: "And they sung a NEW SONG, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and

priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9-10). This is a new kind of song, the likes of which has never before been sung. It is sung with greater insight, in a new environment, and by the completed family God who are insightfully singing together.

NEWNESS OF LIFE: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in **NEWNESS OF LIFE**” (Rom 6:4). This is a new kind of life, sustained by a new kind of sustenance, and with a new objective.

NEWNESS OF SPIRIT: “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in **NEWNESS OF SPIRIT**, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom 7:6). This is a new kind of spirit, or frame of mind. It is serving God apart from routine, with spiritual insight, and with unparalleled willingness and thankfulness.

NEW MAN #1: “And that ye put on the **NEW MAN**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). This is a new kind of man that is in the generation of Jesus, not Adam (Rom 5:15-17). This “new man” has new affection, new purposes, new love, and new preferences.

NEW MAN #2: “For He is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us [Jew and Gentile]; Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one **NEW MAN**, so making peace” (Eph 2:14-15). This is a new and separate body of people, comprised of Jews and Gentiles. Thus Paul wrote of three classes of people: “Give none offence, neither to the **JEW**S, nor to the **GENTILES**, nor to the **CHURCH OF GOD** (1 Cor ,10:32).

NEW COVENANT: “And to Jesus the Mediator of the **NEW COVENANT**, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:24). This is a new type of covenant, totally unlike the “first covenant,” which was made with Israel (Heb 8:7; 9:1). The new covenant is a different order of covenant, a “better covenant,” with a different basis, a different objective, and better promises (Heb 8:6).

NEW CREATURE (CREATION): “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **NEW CREATURE**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17). This is a different kind of person, used to comprise a different kind of race. This creation thinks differently, lives differently, and is provided different and superior resources.

NEW COMMANDMENT: “A **NEW COMMANDMENT** I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34; 1 John 2:8). Although the same word we used (“love”), it is a different kind of love – a new kind of love: loving one another like Jesus loved us!

NEW LUMP: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a **NEW LUMP**, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7). “Old leaven” is people that are not acceptable to God. A “new lump” is a congregation that has labored to rid

itself of carnal and unspiritual people. This can be done by converting them, or expelling them. A “new lump” is a new congregation that, as a body, is accepted by God. This may be difficult for some to receive, but the Lord has spoken on the subject (1 Cor 5:1-11).

NEW AND LIVING WAY: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a NEW AND LIVING WAY, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb 10:19-20). This is a new and different approach to God. It is not a way of routine, as was instituted under the Law. It is an approach through which the individual comes to God through Christ, with a true heart and a clear conscience (Heb 10:22).

NEW NAME: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a NEW NAME written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev 2:17). This is a new kind of name – a name that precisely reflects what the individual is in Christ Jesus, and their role in the kingdom of God.

NEW JERUSALEM: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is NEW JERUSALEM:, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him My new name” (Rev 3:12). “And I John saw the holy city, NEW JERUSALEM:, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband” (Rev 21:2). The “new Jerusalem” is a different kind of Jerusalem – one with no corruption or anything that defiles. It is the glorified church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph 5:27). It is “the bride” of Christ.

All of these “new” realities are designed to ready us to inhabit the new heavens and the new earth – to properly fit into an eternal environment in which there is not the slightest evidence of anything that is contrary or displeasing to God.

Because, in our prophetic text, all opponents have been removed, the battlefield itself is also withdrawn – the “first earth” (Rev 21:1). Undistracted by the warfare, we will be better able to behold the glories of the Lord, our Savior, and the world to come. This is nothing less than the fulfillment of God's "eternal purpose."

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THE REASON FOR SALVATION

Here we come to grips with the reason for salvation, the purpose for redemption, and the goal of regeneration. I perceive this to be one of the most obscured realities in all of Christendom. In pulpit and pew, one can scarcely be found who is conversant with the WHY of God's great salvation. The nominal church is so institutionalized it cannot see beyond this world. It is anchored in time instead of "within the veil," and thus is tossed upon the ephemeral waves of "this present evil world." Somehow, men must be persuaded that a "new heaven and a new earth" are looming on the horizon – a realm in which a worldly emphasis has no place, and is not permitted.

Let it be clear in your mind – if there was no “world to come” (Matt 12:32; Heb 2:5), THERE WOULD BE NO SALVATION. If there was no resurrection from the dead, THERE WOULD BE NO SALVATION (John 5:28-29; Acts 17:32; 1 Cor 15:21; Phil 3:11). If there was not a day of judgment, THERE WOULD BE NO SALVATION (Matt 11:24; 2 Pet 2:9; 1 John 4:17). If there was not an “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15), THERE WOULD BE NO SALVATION. If there was not a final gathering together unto Christ, THERE WOULD BE NO SALVATION (2 Thess 2:1).

Jesus did not come from heaven, walk among men, die, be buried, rise from the dead, teach His disciples for forty days, ascend into heaven, be seated at the right hand of God, and invested with all power in heaven and earth to fix the problems of this world, or in order that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life. Because the purpose of God is an “eternal purpose,” it cannot possibly be consummated in the realm of time.

As unsavory as it may appear to the flesh, a significant percentage of contemporary “Christian” activity is in the realm of vanity because it is not properly motivated. If the world to come is not in our minds (Heb 11:10,14; Lk 18:30), if our affection is not on things above (Col 3:1-2), and if we are not determined “attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:11), and forever be “with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17), our thoughts will be too skewed to be acceptable.

Salvation orients us for "the world to come," with which our text is concerned. No person unprepared to enter into that realm shall have been advantaged by Jesus. That IS the world over which we will rule. As it is written, "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Heb 2:5-6).

When we speak of heaven, the world to come, and being with the Lord, we are not talking about “pie in the sky by and by.” If you are one of those benighted persons who, like the prodigal son,

want your inheritance now, you have missed the whole point.

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THIS WORLD IS NOT OUR DOMAIN

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Verse 1 (Rev 21:1-8)

It is currently being taught in many circles that Christ restored to man the dominion Adam lost. This is not the case at all, and is a serious misrepresentation of the result of Christ's atoning death. Adam and all of his progeny, as revealed, are classified as those who “have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1-2), “alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works” (Col 1:21), and “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Tit 3:3).

Since the fall, no one has ever reentered the Garden of Eden – which they would have done if God is restoring what Adam lost. If such was actually true, all believers would be eating from the tree of life, and not be subject to death. Those are things Adam “lost.”

As a valid progenitor, Adam has been written off. Now, the only acceptable progenitor is Jesus – that is why a person has to be “Born again” (1 Pet 1:23), regenerated (Tit 3:5), and “created” again (Eph 2:10). If, in Christ Jesus, God was restoring what Adam lost, none of that would be necessary.

God has provided us a comparison of Adam and Jesus – and it is quite clear. “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:15-19).

This complete assessment is based upon two acts: Adam eating of the forbidden fruit, and Jesus dying on the cross. Therefore we read of “THE offence” and “one man's disobedience,” as compared with “the obedience of One.” The New Living Translation reads, “Adam's ONE SIN brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's ONE ACT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS brings a right relationship with God and new life.”

All of this explains why the entire world order has been written off, or “made subject to vanity”

(Rom 8:20). It is why we read such expressions as, "Heaven and earth shall pass away" (Matt 24:35), "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet 3:10), and "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed" (Psa 102:25-26).

The present world is referred to as "this present evil world," from which Jesus delivered us (Gal 1:4). "This world" is not a mere age. It is "the world" that was once "overflowed with water" (2 Pet 3:6). It is the world that "passes away" (1 John 2:17). It is not our inheritance. When Jesus spoke of inheriting the earth (Matt 5:5), He was not speaking of the earth that is under the curse of vanity. It was rather the "new earth" to which He referred, for our inheritance is an "eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). The solemn injunction is not to rule this world, but to overcome it, as Jesus did (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4-5). Because "the fashion of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31), it cannot be the primary realm in which our spiritual abilities are exercised. Rather, we have been "raised . . . up together, and made [to] sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). That is something Adam never did have.

Christ's kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18:36). If it was, not only would His people rule over the elements, they would "fight" their enemies in the flesh (John 18:36). If it is true that Jesus restored the dominion Adam lost, Paul would NOT have had perils in the "waters" and the "wilderness." He would NOT have experienced "weariness and painfulness," "hunger and thirst," and "cold and nakedness" (2 Cor 11:26-27). What purpose would there have been for "learning" how to "suffer need" (Phil 4:12), if the most prominent Apostle had dominion over the elements? Or is there one who would dare to say Paul lived beneath his privileges? Why did he have to labor with his own hands (1 Cor 4:12)? Why didn't he command the elements to come to his aid? How is it that he "suffered shipwreck" three times? Is it that he did not know he had power over the elements, or that Jesus had restored the dominion Adam lost? I tell you emphatically, this doctrine is false to the core, revealing an abysmal ignorance of the nature and intent of salvation! The mouths of those who espouse and teach it must be "stopped" (Tit 1:11).

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 7 of 50

A NEW CREATION FOR A NEW REALM

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more." Verse 1 (Rev 21:1-8)

It is written of those in Christ, the saved, or those who are properly called "Christians," "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). This "creation" has made us misfits in the world, referred to as , "this present evil world." We have been "delivered" from this world by virtue of this new creation. Now we are constituted "strangers and pilgrims" in the world (1 Pet 2:11), and are strictly commanded not to love it (1 John 2:15). Although we remain in this world for a season, we are to maintain the condition caused by our re-creation, being "separate" from this

transitory world which shall “pass away” (Lk 21:33). Jesus said He was “not of this world” (John 8:23). He boldly affirmed to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). He said to His disciples, “ye are not of this world” (John 15:19), and, praying to God the Father about His followers, said, “they are not of the world” (John 17:14,16). That sets the direction for our thoughts on this matter.

For those in Christ, “the world” is now something that must be “overcome” (1 John 5:4-5). While I do not mean to complain, there simply is not enough being said about these things in the nominal church. Now, its appearance, manners, programs, education, etc., simply look too much like the world, and blend in too easily with it. It appears that the modern church is wedded to the world, and “the world” is her wedded name. Like the apostate church of which Paul wrote, there simply is too much of the world in the church of our day. Paul wrote of these traits, found in those with a “form of godliness” – “lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim 3:2-4). He wrote that such people had “a form of godliness, denying [rejecting] the power thereof.” He also ordered, “From, such turn away!” (2 Tim 3:5). Why did Paul write in such a manner, and with such holy pointedness? Because salvation involves separation from the world, not at-home-ness in it!

Becoming a "new creation" in Christ Jesus readies us for the “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13). It prepares us by uprooting our hearts from the transitory world, and giving us an appetite and affection for "the world to come" (Mk 10:30; 18:30; Heb 2:5). Whatever you may think of “this present evil world,” as long as we are "in the body," we are "absent from the Lord" (2 Cor 5:6). Who is there among us that is content with that circumstance? If David yearned for the external "courts of the Lord" (Psa 84:2), how much more do those in Christ yearn to be "forever with the Lord?" What kind of “Christian” does not take advantage of what can be had now in Christ Jesus, all the while earnestly desiring to be with Him in the fulness of that reality? How dare someone call themself a “Christian” who is not so characterized. However palatable it may or may not be, let it be emphatically said that such people are NOT “Christian.” The Gospel, which is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16), does not produce such people. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in such people. Such people are not united to Christ, who Himself, is in heaven. If this is not true, then salvation is a hoax!

Through Peter, the Holy Spirit stated the case succinctly. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet 3:13). Are not the hearts of God’s people lifted when they read these words? "I saw a new heaven and a new earth!" The expression itself presumes a longing for such an environment, where "the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest" (Job 3:17). Salvation begins a process that will culminate in our total adaptation to that realm in "spirit, soul, and body" (1 Thess 5:23). Now, our spirit and soul are being adapted, while in the resurrection of the dead, our bodies will be adapted.

Rest assured, no one who is not fully adapted for heaven will remain there. No one who is not ready to dwell forever with the Lord will do so. That is what salvation is all about –getting us ready to be with the Lord, like a bride is made ready to be with her husband.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 8 of 50

THE LONGING OF THE PATRIARCHS

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Verse 1 (Rev 21:1-8)

Even before the Law, holy people longed for "a better country, that is a heavenly one" (Heb 11:16 RSV). Father Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, Whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb 11:10). He was promised a fruitful part of this world, "all the land of Canaan" (Gen 17:8). The promised possession was extensive, and fertile in the extreme. "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites" (Gen 15:18).

Abraham did arrive in the land promised to him. Yet he remained a stranger while in it, never really settling there. As it is written, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb 11:9). Scripture goes on to tell us, God "gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on" (Acts 7:5). Abraham did not remonstrate at this circumstance, but looked beyond Canaan to a "better country." His faith produced this godly reaction.

About the same time as Abraham, there was a man in the East named Job. He was singled out by the Lord to set before us Satan's vulnerability, and the ability of those who trust in God to stand under the most severe test. Like Abraham, he had no Bible, and limited revelation. Yet he was such a godly man he could reason concerning the world to come. He looked at a tree that had been cut down and reasoned, "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me. If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" (Job 14:7-15).

Job's strong faith stretched forward and shouted, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:26-27).

After Abraham and Job there was David, who had more revelation than they, but a lot less than

us. He wrote of dwelling “in the house of the Lord forever” (Psa 23:6). He testified in no uncertain words, “One thing have I desired of the LORD , that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD , and to inquire in his temple” (Psa 27:4).

Can it be that those in Christ would possess less of a longing for a "better country," and seeing God for themselves, and have more of an at-homeness in this world than was found in Abraham, Job, and David? The very thought offends those living by faith. Why should anyone be subject to the groans and moans of professing believers who have little or no hope? If we are in truth “saved by hope,” can anyone really be saved without it? And this is a “living hope” to which those in Christ have been begotten (1 Pet 1:3). Christ dwelling within us is said to be “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

Let no professed believer reason as though this was the only life, and there was no resurrection. Faith and hope will keep despair from stomping on us, and driving us into a hopeless state. If you are enduring the experience of the pit (Psa 40:2), look up, and take hold on hope. If you are in any debilitated state, and the condition has lingered for a long time, look up, and take hold of hope. If you are being persecuted for righteousness’ sake, look up and take hold of hope. Declare war on murmuring and griping, and blaming, and have hope in God! There really is a world to come. There really is a coming time of total freedom. There really is an appointed day when all wrongs will be made right, and all saints will be vindicated for having a strong faith and hope. Let the preachers tell the saints about the appointed triumph, the final deliverance, the eternal inheritance, the final demise of all of our enemies. Let hope arise and show itself to be as strong and comforting as God has said! Kick despair and mumbling out of the house, and let hope occupy your heart!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 9 of 50

PROMISED BY THE PROPHETS

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Verse 1, (Rev 21:1-8)

What we are reading is the confirmation of promises made through the prophets. With remarkable clarity Isaiah said, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa 65:17). In this proclamation, the grandeur and glory of the new heavens and earth are seen in the words, “ the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” That is, the earth in which we now find ourselves will not be the center of thought or consideration at any time. A superior glory will overshadow all such memories.

For the glorified saints of God, earthly relationships will not be considered anymore. No one will be found weeping over the lost – that is something that must be done now. Husbands and wives will not remember each other in that capacity, nor will parents and children. There we will

consider deeper and enduring ties and relationships only. That should not be difficult to comprehend, for the recollection of friends and relations that are not there would induce sadness and tears, neither of which will ever be found in the glory – the new heavens and new earth.

For that reason, while we are in this world, the most precious ties are those that are in Christ Jesus. If that was not the case, it would not be possible to leave, as Jesus Himself said, “house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's” (Mk 10:29). If those were the deepest and most enduring ties, how would such a thing be possible? If flesh and blood ties are really the most precious ones, how could Jesus Christ the Lord say, “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Lk 14:26). In so speaking, Jesus was not justifying abuse, or unwarranted neglect of these relationships. Rather, He was speaking of our orientation to the world to come, where such relationships will no longer exist.

Rest assured that no one will forever be with the Lord who chose to accent earthly relationships, to the neglect of eternal ones, when they were in the world. God forbids the preference of any relationship that competes with our identity with God and with Christ. Who does not know this? It is something that is fundamental in spiritual life. The coming reality of the new heavens and the new earth demands that we consider these things.

In confirmation of the covenant made with Abraham, God spoke to Israel about a new heavens and earth. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain" (Isa 66:22). That is a Divine promise for those who teach that Israel has been written off to consider. If Israel is no longer an entity before God, then He has forsaken this promise – and that simply is not possible, for God “cannot lie” (Tit 1:2). God, who knows all things, always speaks with the future and His promises in mind. He is never caught off guard so that He has to abandon something He said He would do. It is true that there have been generations of Israel that have been forsaken (Psa 95:10; Hos 1:9; Matt 12:41; Lk 11:31-32) – but Israel remains in the body of a remnant, according to “the election of grace” (Rom 11:5).

After stating the promise of the New Covenant, which Jesus is presently mediating (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:6-12), the Lord continued: “ Thus saith the LORD , which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: IF THOSE ORDINANCES DEPART FROM BEFORE ME, saith the LORD , then the seed of Israel ALSO SHALL CEASE FROM BEING A NATION BEFORE ME FOR EVER. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:35-37).

Therefore, for Israel to have ceased being a nation before God, as some falsely allege, The sun, moon, and stars no longer exist, heaven can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out. If this is not the case, then God has not spoken the truth – and to allege such a thing puts one in danger of hellfire.

Thus the Lord promised an environment in which His purpose would be executed without contradiction. It would be such a glorious realm, "the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." The glory of the world to come will not only remove the present heavens and earth, it will also dissolve all memories of the defiled realm! In the very fullest sense of the word, "old things" will pass away – even from our memory. Everything corrupted by and associated with the old order will give place to the new order!

Those in hell, of course, will have remembrances that eat at them like a worm, that does not die. Whatever it takes to avoid such an existence by proper preparation and readiness, must be done now – while we are in this present evil world – and the salvation of God provides the resources to get that job done. Anyone and everyone who fails to live with the new heavens and earth in mind is, by virtue of that omission, in jeopardy.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 10 of 50

THEY ALREADY EXIST

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Verse 1, (Rev 21:1-8)

The new heaven and earth are not presently in a state of construction. They already exist. When Jesus said “I go to prepare a place for You,” He was NOT speaking of a construction project that has taken two thousand years to this point. Those who affirm such a thing have only exposed us to their juvenileness. Rather, it is His GOING there (1 Pet 3:22), and MINISTERING there (Heb 2:14; 4:15; 7:25; 8:6), that is preparing the “place” for us.

The creation of which He speaks is more from our perspective than that of the Lord. In another place the Spirit says, "And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may REMAIN" (Heb 12:27).

Hidden beneath the realm of the seen is a Kingdom that is not visible while time and this present evil world exist. There are things “that are NOT seen” that can become the focus of our attention.

By faith, we have already received this Kingdom: “But ye ARE COME unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh FROM HEAVEN: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the

removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken MAY REMAIN. Wherefore we RECEIVING A KINGDOM which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:22-29).

We have not received a mere idea, but an unshakable Kingdom. It remains for it to be revealed – to be seen with clarity and joy. It is the environment in which we will dwell forever with the Lord. Now we see it by faith, but when the present heavens and earth are removed, we will see it in its fulness – a new heavens and a new earth – a totally new total environment!

Right now, hidden from the eye of the flesh, a realm exists in which nothing defiled can be found. Salvation is designed to prepare us for THAT realm. Faith, which procures salvation, also "looks" for the revelation of the new heaven and the new earth (2 Pet 3:13). A few decades ago when I traveled to New York on a business trip, I saw a skyscraper under construction. Actually, all I saw was a vast wooden scaffold beneath which the skyscraper existed. Later, when it was completed, the scaffolding was removed, and a large glass building was unveiled. The parallel breaks down because the scaffolding was not removed unto the building was completed. However, the new heavens and new earth will be revealed when the present heavens and earth have served their Divinely appointed purpose, and are removed. That is why the text says of the present heavens and earth, they “are shaken” (Heb 12:27a). But “the world to come” cannot be shaken, and will “REMAIN” (Heb 12:27b).

From another perspective, the resurrection body, which is suited for the world to come, is said to exist already, being kept in heaven for us. It is an unseen reality – not one that shall be, but that is. Therefore Paul wrote, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle [our body] were dissolved [subject to decay], we HAVE a building of God [a resurrection body], an house [we will occupy] not made with hands, eternal [immortal] in the heavens. For in this [body] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house [new body] which is from heaven” (2 Cor 5:1-2).

We are not simply anxious to get out of this mortal body, or be “naked,” but to occupy our new body, for which we have been re-created in Christ Jesus – “If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked” (2 Cor 5:3). At that time, our whole person – spirit, soul, and body – will be perfected and accepted. Or, as Paul states it, “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: NOT for that we would be unclothed [without a body], but clothed upon, that mortality might be SWALLOWED UP OF LIFE” (2 Cor 5:4).

Concerning inhabiting our immortal bodies, it is written, “Now He that hath wrought us FOR THE SELFSAME THING is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor 5:5). Other versions read, “Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God” (NKJV), “God Himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee He has given us His Holy Spirit” (NLT), and “He Who has fashioned us [preparing and making us fit] for this very thing is God, Who also has given us the [Holy] Spirit as a guarantee [of the fulfillment of His promised]” (AMPLIFIED). That is, only a regenerated person, spirit and soul, will be compatible with this body. Ultimately, that is what salvation is all about – being able to fit into an eternal realm with eternal advantage and joy. The new heavens and earth are the larger picture of that blessed environment.

My point is that what we are, by a living hope, anticipating, already exists. That is why it is said that our inheritance is “reserved in heaven for us” (1 Pet 1:4). It is why our resurrection bodies are presently “eternal in the heavens.” It is why, by faith, we have been “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), who is in heaven, and have fellowship with Christ, who is in heaven (1 Cor 1:9), and have been seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).

Now is the time to develop sensitivity to eternal things, compatibility with them, and the enjoyment of them. This is one reason why powerless and lifeless religion becomes detestable to those who live by faith and walk in the Spirit. **THE MORE PEOPLE ARE WRAPPED UP IN THIS WORLD, THE MORE THEY WILL NOT BE READY TO LEAVE IT – WHICH THEY MUST DO!** Those who dominate our time with temporal things are not our friends!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 11 of 50

THE FIRST ORDER PASSES AWAY

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Verse 1, (Rev 21:1-8)

When the "first heaven and the first earth" are removed, it will strip many a soul of everything it counted precious. Life in Christ Jesus is designed to prepare us for this inevitability. Hundreds of years before Jesus came into the world, the Psalmist wrote, "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. **THEY SHALL PERISH**, but thou shalt endure: yea, **ALL OF THEM** shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed" (Psa 102:25-26).

That was written during a time BEFORE “the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings” (Mal 4:2). It was before “the Light of the world” came into the world (John 8:12), and men saw “a great light” (Matt 4:16). It was before the prophet Isaiah had written, “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isa 65:17). Sin had thrown a shroud of obscurity over everything, so that only those familiar with God knew the destiny of all of nature. But even in those spiritually primitive times, David walked close enough to the Lord to receive the revelation that the earth was growing old, and would finally be removed, and replaced with a new one.

Isaiah wrote of the earth being "broken up," "split open," "shaken exceedingly," reeling "to and fro like a drunkard," tottering "like a hut," and falling never to "rise again" (Isa 24:19-20). Those who know and believe this will not conduct their lives as though this world was permanent – to say nothing of their own life in this world. Satan leads people who yield to him into a life that ignores ultimate reality. He so blinds them that they live as though “now” is the most important period, and “here” is the most important place. But these are nothing but delusions. They move people to make worldly investments without due regard for the fact that the world is temporal. They culture appetites for this world, a love for it, and a preference for it. But the very world in which they feel at home, and for which they live, is tottering about like a drunken man, and

becoming “old” like a tattered garment. O, the scientists have given them explanations for the erratic behavior of the earth, so that the people do not think about the world passing away, and that it may very well be in the throes of death right now.

Again, the world is challenged, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment" (Isa 51:6). Our Lord Himself said, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matt 24:35). Peter affirms that when our Lord returns "the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Pet 3:10 NKJV). Those counting on this world being permanent are on the precipice of eternal ruin!

Now John is given to see the time when "the first heaven and the first earth will pass away." That means the purpose for them will be concluded – and when it is concluded, the world cannot continue on. The temporal realm was the stage upon which the drama of redemption was unfolded. It was intended to be the place where people would be cultured and prepared for eternity with the Lord. It was meant to be a place where their souls could be properly sensitized, their appetites cultured for proper things, and longings for a “better country” could be developed and matured. The church, which is “the body of Christ” (Col 1:18), “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), and “the household of God” (Eph 2:19) is not intended to resolve the problems of this present evil world. It is not meant to be a relief station for those who prefer this present evil world. As a God-ordained entity, it is not here to minister to the temporary needs of the citizens of this world. That does not mean that such activities are of themselves wrong. It does mean they are not principle matters, and there is not a syllable in Scripture that suggests they are. We have examples of churches in Scripture, and of what they did – both acceptable and unacceptable. A lack of preparation for the coming of the Lord and the end of the world was always out of order – no matter what else a church did or did.

What shall we say of a church – any church – where it is relatively easy for the attendees to forget, and perhaps not even know, that this world and its “fashion” are passing away (1 Cor 7:31), and there is “the world to come” (Lk 18:30; Heb 2:5; 6:5), for which thorough preparation is mandatory? Tell me, What good is such a church? What need does it have for Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the ministry of holy angels? Believe me, heavenly resources are not intended for worldly projects.

Salvation prepares the people of God for the inevitability of the present heavens and earth passing away. Thus, for them, the thought of its passing is not accompanied by trauma or disappointment. Their affection has been uprooted from the passing realm and anchored in the eternal domain – where Jesus is presently ministering and preparing His people for eternity with Himself.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was NO MORE SEA.” Verse 1, (Rev 21:1-8)

NO MORE SEA

How precious the vision must have been to John. He had been exiled on Patmos, an Isle jutting out into the Aegean Sea. Of course, the sea is a Divinely appointed representation of turmoil and agitation. Thus it is written, "But the wicked are like THE TROUBLED SEA, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa 57:20). In "the world to come" there will be no more troubling, turmoil, or agitation.

For the saints of God, the present world is a place of agitation, turmoil, commotion, and disturbance. Because of this believers have vexation, irritation, and annoyance by some of the things they see and hear daily. To be sure, there is grace, which brings comfort and consolation, settling the heart so that holy cogitation, meditation, thanksgiving, and praise can be experienced and expressed. When He walked among men, even Jesus was "troubled" (John 11:33; 13:21), and "grieved" (Mk 3:5). Nevertheless, the very thought of the total absence of such things warms the heart and soothes the troubled soul.

The sea is also a depiction of trial, as seen in the Israelites' confrontation of the Red Sea (Ex 13:18). It also reminds us of the agitating presence of false teachers who are described as "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame" (Jude 12-13). No more agitation, turmoil, or unrest in the world to come! Praise the Lord!

The sea now covers the predominate percentage of our earth. 71% of the earth's surface is covered by the oceans of the world. Including lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water, nearly 87% of the earth's surface is covered by water, hiding much of the splendor and resources on the earth. I understand this to be the result of the flood of Noah's time. It changed the surface of the earth, and the climate as well. This is a picture of the curse of sin that has enveloped our world, obscuring Divine benefits from human consideration. Even after we come into Christ, this obscurity remains to a significant degree. The vast majority of what we have in Christ has "not yet appeared" (1 John 3:2).

Thus, when the word is spoken, "And there was no more sea," we are to understand that all forms of restriction, as well as agitation, have been removed. Not only will the majority of the environment be conducive to life with Jesus, that will be descriptive of the total environment of the new heavens and the new earth. There will be no "miry places" or "marshes" (Ezek 47:8), in which corruption and infection are found. There will be nothing to "avoid" (Rom 16:17; 2 Tim 2:23; Tit 3:9), "shun" (2 Tim 2:16), or "turn away" from (2 Tim 3:5).

Think of it, we will never again hear the words, "put off all these" (Col 3:8), or "resist the devil" (James 4:4), or "be not overcome of evil" (Rom 12:21), or "be not conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2). Never again will we ever hear the words, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15), or "mortify the deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13), or "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1), or "sin not" (1 Cor 15:34; Eph 4:26; 1 John 2:1). We will not hear exhortations like, "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom 12:1), or "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor 6:14). We will never hear, "Beware" (Matt 7:15; Phil 3:2; Col 2:8; 2 Pet 3:17), "Stand fast" (Gal 5:1; 1 Thess 3:8; 2 Thess 2:15), or "Fear not" (Matt 10:28; Rev 1:17).

Those are all required because of our present environment, fitly described as “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). There are hostile “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12). It is a world from which we can “carry nothing out” (1 Tim 6:7) – that is, from the perspective of this devotion, there is absolutely nothing of this world that can be fitted into “the world to come.”

We also ought to mention that “the sea” divides the peoples of the earth. Its very presence is divisive. But in the glory, there will be “no more sea” – no more divisions of any sort. Then God shall have done what He has purposed: “gathered together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Eph 1:9-10).

All of this is wrapped up in the marvelous saying – “and there was no more sea.” May God be praised!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 13 of 50

THE TOTAL CREATION

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Verse 1 (Rev 21:1-8)

The present total creation is referred to as "heaven, earth, and sea" (Ex 20:11; Psa 146:6; Acts 4:24; 24:15). All of these were infected by sin, and all will pass away! The whole creation is presently in a state of “groaning,” like the birth-pains of an expectant mother. Therefore it is written, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:22-23). The saved join in the “groaning” of expectation, looking forward to what will come when Jesus comes.

Because of man’s sin, mortality, or “the bondage of corruption,” has been imposed upon the whole creation. If any person is prone to minimize sin, or to treat it though it was not infectious, let them consider what it has caused for “the whole creation.” The erratic behavior of creation, such as earthquakes, tornados, cyclones, floods, dearths or droughts, etc., are the result of man’s sin – in fact, a single sin, which was that of Adam. This curse sprang from one sin, not an accumulation of sin. The creation that was once under Adam’s control, was wrested from his hand when sin entered into its domain. That one transgression was so potent that all men are born with a propensity to sin (Rom 3:23), and are destined to die (Heb 9:27). Because of that one transgression, the blight of corruption was imposed on creation, reaching from the earth to the furthest galaxy. Something resulting in such a judgment cannot be minor, acceptable, or treated as common. Let no man refer to sin – any sin – as a mere error in judgment, a harmless mistake, a habit, or something that is easily tolerated by a Holy God.

Before, therefore, we are given a view of the glories of the world to come, it is first confirmed that all that has been cursed will be removed. In this case, so far as appearance is concerned, as

well as all other aspects of the Kingdom, "the last (the new heavens and earth) shall be first." The present heavens and earth in which God is working salvation, will be removed, and the new heavens and earth will become the stage on which the ongoing will and purposes of God will be worked. Those who have been redeemed will "inherit" (Psa 37:9,11,22; Matt 5:5), and "reign" (2 Tim 2:12) in that domain. Further, their "reign" shall be "for ever and ever" (Rev 22:5). The saints do not reign over the present creation, but they will reign over the new creation.

This reign is the subject of exposition in the second chapter of Hebrews.

1. The "world to come" has not been placed under the angels: "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb 2:5).
2. Man was made to be the manager of the whole creation: "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him" (Heb 2:6-8a).
3. At this time, and until the new heavens and earth appear, man does NOT have dominion over the whole creation: "But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Heb 2:8b). If anyone doubts that this is the case, let them deliver a command to a star, or a sea, of a wild beast, or a storm.
4. However, during this interim of salvation, THERE IS A MAN who is governing the whole creation: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb 2:9).
5. When the day of salvation" has been completed, and the present heavens and earth have been removed, the words of Daniel shall come to pass: "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan 7:22). This is the judgment mentioned by Paul in Second Corinthians 6:2-3: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" Then, this saying of Daniel shall come to pass: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Dan 7:27).

The salvation of God is leading to this time – a time when God Almighty will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Eph 1:10), and the saints will "take the kingdom" (Dan 7:18). THIS IS THE REASON FOR SALVATION. Remove the thought of the new heavens and new earth and there really is no rationality for salvation. Why would God save a people only to live on an earth that is going to pass away? While salvation does enable you to live in this present evil world without being

contaminated by it, that is not the ultimate purpose for salvation. It is “the world to come” that is the point – the one of which the Spirit spoke when he moved this to be written, “For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, WHEREOF WE SPEAK” (Heb 2:5). Other versions read, “of which we are speaking” (ESV), “the future world we are talking about” (NLT) “concerning which we are speaking” (NASB), and “the habitable world of the future, of which we are speaking” (AMPLIFIED).

In Christ, we are being saved “by hope” (Rom 8:24). For us, this involves the coming of Christ, at which time we will be “as He is” (1 John 3:1-2), being given a new and immortal body (2 Cor 5:1-3), being forever with the Lord (2 Cor 4:17-18), and reigning with Jesus over “the world to come.”

Also, as at the wedding feast in Cana, the Lord has kept the best for last (John 2:10). Our hearts must be convinced of the passing of the natural order before we will be able to let it go. Faith, however, can accomplish that task. It is imperative, therefore, that we hear the truth of the matter. May God raise up faithful laborers who will declare the appointed destiny of the saints.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 14 of 50

THE REGENERATED REALM

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”(Verses 1-2, Rev 21:1-8)

The "new heaven" and the "new earth" are the regenerated realm – the new environment for which we are being prepared. We are not “saved” by the present life of Christ (Rom 5:10) to merely live acceptable lives on the earth. Such an ultimate life is the aim of Law, not grace. Jesus did not deliver us from this present evil world in order that we might live in it (Gal 1:4). We have not been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” in order to build religious institutions. There is a larger purpose! We have been regenerated (Tit 3:5) in order to occupy a regenerated realm. We have been made “new” (Cor 5:17) in order to dwell in a new realm.

Now, in our spirits, we are associated with a domain higher than the earth. God has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). Our “conversation,” or manner of life, “is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil 3:20-21). We have been “called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9) – and He is in heaven, at the right hand of God. We have been “joined unto the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17) – and He is in heaven. In a very real experience, we “are come to “the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Heb 12:22).

Solemnly we are warned, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any

man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). We are told that the grace of God, that brings salvation, effectively teaches us to reject “worldly lusts” (Tit 2:11-12). We are apprised of the fact that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor 3:19). Unlike Israel of old, our inheritance is not in this world. It is an “eternal inheritance”(Heb 9:15), and we will not receive it until this present heavens and earth, which are “are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” are destroyed (2 Pet 3:7), and shall pass away when the Lord comes again (2 Pet 3:10).

The life of the believer in this world is not one that is compatible with the world. As it is written, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD” (1 John 4:17). A person that is in Christ can no more blend with the world, and be accepted by the world, than Jesus did. Jesus said of His disciples and of Himself, “the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14).

It is not pleasing to say this, but this kind of language is strange to the modern church. O, to be sure, there is a blessed remnant who receive and rejoice in these revealed facts, but they are not commonly declared or embraced. The reason for this circumstance is clear: the nominal church is not preparing for the world to come. It has been willingly absorbed into the culture of this world, that is going to pass away. They are afraid they may be “so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good.” By adopting this foolish stance, they have become so earthly minded they are no heavenly good.

Here, in our text, is "the creation itself," "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," who have themselves been loosed from the coils of mortality" (Rom 8:21). This is the "world to come" over which the redeemed will preside (Heb 2:5-6). It is the "earth" the meek will "inherit" (Matt 5:5). The "children of God" have been prepared for this glorious realm. This is one of the reasons we "must be born again."

THE HOLY CITY

" And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (ASV). We have been introduced to the new realm, now we will be exposed to the occupants of that realm. Let there be no mistake here, we are beholding the glorified church, "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." A city as a dwelling place for men is never so described. This is not a place where saints will dwell, but is a depiction of the saints themselves, who will be the dwelling place for God. It is WHAT they are that is the point.

Those who spend their time delineating the measurements of this “city,” and attempting to determine how many people can dwell there, have only revealed their ignorance. The “Holy City” and “New Jerusalem” is not a dwelling place for men, but for God – and it is comprised of those who have been redeemed. This has always been God’s intention, as Paul stated so well in Ephesians 2:19-22: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly

framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for AN HABITATION OF GOD through the Spirit.” How glorious the announcement: “He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21:3).

Salvation is all about preparing the people to be part of this city. It is the EMPHASIS of redemption, the PURPOSE of salvation, and the REASON for sanctification. It is wrong, seriously wrong, to be caught up in any other emphasis.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Rev 21:1-8)

Lesson 15 of 50

A VITAL PERSPECTIVE

Herein is a marvelous commentary on Divine emphasis! With the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the appearance of the new heaven and new earth, what are we given to see? Does the Spirit launch into a description of the new heaven, telling us of celestial bodies and the renewed atmosphere? Is the renewed earth the objective of consideration, with a description of the terrain, the renewed brute creation, and a description of our resurrection bodies? Indeed not! Is there any account of the new heavens and new earth that parallels the details of the first creation (Gen 1-2)?

Immediately, the Spirit speaks of the redeemed – the glorified saints of God. There is no account of another fall, like that of Adam and Eve (Gen 3). There is no presence of a place of testing – like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:9). There is no Tempter present, nor night. This is a different kind of creation.

John sees the church aggregate, with every vestige of the curse removed. There is no flaw or weakness in it, and therefore there is no exhortation to be watchful, diligent, and faithful, like there is to the church in this present evil world (Mk 13:37; 2 Pet 3:14; Rev 2:10) “Old leaven” is

not present, as it often is in this world (1 Cor 5:7-8). There is no need for weapons or armor, as there is upon the earth (2 Cor 10:1-3; Eph 6:10-18). The devil is not present to resist, as he is now (James 4:7). There is no race to finish, as we have now (Heb 12:1-2). "The world to come" is a different kind of world, where there is not, and cannot, be ungodly lusts, temptation, an evil heart of unbelief, slothfulness, lukewarmness, unfaithfulness, weakness, and wicked and slothful servants.

We are presently being prepared for such a blessed environ. Does it make sense, therefore, to become acclimated to this world, learning and absorbing its manners, and thinking as it does? Just how much should we be involved with the things of this world? These are things those who are sober minded should think about. We do have to live in this world, but the larger part of our energies must NOT be devoted to our participation in the things of this world. Whatever keeps us from making due preparation for the world to come must be omitted from our lives. God has, in a sense, greatly simplified the matter, in giving us grace to do everything we do for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17). We can present the weakest part of our constitution, our bodies, to the Lord as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1-2). How gracious is our God – now we can spend all of time preparing for eternity living in this world without neglecting the needs of the body, etc.

Those who are actually involved in "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12) have some idea of how much of our life is spent in a defensive posture (Eph 6:8-18), wrestling against principalities and powers (Eph 6:12), keeping our hearts (Prov 4:23), resisting the devil (1 Pet 5:7-8), mortifying the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13), keeping under our body, bringing it into subjection (1 Cor 9:27), and casting down imaginations (2 Cor 10:3-5). None of these involvements will be found in our inheritance – not a single one of them.

In our text, with perfect preparation, the glorified church is ready to dwell forever with the Lord and reign with Him, world without end. It has resisted this present evil world to participate in the world to come.

The appeal of this passage is not to our carnal curiosity, but to our faith. Those who take this passage and attempt to lead us into a vivid description of WHERE we will be are in serious error. The point of the passage is not where WE will be, but where GOD will be – "with us" (Rev 21:3). As for the redeemed, they will be where the One they have served is (John 14:3).

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 16 of 50

WE HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED TO THE CITY

"And I John saw THE HOLY CITY, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband." (Verse 2; Rev 21:1-8)

The Scriptures have introduced us to this city, with which we already have fellowship. "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal 4:26). This is the body of the redeemed of all ages. They are termed "Jerusalem" because God dwells among them through

the Spirit now (2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:22), and will Himself dwell among them in the world to come (Rev 7:17; 21:3). They are identified as "above" because they have been "raised up together" and made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

“Jerusalem which is above” is also "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," to which we have come in salvation (Heb 12:22). Earlier in the Revelation, Jesus referred to it as "The city of My God" (Rev 3:12). This is the "city" that Abraham sought: "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb 11:10). Prophetically, the Psalmist spoke of this city when he said, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Psa 48:2).

The first person to build a city was Cain (Gen 4:17). The last one to build one is God – a city “whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb 11:16). A united people in the land of Shinar conspired to build "a city and a tower, whose top may reach into heaven" (Gen 11:4). God aborted that project because it was of man, through man, and to man. The "city of God" will come down from heaven to a renewed earth. Actually heaven and earth will be joined together as a united whole. That is the purpose of God: “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: THAT in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Eph 1:9-12).

Actually, the church is God’s own project, and it is being built for Himself. The project itself is in the hands of Jesus, who is building His church (Matt 16:18) – “His” by virtue of the redemption by which He bought it. The objective of His work is clearly stated: “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; THAT He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, THAT He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27).

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here is some of what we know about the Divinely established purpose for the church.

1. It is being prepared to be a habitation of God, where God in all of His glory will dwell. Salvation is suiting us to be able to endure, and eternally profit from, the inexplicable glory of Almighty God – something that cannot be accomplished in the flesh.
2. Now, during “the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2), the church is being sanctified (separated and dedicated) and “cleansed” from sin and its defilements, in order the Jesus might present it to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).
3. It is presently being prepared to be the wife of “the Lamb of God” (Rev 19:7; 21:9) – to be joined to the Lord in a manner that can neither be discerned nor enjoyed while the earth remains.
4. In glory, it is the aggregate church that is the point, not merely individuals. The objective of

each individual is to fit into the whole. Rest assured, A bride will not be presented to Christ that has deformed hands, lame feet, and uncomely moral and spiritual blotches. Such things have got to go in this world. At the present time, the aggregative church has a lot of deformed parts, ailing members, and spiritually impotent members. Jesus dealt with such things in His churches (Rev 2-3).

These conditions are to be addressed now. Full provisions have been provided for the required preparations.

1. The Holy Spirit leads us in putting to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13-14).
2. The glorified Christ is making intercession for those who are coming to God through Him (Heb 7:25).
3. From within, the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us when we do not know what we should pray for as we ought (Rom 8:26-27).
4. Every temptation comes to us with a way of escape, in order that we might bear it (1 Cor 10:13).
5. We can come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:15-16).
6. If we “walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).
7. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
8. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3).
9. Through His Divine power, and by “the knowledge of Him,” God the Father has “given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3).
10. We have been given “the whole armor of God,” by which we can effectively address all inimical influences (Eph 6:10-18).
11. We have been given spiritual weaponry that can effectively throw down all imaginations and opposing thoughts (2 Cor 10:1-3).

The reason for these provisions is the absolute necessity of being fit for eternity with the glorified Christ, the mighty God, an innumerable company of angels, and the sanctified of all ages. If that readiness is not taking place now, there is no purpose for the professing church. If it is not separate from the world, it is like the Midianites, Canaanites, Jebusites, etc. in the land of Canaan. It is not pleasant to say this, but for those who are actually fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold on eternal life (1 Cor 6:12), the modern church is among their principle foes. This institutional monstrosity actually is making it more difficult to be ready for the coming of the Lord, and be presented as an integral part of the bride of Christ.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 17 of 50

PEOPLE, NOT STRUCTURES

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev 21:1-8)

It is necessary to emphasize that we are now beholding people, not inanimate structures. Nor, indeed, are we beholding an impersonal institution, or mere external organization. When we think of cities in Scripture, the predominate thought is the people dwelling in them: i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh, Jerusalem, Tyre, Nazareth, Nain, Bethany, Antioch, Athens, etc. Nowhere is a “city” viewed as a complex of buildings of various sizes and capacities. Even in this world, towns without people are called “ghost towns.” A principle city of a country or region is a metropolis – but who thinks of something that is void of people when they think of a metropolis? When one speaks of living in a city, we presume they are speaking of living among people.

When John “saw the holy city,” he was not beholding a place where people resided. Rather he was beholding a body of people in whom God resided – “the city of God” (Psa 46:4; Psa 87:3). How foolish it is to think of this city only in terms of dimensions and capacity! That is why this city is “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2). It is a where God Himself “will dwell with THEM, and THEY shall be His PEOPLE” (Rev 21:3).

When Jesus “beheld the city” of Jerusalem, He wept over it, saying “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes . . . ” (Luke 19:41ff). He was not weeping over the structures, but over the people dwelling there!

When Jesus upbraided Chorazin and Bethsaida, telling them that if Tyre and Sidon had witnessed the works done in them, they would have repented (Matt 11:21), He was not speaking of buildings, but of people – people among whom He had done many “mighty works.”

When Jesus assessed the seven “churches in Asia,” He was assessing specific bodies of people (Rev 2-3). When Paul wrote to the “churches” (Gal 1:2), and had a great “care of the churches” (2 Cor 11:28), he was speaking of congregations of people. With God, there is a persona that applies to a body of people, whether it is a “church,” groups like “Jews” and Gentiles,” or nations. These groups of people have certain characteristics. The group of people that were identified with Christ in Laodicea were “lukewarm” (Rev 3:16). The group at Corinth were “carnal” (1 Cor 3:3). The people in various groups in Galatia had “removed from Him who had called them into the grace of Christ” (Gal 1:6). Anyone in those assemblies that were not so characterized were distinguished from the rest of the people (Rev 2:24; 3:4). As a whole, the rebuked groups were not acceptable, even though some among them were not so classified.

In this world, churches are urged to purge defiling influences from among them – like purging out the “old leaven” (1 Cor 5:7-8,13). Too often men hesitate to do this, but God is quite different. He said to Israel, “And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek 20:38). John the Baptist said of Jesus, “He will thoroughly purge His floor” (Matt 3:12). Jesus said “The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that

offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:41-42). The city to which Revelation 21 testifies, is the post-gathering body of the redeemed – with all of the misfits removed.

Until that time, the church is to endeavor with holy tenacity to be pure. There are two ways to cleanse the church of “sinners.” The preferred method is “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18). If this cannot be done, the recalcitrant must be put away. This can be done by collective judgment, as in Corinth (1 Cor 5:1-5). However, there is a way to successfully address the situation indirectly.

The church must remove from its gatherings anything that is carnal, and attracts carnal people. A body of people that is to be married to the Lord’s Christ has no business making appeals to worldly people. Get out of the assemblies anything and everything that does not edify, or build up the saints (1 Cor 14:26). The church is preparing itself to be presented to Christ, and it must not forget that sacred assignment.

We must not allow ourselves to become fleshly in our consideration of this passage. We are beholding the glorified church, the people of God brought to perfection according to the appointment of God. It ought to be clear that whatever the involvements of the people of God are here, must be fully compatible with what the Lord is doing within the church, and what He will ultimately do with it.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 18 of 50

COMPARED WITH BABYLON

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Verse 2 (Rev 21:1-8)

One of the chief opponents of the people of God is presented under the figure of a city – “Babylon the great.” What a different city it is! Its end was to become “the habitation of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev 18:2). Instead of being a “holy city,” it is said of Babylon, “her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (18:5).

Babylon was no mere city of brick and mortar. It was an aggregation of people who conspired against the people of God. What she did can only be credited to people.

“She made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (14:8). Therefore, the “fierceness” of God’s wrath was focused against Babylon (16:19). Rather than the world impacting Babylon, Babylon passed her ways on to the world. The world was worsened because of Babylon. A moral stupor came upon the world because of Babylon. “The work of the law” which God had placed in men, and their “conscience” which bare them witness, “their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom 2:15), were neutralized because of

the influence of “Babylon the Great.”

“Babylon the great” is not an architectural wonder, like Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon (Dan 4:30). She is “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (17:5). This is something that is never said of the world. A spiritual “harlot” is an entity that has been identified with God, but has joined herself to other lovers. She is a gathering of people who are unfaithful to the One to whom she owes her love. She is called “the great whore” (Rev 17:1,15,16; 19:2). She also begets after her own kind, being appropriately called “the mother of harlots” (Rev 17:5). That is not an appropriate description for the world, or for the various religions of the world. This is not the proper description of Muhammadans, who do not even claim to worship “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Ex 3:6,15,16; 4:5; Matt 22:32; Acts 3:13; 7:32), or “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Col 1:3).

There is, however, a spiritual entity that parades itself as being associated with God and Christ, yet maintains the characteristics of the world. In it are found “covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim 3:1-4). The Spirit affirms this body of people is having “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Tim 3:5). It is a POWERLESS CHURCH that has chosen to maintain the outward appearance of a bride being prepared for her husband, but actually being a “whore,” or “harlot.” The Holy Spirit solemnly instructs us, “from such turn away” (2 Tim 3:5). Other versions read, “go not with these” (BBE), “Stay away from these people!” (CJB), “avoid such people” (ESV), “Have nothing to do with them” (NIV), “stay away from people like that!” (NLT), and “Avoid [all] such people [turn away from them]” (AMPLIFIED). Having rejected the power of God, this body of people attempt to use the wisdom of the world to control human behavior – a wisdom that cannot cause a new birth (1 Pet 1:23), or conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29-30; 2 Cor 3:18).

Some imagine that “Babylon the Great” is a system or a way of thinking. But this is not true. Babylon the Great is a “city” – like the redeemed of the Lord are a city. The “city of My God” (Rev 3:12), “the beloved city” (Rev 20:9), “the holy city,” “the New Jerusalem” (Rev 21:2), and “the holy Jerusalem” (Rev 21:10) is not a system of thought, or anything else that is impersonal. “Babylon the Great” is Satan’s competitive answer to the church, like “another Jesus” (2 Cor 11:4) is his answer to “the Christ of God” (Lk 9:20).

“Babylon the Great” is a spiritual wonder, a composite of people who are governed by the devil himself, yet claim identity with God and Christ. But it is void of power. It cannot overcome the world, or successfully control “the flesh,” or resist the devil. What would happen to organized “Christianity” if those who are in fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), were living by faith (Heb 10:38), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16) turned away from powerless religion, and entities that have no success in crucifying the flesh (Gal 5:24), and are not “separate” (2 Cor 6:17). It would actually impact the economy of the world, to which the false church is married. Great masses of “Christian” enterprises would collapse.

Of course, all of this will take place when “Babylon,” which cannot be converted, will fall. The Revelation depicts it in this way: “the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her,

and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies . . . And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, AND THE SOULS OF MEN” (Rev 18:3,11-13).

Likewise, the "holy city" is not a group of impersonal and lifeless structures. This is not an environment for saints, but a place for God Himself to dwell. The glorified saints themselves are the city, and in this world they are making preparation for their marriage to the Lamb. The faithful will outlast the unfaithful. When the pretenders are taken away, the righteous will still be standing.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 19 of 50

THE HOLY CITY

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Verse 2 (Rev 21:1-8)

The saints of God are precisely that – "saints," or holy ones – “set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His” (THAYER). In the aggregate, they are of “our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph 3:15), “the household of God” (Eph 2:19), “the temple of God” (1 Cor 3:16-17), and are “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” (1 Cor 6:11). A very real righteousness has been imputed to them that can only result in living “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” all the while “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF a peculiar people, zealous of good work” (Tit 2:11-13). A “peculiar people” is not an odd people, but a people “[to be peculiarly His own, people who are] eager and enthusiastic about [living a life that is good and filled with] beneficial deeds” (AMPLIFIED). They have been effectively delivered “from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), and by virtue of their faith in Christ are fully able to overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5).

It simply is not possible for salvation to yield an unholy people, enslaved to sin, and indifferent toward Jesus – a people who are comfortable in this world, quenching the Spirit, and without the faith and power required to cleanse themselves of all filthiness of flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). Any person or people that are so characterized, regardless of what they may claim, are not the products of a holy God. They are the result of Satan’s work, who is the spirit who now works “in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). You may refer to such people as weak Christians, but they simply do not bear the traits of those who have been made free by Jesus (John 8:36). Men may invent programs and methodologies to supposedly help them to be reformed. However, it is not reformation they need, but

transformation.

People who claim to be “Christian” need to eliminate from their thoughts and vocabulary everything that normalizes sin, and suggests there is some discipline or procedure that can correct the standing of men with God. Include in that elimination any notion that God in any sense accepts a defiled people. He has spoken to this issue, and it is time for it to be effectively communicated to the people: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:17-18). That was addressed to a church! No person can possibly be approved of God who ignores that Divine affirmation. If it seems too difficult, then resolve to come out from among those who are “at ease in Zion” (Amos 6:1).

In this world, a very real and effective righteousness is imputed, or credited, to the saints. When they are glorified, they will be thoroughly holy – spirit, soul, and BODY (1 Thess 5:23). God is holy (1 Cor 3:17). The Lord Jesus is holy (Acts 4:27). The Spirit is holy (1 Thess 4:8). The angels are holy (Matt 25:31). The Scriptures are holy (Rom 1:2). HOW COULD AN UNHOLY PEOPLE FIT INTO AN ENVIRONMENT LIKE THAT?

That is what salvation is all about – preparing us to fit into an absolutely holy and undefiled realm. If men are not interested in being truly holy in this world, there will be no provision at all for them to be made holy after they leave this world. If they disembark from this world in an unholy state, the word has come from heaven, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev 22:11).

Of old time, the city of Jerusalem was called "the holy city" (Neh 11:1,18; Isa 52:1; Matt 4:5; 27:53). But it was not inherently holy. Sin and iniquity were found in it – so much so that God judged it with a grievous judgment. That city was "holy" because of its association with God, not because of its character. That city was holy because God chose to put His name there (1 Kgs 11:36). It was a place of Divine association, where His law, worship, and blessing were found. All of that was in spite of the people comprising its citizenry. Therefore, when they rejected the Lord's Christ, God rejected that city. Peering into the future, and considering a com in generation that would receive Him, Jesus said to that city, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Luke 13:35). It should not surprise me if the Lord Jesus has said that to the modern church. If so, that accounts for its current miserable condition – Jesus has left its house!

How different the glorified church. It is holy by nature, having partaken of the very holiness of God while it was in the world. Now, in our text, as it stands before the Redeemer, not a single vestige of iniquity is found in it. The inhabitants have no corruptible bodies or souls bent toward the earth. Every remnant of the curse has been removed from them. They are, in every sense of the world, "the holy city." They left this world in a holy state, having, through the resources supplied to them, kept under their bodies, bringing them into subjection (1 Cor 9:27).

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 20 of 50

THE NEW JERUSALEM

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband.” Verse 2 (Rev 21:1-8)

This is the "Jerusalem" of a new and eternal order – a different kind of city. Comprised of a perfected people, this Jerusalem will fulfill all of the statements made of her. "At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD . . . Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness . . . and Jerusalem shall be called a City of Truth" (Jer 3:17; 33:16; Zech 8:3). Again it is written, “Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together” (Psa 122:3), and “But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying” (Isa 65:18-29).

It is true that earthly Jerusalem is associated with coming spiritual renewal and blessing.

1. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isa 27:13).
2. “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the Throne of the Lord ; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord , to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart” (Jer 3:16),
3. “And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness” (Zech 8:8)
4. “In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem: (Zech 12:8-9).
5. “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord , and His name one” (Zech 14:8-9).
6. “And give him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa 62:7).

Since God cannot lie (Ti 1:2), and what He has “purposed” He always does (Isa 14:24-27; 46:11;

51:29; Jer 4:28), these promises will all be fulfilled – in the earth, and while enemies remain. In fact, the people of God are taught to rely on what God has purposed (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:9,11; 3:11; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 John 3:8).

However, all that God has promised to do with the Jerusalem that is upon the earth is but a prelude to the "new Jerusalem" which will leave nothing to be corrected. The choicest blessings promised to the Jerusalem on the earth, are all within the context of the subduing of inimical nations, and the gathering of inquirers into Jerusalem. But that is not the context of the "New Jerusalem." When that city "comes down" from heaven, there will be no enemies to subdue, and all of the redeemed of all ages shall have been gathered together – for they themselves are "holy city."

When earthly Jerusalem is at its best, the nations will "flow" into it (Isa 2:2). But that is not the picture being portrayed in this section of Revelation. Rather, this is a Jerusalem into which the Lord Himself comes (21:3). Then, the point will not be how the nations respond to Jerusalem, but how God responds to it! The nations being gathered together in it will not be the point, but the Almighty God taking up residence in it – for as a city, it was made for God Himself.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 21 of 50

COMING DOWN

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Verse 2 (Rev 21:1-8)

John beholds the city "COMING DOWN from God out of heaven." It has been associated with God all along, and in a very real sense has been joined to Him. Yet now, in the vision, it will come into its inheritance.

In redemption, we become identified with God Himself. We are "reconciled TO GOD" (Rom 5:10), become "servants TO GOD" (Rom 6:22), and "bring forth fruit UNTO GOD" (Rom 7:4). We are made "acceptable TO GOD" (Rom 14:18), have "turned TO GOD" (1 Thess 1:9), and "draw nigh" TO GOD (James 4:8). The church is referred to as "sons OF GOD" (1 John 3:1), the "temple OF GOD" (1 Cor 3:16), and "the house OF GOD" (1 Tim 3:15). It is a "habitation OF GOD" (Eph 2:22), "heirs OF GOD" (Rom 8:17), and "the elect OF GOD" (Col 3:12).

Here is an association that is too often left out of preaching and teaching. Once seen, however, it brightens the text we are now considering.

From every viewpoint, the glorified church will come down "from God." While they lived on the earth, their lives were "hid with Christ IN GOD" (Col 3:3). Those who died were "absent from the body, but present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). When the Lord Jesus returns, He will "gather" the saints together (Matt 24:31). Together, in their resurrection bodies, they will be "caught up" to "meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17). The emphasis

then is not the individual, but the body of the elect, which collectively are the bride of Christ. Corporately they are a mirror of Christ, who is “the express image of God” (Heb 1:3).

Here, therefore, the people of God are beheld together, glorified, and coming into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34). The depiction is that of the saints taking the Kingdom, as Daniel prophesied (Dan 7:18). The “eternal purpose” of God, made known in Christ Jesus, shall have been completed, and the fulness of times will take place. As it is written: “Having made known unto us the mystery of HIS will, according to HIS good pleasure which HE hath purposed in HIMSELF: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times HE might GATHER TOGETHER INTO ONE ALL THINGS IN CHRIST, BOTH WHICH ARE IN HEAVEN, AND WHICH ARE ON EARTH; EVEN IN HIM: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of HIM who worketh all things after the counsel of HIS own will: That we should be to the praise of HIS glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Eph 1:9-12).

Behold the magnificent emphasis on God Himself: “HIS will,” “HIS good pleasure,” “HE hath purposed,” “in HIMSELF,” “HE might gather,” “the purpose of HIM,” “the counsel of HIS OWN will,” and “the praise of HIS glory.” In view of that, how involved should the church be in the things of this world?

“The world to come” is the one over which the saints of God will preside. This is the point the Spirit makes in the second chapter of Hebrews: “For unto the angels hath He NOT put in subjection THE WORLD TO COME, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst SET HIM OVER THE WORKS OF THY HANDS: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But NOW WE SEE NOT YET all things put under him. BUT we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:5-9).

The point is that God has determined the redeemed will be “over” the “world to come.” However, the dominion for which the redeemed have been destined is not seen yet—i.e. they have not yet realized their inheritance. However, there is presently a “Man” presiding over all that God has made – “the Man Christ Jesus.” He is presently reigning in our stead, but after the passing of the present heavens and earth, we shall “inherit all things,” as it is written “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (Rev 21:7), just as Jesus is presently “over all” (Rom 9:5), and is the “Head over all things”(Eph 1:22).

The words “coming down” must not be viewed with this present evil world in mind. It will be burned up when Jesus comes again. As it is written, “But the day of the Lord will come AS A THIEF IN THE NIGHT (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10); in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements

shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Pet 3:10-12).

What John was beholding was a pictorial representation of the prophecy, "And the kingdom and dominion, and THE GREATNESS of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Dan 7:27). The English Standard Version, God's Word Bible, Complete Jewish Bible, New Revised Standard Version, The Jewish Bible, and Living Bible all read, "serve and obey THEM." This is involved in reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12), and being "joint-heirs" with Him (Rom 8:17).

The people of God are being cultured to reign with Jesus, the world to come being placed in their charge – not independently of the exalted Christ, but with Him. In the vision of Revelation, John is seeing that taking place.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 22 of 50

PREPARED AS A BRIDE

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Verse 2 (Rev 21:1-8)

Earlier the people of God are referred to as the Lamb's wife, that "made herself ready" (19:7). That description emphasized her personal involvement in the preparation, with each individual member entering into the preparation process. Any person or collection of persons identified by the name "Christian" that is not preparing to be joined to a holy Jesus, is really not "Christian" or a "church" at all. God Almighty has made no provision for a body of people who are NOT getting "ready" to be "the Lamb's wife." There is no place in heaven for such a people. They will not be given grace, or faith, or hope, or any other thing that is Divinely required while in this world.

Jesus will not rise to confess an unholy people to God (Rev 3:5). A person or a people that are not "separate" from the world will be rejected by both God and His Son – and that before an assembled universe. They will hear such words as "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt 7:23), and "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:41).

Those who have consistently lived in subjection to the devil, will have "their part" with him in the lake of fire (Rev 19:20; 20:10,15; 21:8). I acknowledge that it is not pleasant to say such things, but they must be said. There seems to be a prevailing insensitivity to these facts. There simply are too many lukewarm, untaught, and insensitive churches to keep silence on this matter. The church has not been put in the earth to make it a better place to live, or to ensure that the poor are fed, or that men can have the alternative of religious careers. As noble as such works may appear, if they are not done for the glory of God, they are like a weightless mote, floating on the turbulent sea of life. Being part of a large congregation by no means makes up for a lack

of faith, a failure to walk in the Spirit, and a refusal to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 6:15-7:1).

Paul once wrote of his own objectives for God's people: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (2 Cor 11:2-4). That certainly has a sober tone!

What we are seeing in our text for these devotions (Rev 21;1-8), is a glorified church – a body of people that have been conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29-30). She has prepared herself to exit the world and enter into the presence of the Lord. It has avoided being wed to the world, so it could be married to Christ. Having been glorified, she is, in the fullest sense, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The redeemed no longer dwell in tabernacles of clay. Their souls are no longer cast down, nor can they be. They no longer find in themselves "another law, "warring against the law of their mind" (Rom 7:23). They no longer have to "resist the devil" (James 4:7), throw down unacceptable thoughts (2 Cor 10:1-3), or put on the whole armor of God, that they may stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:10-18). They have been glorified and made suitable for eternal and expanded involvement with the Son of God, and with God Himself.

This is why God called them (Rom 1:7; 8:28; 2 Tim 1:9. This is why they were born again (1 Pet 1:23), with sins forgiven (Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 1 John 2:12), and their names written in heaven (Heb 12:23). Remove this glorious event and there is no reason for a Savior, the Gospel, or godliness. If the church is not ultimately joined to the exalted Lamb as His spotless bride, every single aspect of a religious life has been lived in vain. Instead of the religion of the disinterested saving them, it will prove to be the cause of their condemnation. In order to adopt a lifeless religion, you have to leave the Lord (Gal 1:6), quench and grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19), and refuse to be taught by the grace of God (Tit 2:11-13). That is simply the way it is.

It is imperative that the people of God be regularly exposed to the "end," or objective, "of their faith" (1 Pet 1:9). If we are not given to contemplate our state AFTER the passing of the first heaven and the first earth, we will be confined to futility. If our thoughts are not focused on our involvement with the new heaven and the new earth, we will be unable to please the Lord. This is His appointed objective for us, and it must capture our minds. A religion that emphasizes this world finds no profit in a passage like this. It rather chooses to actually dwell on the things that cannot, by their very nature, remain. This is nothing less than a Satanic snare.

Community involvement, political participation, charitable works, etc., will all count for nothing if the person or group is not "prepared" to stand before the Lord on the day of judgment. Mind you, we are not opposed to such activities, but we ARE opposed, and seriously so, to any and all who choose to ignore the requirement of making themselves ready to be part of the bride of Jesus.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 23 of 50

GOD HIMSELF SHALL BE WITH THEM

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Verse 3, Rev 21:1-8)

Again, we hear "a great voice." The Revelation began with John hearing "A GREAT VOICE, as a trumpet" (1:10). Later, he was summoned up higher by "A GREAT VOICE from heaven" (11:12), coming from "the throne." Twice he heard "A GREAT VOICE out of heaven" (16:1,17). When the Lord spoke the Law on Mount Sinai, it was with "A GREAT VOICE" (Deut 5:22). Other versions read "a loud voice" (NKJV/NLT/NASB). The word translated "great" [megas], means "of great weight, importance; a thing to be highly esteemed for its excellence: excellent" (THAYER). It is a voice that can drown out all competing sounds. It is a voice that will strike fear in the hearts of God's enemies, and get the uncompromised attention of those who are serving Him.

Things spoken with this "great voice" are not only intended to be heard, but understood as well. What is said, if heard properly, will bring assurance to the troubled soul, cause faith to rise up, and hope to awaken. This "great voice" does not say anything that is irrelevant, or that is unrelated to people living in "this present evil world." It is a voice that is also heard in the heavenly chambers, in which dwell the seraphim, cherubim, principalities and powers, and holy angels. The souls of those who have departed from this world (Rev 6:9) also hear this voice. On earth, those with faith can hear this voice with the ears they have been given "to hear" (Mk 4:23). Christ's sheep always hear this voice – the superior and dominating voice (John 10:3).

The Holy Spirit reasons with the redeemed concerning hearing this voice: "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will HEAR HIS VOICE, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Heb 3:7-8). And again, "While it is said, To day if ye will HEAR HIS VOICE, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Heb 3:15). And yet again, "He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will HEAR HIS VOICE, harden not your hearts" (Heb 4:7). Again the Spirit reasons with us, "But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have HEARD HIM, and have been TAUGHT BY HIM, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:20-21).

All of these spoken Divine appointments are things that can by no means be averted or effectively contradicted. Now, a "great voice" comes "OUT OF THE THRONE." It is the second time such a voice has been heard specifically "from the throne." The first time a voice is said to have come out from the throne, it was announcing the fulfillment of Divinely determined judgments: "A GREAT VOICE out of the temple of heaven, FROM THE THRONE, saying, It is done" (Rev 16:17).

Another time John heard a GREAT VOICE coming "out of the Throne" – a voice of exhortation:

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great" (19:5).

But the "great voice" in our text (Rev 21:3) is giving no exhortation. Rather a proclamation is being made. In the vision, what God has determined has come to pass, and the announcement of it reverberates throughout the new heaven and the new earth. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." This dwelling will not be "through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22). It will not be a dwelling that is "by faith" (Eph 3:17). It will not be a dwelling that causes mountains to shake (Psa 68:8), and is accompanied by a destroying fire (Psa 97:3). It will not be a visitation (Lk 1:68,78). Rather, God Himself is going to take up permanent residence with His people.

Salvation is preparing us for that dwelling. Through it we are gaining an acquaintance with the Almighty (Job 22:21). We have been reconciled to God (Rom 5:10) in the prospect of this announced dwelling! In view of this determined and unalterable purpose, who would dare to justify or excuse something that God hates being found in those professing identity with Him? Who is the person bold enough to give their allegiance to anything or anyone other than the Living God?

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 24 of 50

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Verse 3, Rev 21:1-8)

While there is a sense in which God now dwells in us, it is not in His fulness. The situation with us is much like it was with Moses. He saw the glory of God – but it was only the after glow of that glory, not the blazing fulness of it: "And He said, Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while My glory PASSETH BY, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I PASS BY: And I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts: but My face shall not be seen" (Ex 33:20-23). In the place of "back parts," other versions read "My back" (NKJV), and "from behind" (NLT). Moses saw God AFTER He had passed by him. He did not see God's face, or the fulness of His person. The same kind of thing was involved when "the nobles of the children of Israel . . . saw God" (Ex 24:11). They saw the evidence of God, or His glory, as compared with His Person.

I am showing here that, as long as the world is standing, and salvation is not yet finalized (as in the resurrection of the dead), the presence of God is a token, or marginal Presence, not His fulness. Therefore, at this time, being indwelt by Deity is depicted as being "through the Spirit"

(Eph 2:22). The Father and the Son take up residence in the believer (John 14:23), but it is “by faith” (Eph 3:17), which is not the means of God Himself dwelling with the redeemed. It is when Jesus comes “in His own glory” (Matt 25:31), and “in the glory of the Father” (Matt 16:27) that the unveiled glory of both God and Christ will be seen. This is a glory that cannot be seen by mortals without it consuming them. That is why God told Moses, “Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live” (Ex 33:20). By way of comparison, when speaking of the time depicted in our text, it is written, “And THEY SHALL SEE HIS FACE; and His name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev 22:4). That is the necessary result of “God Himself” being with the saved.

In a preliminary sense, God is presently dwelling with His people, but it is not in the sense of our text, which reveals circumstances AFTER the present heaven and earth have been destroyed, all enemies have been removed, and the new heavens and earth are made fully known. Until that time, here is what is said of God dwelling with men.

1. “Know ye not that YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor 3:16).
2. “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I WILL DWELL IN THEM, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (2 Cor 6:16)
3. “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, GOD DWELLETH IN US, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).
4. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, GOD DWELLETH IN HIM, and he in God” (1 John 4:15).

This indwelling is a preliminary one. Presently, God inhabits His people "through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22). He does so only in the part of us that has been regenerated – our spirit, or “the new man” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) – or “our hearts” (Eph 3:17). We do not yet have the fulness of His dwelling or Presence, because there are parts of us that are incompatible with Him, and would be destroyed by His glory. Our present bodies most evidently fit into that category. That is why God said “there shall no man see Me, and live” (Ex 33:20). It is why John wrote, “No man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18). So far as flesh is concerned God is “invisible” (Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27).

The dwelling of God among His people is mentioned often in Scripture. We have read of this dwelling before. "He that sitteth on the throne SHALL, DWELL AMONG THEM" (Rev 7:15). This is an immediate dwelling, and is the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. "My tabernacle also SHALL BE WITH THEM: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Ezek 37:27). There is a marvelous play on words here. In this world, we come to God. In this text, God comes to the redeemed. He comes to dwell with them forever.

All of this postulates a staggering change in men – a “change” that adapts them to ultimately behold the fulness of Divine glory without being consumed by it. That “change” commences

with a “new birth” (John 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:23) – one in which men become “a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17) in which we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Furthermore, an ongoing work is commenced in which the saved “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18), or being “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29-30). These are the ONLY people that will be fully changed when they see the Lord coming in all of His glory. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil 3:20-21). Again, it is written, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Let it be clear to all, there is no such thing as a salvation that does not thoroughly prepare the saved ones to behold and remain with the Lord in all of His glory. Furthermore, while the change involved is not seen by mortal eyes, the evidence of that change IS seen in the lives of the redeemed– in their words and in their deeds. Their manner of life testifies to the change that is being wrought in them, for a purported change with no evidence is really no change at all. This change is being wrought with “the world to come” in mind, and in preparation for dwelling with an unveiled God forever and ever.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and HE WILL DWELL WITH THEM, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Verse 3, Rev 21:1-8)

Lesson 25 of 50

HE WILL DWELL WITH THEM

These words are especially precious in view of the fact that God sometimes hides Himself, even forsaking some with whom He has identified Himself. Enough is said about this in Scripture so there should be no doubt about it.

In this world, wrote the prophet Isaiah, God is a God who "hides" Himself: “Verily THOU ART A GOD THAT HIDEST THYSELF, O God of Israel, the Savior” (Isa 45:15). Isaiah also said, “And I will wait upon the Lord , THAT HIDETH HIS FACE from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him” (Isa 8:17).

Speaking of a time of chastening God said to Israel, “In a little wrath I HID MY FACE FROM THEE for a moment” (Isa 54:8). To a wayward Israel God said, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have HID HIS FACE from you, that He will not hear” (Isa 59:2). In accounting for the spiritual obtuseness of Israel, the Holy Spirit moved Isaiah to write, “And there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take

hold of Thee: FOR THOU HAST HID THY FACE from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities” (Isa 64:7).

Before Moses died, God told him what was going to take place with Israel: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake Me, and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I WILL FORSAKE THEM and I WILL HIDE MY FACE FROM THEM, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day. Are not these evils come upon us, because our GOD IS NOT AMONG US?” (Deut 31:16-17).

If those who point out the weakness and powerless nature of the nominal church are correct, and if the phenomenal outbreak of sin is found among those claiming identity with God, as the Lord said it would (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1-5), can it be that it is owing to the fact that God has hidden Himself from such, and is no longer among them? Was God misrepresenting Himself when He solemnly told Moses, “I will forsake them!” I do not believe anyone can adequately explain the carnality of the modern church as a whole without seriously considering that God may well have hidden Himself from them and is no longer among them. If this is not true, then God has not kept them from falling as He said He would (Jude 1:24).

There are times when God’s presence is not apparent, and we must navigate through faith alone. Experientially it seems that He is far away. It is as though a cloud comes between the faithful and God – not, in this case, because of sin, but in order to try their hearts. This is why Paul once testified, “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us” (2 Cor 1:8-10). According to Paul’s experience, it looked as though he had been forsaken – but he was really in the furnace of trial, and he passed the test! Learn from him how to conduct yourself in trial, when God seems far away. This kind of circumstance is why David prayed, “Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my Help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation” (Psa 27:9).

In our text, God takes up His abode with His people – people who have passed through trials safely (1 Pet 1:7), kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7), walked in the Spirit (Gal 5:16), and perfected holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1-2). These are the ones who loved Jesus and kept His words (John 14:21,23). Further, Deity now dwells within our hearts "by faith" (Eph 3:17), not by feeling, and not by some mystical automated process. That indwelling is preparing us for the fulfillment of the prophecy, “God Himself shall be with them.”

Against the backdrop of danger, striving, inimical forces, and wayward tendencies that must be avoided, the proclamation of God Himself being with us declares a time when faith will no longer be the means of God dwelling with us, and contrary influences will no longer be experienced. There will be no more Mediator as we now have. We will never again be unaware

of His presence, and the element of mystery, or veiling, will have been finally and permanently removed. No one will have to “seek the Lord” (Acts 17:27), or “look” for Him (Isa 8:17).

How glorious are the words: "God HIMSELF shall be with them, and be their God." From an experiential viewpoint, it will be just as though the individual and God were the only ones present. There will be an acute and unfading awareness of His presence, His favor, and His purpose. There will be no need for chastisement, correction, or forgiveness. We will no longer "seek" the Lord, strive to "find Him," or be unable to see Him with crystal clarity! For those who are living by faith, that is good news.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 26 of 50

A LONGING IS PRESUMED

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Verse 3, Rev 21:1-8)

This entire text and context presume an intense longing within the saints for the immediate and unveiled presence of the Lord. Those who are actually living by faith reason like Paul: “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him” (2 Cor 5:6-9). If men are learned in the ways of God, and are ministering to the saints who are not as informed as they could be, they will reason like this: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again” (Phil 1:23-26).

If the modern church is ever going to be truly improved, it is going to have to be brought to the point where the anticipation of forever being with the Lord (1 Thess 4:16-17), or “God Himself” dwelling with us (Rev 21:3), is PREEMINENT. Until preachers and teachers see that making it safely to glory takes the preeminence over solving the problems associated with life in this world, the people that are led by them can really do nothing more than tread water, making no progress to the shore of glory.

If this seems like it is not relevant, remember that God has graciously revealed His agenda: “ For whom HE did foreknow, HE also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom HE did predestinate, them HE also called: and whom HE called, them HE also justified: and whom HE justified, them HE also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30). If you remove being conformed to the image of His Son, and

glorification, none of the rest is neither reasonable or possible. Furthermore, this passage is the explanation for the verse preceding it: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. FOR . . .”

Those who are actually participating in this revealed purpose, “being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor 3:18, NRSV), are firmly anchored by the hope that will be fulfilled in our text (Heb 6:19). They are being “saved by hope” (Rom 8:24).

If you have any doubts about the prevailing deficiency of hope within the professed church, start asking people about it. Inquire about what they are longing for. Ask them how they feel about the coming of the Lord and the day of judgment. If the preacher has not been saying much about the coming of the Lord, and God Himself being with us in the glory, ask him why he does not say more about such things. Inquire into the reason for many song books eliminating songs about heaven. If the Divinely purposed spiritual culture depicted in Scripture is not around you, find out why it is not.

This passage is not the passing along of mere information. It is language for the oppressed, good news for the persecuted, and a promise to the longing ones. It all means nothing to people firmly entrenched in this world. Salvation will, if heeded, create deep longings for these very things in the heart of the believer. Where such longings are absent, the Spirit has been grieved and quenched, and the soul is in serious jeopardy.

This message MUST be delivered to the people of God! A message that majors on the affairs of this world and fleshly experiences is not from God. Such a word does not have Christ at the heart of it, or heaven at the end of it. It is spurious in every sense of the word, and is to be rejected by the saints. Our religion must not allow us to focus on this world to the neglect of the one to come.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 27 of 50

THINGS THAT WILL PASS AWAY

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

“. . . and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away" (ASV).
(Verse 4, Rev 21:1-8)

I cannot overemphasize the necessity of nourishing the saints with this blessed vision. The challenging, discouraging, and hard things with which we presently contend are only temporary. We dare not approach them as though they are to have no end. The best way to do this is not by philosophizing, or even pretending they are not present with us. Rather, we must heed the voice that comes from the throne. It speaks of the end of things that grieve us! “God will wipe away

every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be anguish (sorrow and mourning) nor grief nor pain any more, for the old conditions and the former order of things have passed away” (Rev 21:4, AMPLIFIED)

Over and over we are reminded of the temporality of the natural order.

IT SHALL PERISH. “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. THEY SHALL PERISH, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed” (Psa 102:25-26).

IT SHALL BE REMOVED. “The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and SHALL BE REMOVED like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and NOT RISE AGAIN” (Isa 24:20).

IMPRESSED WITH NATURE? “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished” (Isa 51:5).

COMPARED WITH CHRIST’S WORD. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35).

THE END WILL COME SUDDENLY. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Pet 3:10).

HOW SHOULD THE SAINTS LIVE?

The saints are to reason with the ultimate removal of the present heavens and earth in mind. ”Seeing then that all these things SHALL BE dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). What reason can possibly be cited for living as though this world will never pass away? While evolution teaches that nature is advancing, growing, and developing further, the Lord tells us it is declining, having been consigned to “the bondage of corruption.” In some way nature itself senses this, for it is bound up with corruption because of the sin of man, and it will not be loosed from that bondage until the sons of God are fully liberated: “For the creature (creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:20-21).

Believers live in view of the passing of this world. Solemnly we are told, “But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: FOR THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY” (1 Cor 7:29-31).

How much sense does it make to lay up treasure on earth as though the earth was always going to be here (Matt 6:19-20)? Why not consider the passing of the world, and invest with that in mind – “using the world, as NOT ABUSING IT” (1 Cor 7:31). Other versions read, “as not using it to the full” (ASV), “as though they had no dealings with it” (ESV), “Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them” (NLT), and “as though they were not absorbed by it and as if they had no dealings with it” (AMPLIFIED).

The saints of God should not ignore, or be surprised by, temporality, or things waxing old and decaying – that is the fashion of this world. A significant part of “newness of life” is preparing for the passing of the natural order, and the induction of the new heavens and the new earth. When a person – any person, or a church – any church, becomes absorbed with here and now, they have veered off of the strait and narrow way, and are headed for ultimate destruction. That is just the way it is.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 28 of 50

THE END OF TEARS

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes . . . ” (Verse 4a, Rev 21:1-8)

" . . . and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (NKJV). What child of God does not rejoice to read these words! Tears will not simply cease to flow, God will "WIPE AWAY every tear." Until this is accomplished, the tears of the righteous are carefully stored in God's own "bottle," and are written in His book – “Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book? (Psa 56:8). O child of the King, none of your tears have been shed in vain! Once the Lord told Hezekiah, “I have seen thy tears” (2 Kgs 20:5). During his affliction Job said, “My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God” (Job 16:20). There are people who are backslidden of whom it is said, “Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure” (Psa 80:5).

Jesus once promised, "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Lk 6:21). That day is surely coming! Often, like David, we "drench" our "couch" with our "tears" (Psa 6:6). They are an expression of the futility that characterizes our flesh. Were we able to control everything about us, as some liars claim, we would have no tears at all. Our tears are the proof we are not now in control; we are not yet “present with the Lord” in the way that has been determined (2 Cor 5:8), we have not yet been “glorified”(Rom 8:29-30), and have not yet finished our race (1 Cor 9:24; Heb 12:1-2). As long as we are in the world, we must keep the faith (2 Tim 4:7), fight the good fight of faith (1 Cor 6:12), perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1), resist the devil (James 4:7), and “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11). Our present circumstance is conducive to tears, which everyone living by faith knows very well.

Sometimes tears are our food "night and day," as we are not able to get away from them: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat

day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? (Psa 42:1-3). Even in the service of the King, Paul sometimes wrote to believers "with many tears" (2 Cor 2:4). In Ephesus, the Apostle "ceased not to warn every one night and day WITH TEARS" (Acts 20:31). He was even thoughtful about the "tears" of Timothy the young evangelist (2 Tim 1:4). Often the righteous weep as they anxiously wait for the coming of the Lord, dwelling among the indifferent, the casual, and those who are in the grip of "the sleep of death" (Psa 13:3). There are times when the godly, under oppression of varied kinds, "cry out night and day" for God to right wrongs, and vindicate His people (Lk 18:7).

Regardless of their volume or frequency while we are "in the body" (2 Cor 5:6; Heb 13:7, in the world to come God will "wipe away every tear from their eyes!" In this world, we wipe tears. In the one to come, they are wiped "AWAY." By this, the Spirit means the things that occasioned the tears will no longer be remembered. Too, the total affect of those occasions will be removed from us – sorrow, disappointment, unwanted failures, hard experiences with infirmities, and experiencing being forsaken (2 Tim 4:16). Because this is such an essential matter, it is repeated two times in this book. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes . . . God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev 7:17; 21:4). Isaiah spoke of this blessed time also. "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa 25:8). This circumstance is much desired by those living by faith.

This, then, speaks of the affect of life in this world upon us. All such affects will be removed. Hear it again, and rejoice in the truth of it. "The Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces."

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 29 of 50

THE END OF DEATH

" . . . and there shall be no more death . . ." (Verse 4, Rev 21:1-8)

With the advent of sin, death entered into the world. As it is written, "Wherefore, as by one man sin ENTERED into the world, and DEATH by sin" (Rom 5:12). Sin and death always travel and work with each other. There is no such thing as sin that is disassociated from death. Those enslaved to sin are described as "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). Both death in the body, and death within were caused by a single sin, committed one time (Rom 5:15-19). Those who attempt to minimize sin, or normalize it, simply do not know what they are doing. They have been duped by the devil.

Ruthlessly, death has reigned over the entire human race. The landscape of this world is cluttered with the graves of those "swallowed" up by death. There is no time or culture where death has not ruled the race. No one has been able to elude its rule but Enoch and Elijah (Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:11) – and their translation was the result of Divine action, not personal accomplishment. It is even said of the patriarchs who lived by faith, "these all DIED" (Heb 11:13). Presently, we face "the power of the grave" and its "sting" (1 Cor 15:55). We stand at the graves of the godly as

well as the ungodly, and mourn the loss of those with whom we have been united, and with whom we have labored.

No matter how long we live in this world, we do not grow accustomed to death. It is "the last enemy" to be destroyed – and it surely will be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26).

When Sarah died, the Scriptures tell us "Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" (Gen 23:2). When mighty Jacob died, a gigantic entourage came with Joseph and "they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days" (Gen 50:10). When Aaron, the saint of the Lord, died, Israel mourned for him for thirty days (Num 20:29). They did the same for Moses (Deut 34:8). All Israel lamented the death of Samuel (1 Sam 28:3). Those whose lives have proved an advantage for the faithful are sorely missed when they die – and they DO die! Although they go to be with the Lord, the wake of their death leaves tears and sorrow behind them, as well as thankfulness and joy for their labors.

When Stephen, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, died at the hands of God's enemies, "devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him" (Acts 8:2). It was apparent to them that they had sustained a great loss in the death of Stephen. I have known a few such people in my lifetime – people whose death created a sort of void that caused sorrow.

But the appointed time is coming when there will be "no more death." God Himself will be the plague of death (Hos 13:14), and its "sting" will be forever removed (1 Cor 15:55). The curse enforced in Eden will finally be dissipated, praise the Lord (Gen 2:17; 3:19). Until then, there are no exceptions to this: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27).

There is much involved in the removal of death. For those who die in the Lord (Rev 14:13), there will be no more vanity, futility, or hopelessness in any form – all the offspring of death. The tendency to fear will be removed, as it is a sister to death. There will be no more fading glory, deterioration in any form, or any kind of separation. For the saints of God, there will be no decline in any form – in body or in mind. There will be no such thing as recovery, renewal, or retrieval. There will be no graves or cemeteries when there is "no more death."

Jesus spoke of those who would be worthy to obtain the world to come: "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: NEITHER CAN THEY DIE ANY MORE: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Lk 20:35-36). The worthiness of which our Lord spoke is not a mere human attainment. Jesus referred to a very few souls in the dead church of Sardis who were "worthy." "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have NOT DEFILED THEIR GARMENTS; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev 3:4). Such people took seriously the admonition, "touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor 6:17). They believed what the Spirit said: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, NOT UNCLEAN PERSON, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph 5:5).

How glorious the announcement! "There shall no longer be any death!" (NASB). Not only will

there be no more death, all of the things that accompany it will also forever pass from us. That is worth preparing for – and that preparation is mandatory!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 30 of 50

THE END OF SORROW

“ . . . and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow . . . for the former things are passed away.”(Verse 4, Rev 21:1-8).

Other versions read, “neither mourning” (ASV), and “anguish (sorrow and mourning)” (AMPLIFIED). The word from which “sorrow” is translated {pen'-thos} has the following lexical meaning: “an outward expression of sorrow grief, lamentation, mourning” (FRIBERG).

Mourning, or sorrow, is an offspring of faith. It is a sister to repentance, and is characterized by grief. In this world, those who mourn because of a regret over sin, are promised a blessing. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt 5:4). Among other things, that means mourning creates a condition that requires comfort and bolstering. It depletes our resources, and weakens our soul.

Speaking of sorrow – even "godly sorrow" – the Spirit says, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Cor 7:10). There is a sense in which this is the type of sorrow or mourning meant. By saying there will be "no more sorrow," or "mourning," the voice means there will be no more occasion for it. There will be no need for the confession of sin, for sin will have been forever banished. No more debilitating weaknesses. No personal unwilling thoughts to be cast down. None will ever again be taken captive by Satan, nor will there ever be frustrated desires and ambitions. As Isaiah said, "they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa 35:10). The sorrow produced by the awareness that we "come short of the glory of God" will forever be removed from us (Rom 3:23). Never again will we find "another law" in our members, "warring against the law of our mind" (Rom 7:23). There will be no more mourning, or sorrow!

But there are other forms of sorrow, or mourning. When Sarah died, Abraham “mourned” for her (Gen 23:2). When Aaron died, the congregation of Israel mourned (Num 20:29), doing the same when Moses died (Deut 34:8). When Uriah the Hittite was killed, his wife, Bathsheba, mourned (2 Sam 1:26). When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the gates burned with fire, he “mourned certain days” (Neh 1:4). When Job was enduring a great trial and affliction he said, “I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation” (Job 30:28). David confessed, “I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long” (Psa 38:6).

Who does not prefer happiness over mourning? However, alas, sin has birthed mourning in mankind. It is part and parcel of life, bitter and difficult though it may be. Mourning is an

expression of futility, when we can do nothing about the situation – although it is not without hope. Speaking for myself, I mourned when, as a young man, I faced the unjust indignation of a denomination. I mourned when my little twin girls were diagnosed with epilepsy, suffering multiple seizures daily. I mourned when my wife died. I mourned when two of my daughters died. I mourned when one of my twin sons was found to have a massive brain tumor. I mourned when I lost all of my financial resources. I mourned when my mother died. I mourned when my father died. I mourn under the weight of a care for the churches. O, I know about mourning!

But I also know out comfort, about encouragement, and about the sustaining power of hope. When the night is dark, and human experience is painful, the thought of the promise, “there shall be no more mourning,” enables me to keep my head above the waves, and sing the sons of Zion. For those who live by faith and walk in the Spirit, there is this sure promise: “there shall be no more mourning!” Praise God, and run the race with patience!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 31 of 50

THE END OF CRYING

" . . . and there shall be no more . . . crying." (Verse 4, Rev 21:1-8)

Since the transgression of Adam, there has never been a day when the voice of crying was not rising from the earth. The word "cry" does not mean shedding tears, although tears accompany such cries. This is strong longing that erupts from the mouth—i.e., a cry for help, or crying out. When Israel was in harsh Egyptian bondage and “sighed by reason of the bondage . . . they CRIED, and their CRY came up unto God by reason of the bondage” (Ex 2:23). God responded, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have HEARD THEIR CRY by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows” (Ex 3:7).

Jesus said of the Almighty God, “And shall not God avenge His own elect, which CRY NIGHT AND DAY unto Him, though He bear long with them?” (Lk 18:7). The Psalmist testified, “This poor man CRIED, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles” (Psa 34:6).

John saw a vision of those who had been “slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (Rev 6:9). Although they no longer in the body or in the earth, they were crying: “And THEY CRIED with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:10). For them, the time had not yet come when there was “no more crying!”

When Jesus approached His death, He cried out to God. Of that occasion it is written, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with STRONG CRYING and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb 5:7). Who can forget His words from the cross, "Jesus CRIED with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken

Me?" (Matt 27:46). "Crying" is no small word.

Often the Psalmist would say, "I cried unto the Lord" (Psa 3:4; 120:1; 142:1), or "I cried unto Thee" (30:2; 31:22; 119:146; 130:1; 142:5). One time, when he was surrounded by his enemies, Jehoshaphat "CRIED OUT, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them to depart from him" (2 Chron 18:31).

Crying speaks of times of helplessness, when fervent calls are sent up to God for strength and protection. If you have not experienced such times, you will! There will be times when you can do absolutely nothing about your situation – like Israel in bondage; like young Joseph in the pit (Gen 37:20); like Jeremiah who was also in a pit (Jer 38:6); like Paul being stoned (Acts 7:58-59); like Paul and fellow passengers in a fierce storm at sea (Acts 27:14-20); like Jonah in the belly of a fish (Jonah 2:2). There are times when money will not help; times when human aptitude is useless; times when the most prodigious thinkers in the world are stymied. There was a time of which Paul testified: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor 1:8-9).

Yes, there are times when the elect of God – who are "kept by the power of God" (1 Pet 1:5), and for whom God works "all things together for their good" (Rom 8:28) – when there is simply nothing to do but cry out to the Lord – even crying out "day and night" (Lk 18:7)!

By saying there is "no more crying," therefore, the Spirit means there will never again be a time of crisis! Trouble will never again be confronted. No one will experience outward or inward storms, or encounter fearful adversaries, or be faced with an end of their own strength. There will never again be a time when we will have to fight, resist, reject, or cast anything or anyone down.

Who is not able to see the blessedness of this marvelous promise. We must hear it often. Tell it, preacher! Declare it evangelist! Expound it, teacher! Let the saints of the most high God know that they are headed for an environment in which there will never again be the disturbing wave of trouble, or the dissipation of strength! Let the echo float down to your heart: "and there shall be no more crying!"

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 32 of 50

THE END OF PAIN

" . . . neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Verse 4, Rev 21:1-8)

Other versions read, "There shall be no more pain" (NKJV), "pain will be no more" (NRSV),

“pain will exist no longer” (CSB)

The word “pain” is translated from a word {pon'-os} that means, “equivalent to great trouble, intense desire” (THAYER), and “as distress caused by hard, difficult circumstances pain, affliction, anguish” (FRIBERG).

There are at least two kinds of pain, and neither of them is easy to bear. Pain can be in the body or the soul. When Job was afflicted, he had both kinds of "pain." Because of sin, the woman experiences pain in giving birth (Gen 3:16; Psa 48:6). When Joseph was bound with fetters of iron, he was in pain and hurt (Psa 105:18). Paul confessed that in his labors for the Lord, he experienced "weariness and painfulness" (2 Cor 11:27).

In Scripture there are birth “pains” (1 Sam 4:19), pain in the flesh (Job 14:22), pain upon the bed (Job 33:19), and pain of the heart, or the inward man (Psa 55:4; Jer 4:19). Pain is associated with great fear (Ezek 30:9), mortality (Rom 8:22), and with chastening (Psa 73:14-16). Pain is hurt, anguish, torment, affliction, annoyance, or troubling – of any kind, whether in man’s physical or spiritual constitution. It can be in the unseen part of man; i.e. the heart (Psa 55:4; Jer 4:19), in the spirit (John 13:21), and in outward circumstances as well (2 Cor 4:8; 7:2). There is pain in the body, like Joseph’s feet being “hurt” with fetters (Psa 105:18). Job experienced pain both within and without: “But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn” (Job 14:22).

Once, when Jesus came to raise Lazarus from the dead, He saw the tumult of the weeping and mourning multitude, and it pained Him: “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled” (John 11:33). Paul was daily troubled because of the condition of the churches (1 Cor 11:28).

Speaking of inward pain, David once said, "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me" (Psa 55:4-5). When pondering the coming judgment of his people, Jeremiah said "I am pained at my very heart" (Jer 4:19). How blessed it is to contemplate the time when there will be "no more pain."

I have been with kindred and brethren when they experienced great pain. I have witnessed them gather strength to call upon the name of the Lord as the devil sought to restrain them. I have joined them in their prayers for relief. I also personally know the distracting influence of pain – both within and without. Pain of any kind, inward or outward, is diverting and hard to bear – but there is grace to do so.

Let no man or woman of God hide from us the glories of what is to come! When our tears flow, tell us of the time when God will wipe them all away! When we confront death face to face, and even walk into the valley of its shadow, tell us of the time when death will be no more! When we sorrow and mourn, and comfort is difficult to appropriate, tell us of the time when there will be no more sorrow! When we sense the futility of our own strength, and circumstances drive us to cry out to God, tell us of the time when all crying will cease, and we will never again come to the end of our strength. And when pain strikes us down in body or soul, and we are tempted to

despair, tell us of the time when there will be no more pain! Tell us when there will be no more distress, hurt, or anguish. How we need to hear these things. Faith, which "comes by hearing," requires that they be heard – and grasped!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 33 of 50

THE FORMER THINGS

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for THE FORMER THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY. ” (Verse 4, Rev 21:1-8)

“ . . . THE FORMER THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY!” The magnitude of this expression is remarkable. The Spirit gathers all of the entire temporal order – nature, trials, and disheartening experience – and wraps it in a single phrase: "former things." When all things are made new, none of those things will exist any more. In our text, they served their purpose, and thus "passed away." They could not remain a single second after their purpose was fulfilled.

Isaiah adds something significant to the phrase. "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former SHALL NOT BE REMEMBERED OR COME TO MIND" (Isa 65:17, NKJV). It is good to know that the memory of difficulties in this world will not haunt us in the one to come. There will be no recollection of injustices, persecution, or even personal setbacks. Not only will the "former things" pass away, they will not be remembered.

The yoke of trouble we are called to bear is only for a little while. As for those who trouble us, ponder this blessed Psalm. "For yet a little while and the wicked SHALL BE NO MORE; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But IT SHALL BE NO MORE" (Psa 37:10, NKJV). When the light of the glory of God floods all things, all adversity, with its memory, will be ended, and never again come to mind! Purity of heart and mind will be total.

A WORD FROM THE THRONE

"And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new . . . (Verse 5, ASV). With great power, the Spirit has directed our attention away from the warfare. The burdens of both life and death are not now addressed. We are not warned about the devil, the beast, the false prophet, Babylon, or the great harlot. At this point in the vision, churches are not upbraided because they have left their first love, tolerated false teachers, or for being dead. No congregation is rebuked for defiling their garments or being lukewarm. All such things have passed away. Either they were resolved by God's grace, or God will have done what He said He would do to impenitent people.

The net of the Kingdom has been drawn in, and the fish have been separated. There is no more prayer, no more faith, and no more hope. Now, in our text, the objective of all those things has been realized, and we are forever with the Lord. Tears have been wiped away, sorrows drowned

in a flood of joy, and death swallowed up of life. Our bottled tears have been exchanged for shouts of joy. What heart is there that is not touched by the scene!

FROM THE THRONE

Now "He that sitteth on the throne" speaks. He will not speak of the past conflict, but of the blessedness of what is ahead. While we remain in this world, He will speak to faith providing spiritual substance for us to grasp. This is the throne that is presently ruling the universe. Your spiritual life was commanded from this throne. It is the source of your sustenance and the reason your adversaries have not prevailed over you. The place where our Lord sits is not an easy chair, or a footstool. It is a throne. It is not a place of service, but a position of rule.

Throughout this book, we have heard of and from this throne. Holy associations have been made with it. A brief recollection of some of them will underscore the power of what we are about to hear. These are associations with the throne of God.

Victory (3:21)
Awesome sight (4:2-6)
Honor and glory (4:9)
Providence and control (5:1,6,7)
Fear and dread (6:16)
Salvation (7:9-10)
Worship (7:11)
Service (7:15)
Care (7:17)
Prayer and attention to it (8:3)
Singing (14:3)
Faultlessness (14:5)
Finality and fulfillment (16:17)
Praise (19:5)
The passing of heaven and earth (20:11).

Now this throne is a "throne of grace," dispensing what is needed to safely navigate through the difficult straits of this world. It is a throne with which we are familiar by both experience and Scripture. We have learned to trust what comes from this throne, neither doubting nor questioning it. Do not think of trouble, think of the Throne! Do not think of disappointment, think of the Throne! Lift up your head, weary pilgrim, you are living and moving, and having your being under the administration of He who sits upon the Throne!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 34 of 50

“I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW”

“And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” (Verse 5, Rev 21:1-8)

Here is a word the saints need to hear – and it comes from the enthroned Lord of glory. It is spoken to those in tribulation (Rev 1:9), and is designed to bring a blessing (Rev 1:3). The Lord who sits “upon the throne” calls for our attention: "BEHOLD!" This not word that is primarily addressed to those IN glory, but to those who are fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12).

Through Isaiah, God foretold a new creation. “Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them" (Isa 42:9). And again, “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isa 43:19). In Isaiah’s time, that was a prophecy of “the day of salvation” in which we are living. In the Revelation, the promise of making “all things new” is for those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 11:17), been baptized into Him (Gal 3:27), and are running the race that has been set before them (Heb 12:1-2). This is a promise for those who are being “saved by a hope” (Rom 8:24) that is firmly anchored in heaven (Heb 6:19).

Much of what Isaiah prophesied has been fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Our God has made a "way in the wilderness," raising up a highway upon which we can travel to glory (Isa 35:8; Heb 10:22). After making us a "NEW creation in Christ Jesus" (2 Cor 5:17), He surrounded us with newness – glorious newness. We have been given a "NEW song" (Psa 33:3), a "NEW name" (Isa 62:2), and a "NEW spirit" (Ezek 11:19). By His grace we have a "NEW heart" (Ezek 18:31), a "NEW man" (Eph Col 3:10), and a "NEW commandment" (John 13:34).

As great as these things are, THEY ARE REALLY A PLEDGE OF WHAT IS TO COME. They are to our ultimate destiny what the grapes of Eschol were to Canaan (Num 13:20-24).

Whatever needs to be made new WILL be made new. Whatever sin has infected, God will restore to wholeness. Whatever tends to grow old will be made new. When our bodies are fatigued and grow inadequate, remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" When our affections are sluggish and must be prodded with exhortations, remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" When you experience persecution and opposition, and your enemies seem to prevail, remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" When we experience inner warfare, finding a recalcitrant law within our members (Rom 7:23), remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" When we find ourselves doing what we do not want to do, contending with unwanted thoughts (Rom 7:16-19; Tit 2:11-12), remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" If any one experiences members of his own house becoming his foes (Matt 10:36), remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" If you are called to endure the loss of loved ones, remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" When tears of sorrow and repentance fill your eyes, remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" When our hearts are slow to understand these precious things of God, remember: "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!"

There is NOTHING that will not be made new. "I make ALL THINGS new!" There is not an unpleasantry of life, or a frustration of effort, that will not be changed. "I MAKE ALL THINGS

NEW!" Let this truth warm your heart and buoy up your spirit! Allow it to strengthen hands that hang down and the feeble knees (Heb 12:12)! Better days are coming. "I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" Now, there is something to think about!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 35 of 50

WRITE IT DOWN!

“And he said unto me, WRITE: for these words are true and faithful.” (Verse 5, Rev 21:1-8)

In the book of the Revelation, John is told to “WRITE” no less than thirteen times. For me, this underscores the importance of the Revelation.

1. "What you see, WRITE in a book and send it to the seven churches" (1:11).
2. "WRITE the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (1:19).
3. "To the angel of the church of Ephesus WRITE" (2:1).
4. "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna WRITE" (2:8).
5. "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos WRITE" (2:12).
6. "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira WRITE" (2:18).
7. "And to the angel of the church in Sardis WRITE" (3:1).
8. "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia WRITE" (3:7).
9. "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans WRITE" (3:14).
10. WRITE: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on" (14:13).
12. "WRITE: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (19:9).
13. "Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me, WRITE, for these words are true and faithful" (21:5).

If you are ever tempted to question the outcome of your faith, remember "these words are faithful and true!" It is not possible for you to believe them and be disappointed. They have been written BECAUSE they are faithful and true.

When Moses was given the Law, God said, “WRITE thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (Ex 34:27). When the Lord revealed the curses of the Law, He told Moses, “And the priest shall WRITE these curses in a book” (Num 5:23). The “words of the covenant,” which were “the ten commandments” (Ex 34:28), were WRITTEN by God Himself on tables of stone (Ex 31:18). When Israel had gone over Jordan, entering into the promised land, they were instructed to build an altar of stones upon which no tool was laid. Then they were to “WRITE upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly” (Deut 27:8).

God commanded Isaiah to “WRITE ” (Isa 8:1; 30:8). Jeremiah was told to WRITE in a book what God revealed to him (Jer 30:2; 36:2,28). Ezekiel was told to WRITE (Ezek 43:11).

Habakkuk was told to WRITE (Hab 2:2). From Joshua to Malachi, the words “it is written” occur seventeen times. Twenty-six times they are found in the Gospels, and thirty-seven times from Acts through Revelation.

Always referring to words inspired by God, the word “READ” is found no less than seventy times in Scripture. The Jewish culture was one that involved reading – reading the words of God. They read in the home (Deut 6:9; 11:20), and in the synagogue (Acts 13:27; 15:21).

Some have imagined that men like Peter and John were illiterate because their enemies referred to them as being “ignorant and unlearned” (Acts 4:13). But nothing could be further from the truth. Their association with God REQUIRED that they be readers. Their enemies called them “ignorant” because Jesus’ disciples were not taught in their schools – BUT THEY WERE TAUGHT.

In keeping with this Divinely established custom, those who claim identity with God through Jesus Christ must be people of the Book – knowing and being conversant with the Word of God. For God to move holy men to write (2 Pet 1:21), and for “the record God has given of His Son to be written (1 John 5:10-11), and for letters to be written to the churches and the godly, with Jesus even commanding writing to be delivered to His churches – in view of those circumstances, the ignorance of God’s Word is evidence of an utterly deplorable condition.

Who is there, with even a modicum or acquaintance with the professing church, that is not keenly aware of the staggering degree of ignorance concerning the Word of God that is extant in it? This miserable ignorance is what has allowed the proliferation of false teachers and false doctrines. Although Timothy was acquainted with Scripture from a youth (2 Tim 3:15), we have a generation of young people in the professed church that, with few exceptions, have no noticeable familiarity with the Word of God at all. If you know some of these exceptions, encourage them, and use them, for they are like precious jewels in the sight of the Lord.

Every professing preacher must make it his determination to be certain that those to whom he speaks are becoming experts in handling the text of Scripture. Preachers need to back off from the counseling business, problem resolution, and behavioral correction, and get down to the business of preaching the Word, being instant in season and out of season (1 Tim 4:2). The words “It is written” must come to have great weight among the professed people of God. As I write this brief dissertation, that kind of preacher is exceedingly rare. Enough of singers who cannot sing, and preachers who do not preach.

If you know of a faithful preacher, listen to him, encourage him, and pray for him to speak boldly and insightfully. Tell him he is appreciated, and oppose those who oppose him. Hold up his hands like Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses (Ex 17:10-13).

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 36 of 50

THE WATER OF LIFE, #1

“And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Verse 6, Rev 21:1-8)

HE SAID UNTO ME

“And He said unto me . . . ” (ASV). The worth of being addressed by the One sitting upon the throne cannot be overstated. It tells us something about the Holy One. Surely this passage confirms the statement of Isaiah. "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa 57:15).

The Great Sovereign of the universe is speaking. In a sense He is speaking indirectly. When John accounts for his reception of the Revelation, he writes, “The REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, which GOD GAVE UNTO HIM, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it BY HIS ANGEL unto HIS SERVANT JOHN” (Rev 1:1).

Traced back to its ultimate Source, The Revelation is a word from God. In order to get it to us, God gave it to Jesus Christ. Then Jesus delivered it to an angel, who in turn delivered it to John. Now John delivers it to the churches, as the Holy Spirit directs Him to do (Rev 2:7,11,17,23,29; 3:6,13,22; 22:16).

John writes, “HE said unto me.” The reference is, as stated in verse five, “HE that sat upon the throne.” This “throne” is mentioned thirty-nine times in the Revelation. It is the seat of all authority – the throne from which edicts concerning the earth and those dwelling upon it are issued. It is categorically called “the throne of God” (Rev 7:15; 14:5; 22:1,3). The glorified Christ said of this throne, “I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev 3:21). In a visual depiction of the doctrine, John saw Jesus “caught up unto God, AND TO HIS THRONE” (Rev 12:5).

God, who sat upon the throne, gave this word to Jesus, who was seated with Him on the throne. The glorified Jesus delivered it to an angel, who, in turn, was dispatched to John on the Isle of Patmos.

Not so much as a syllable was altered in the transmission. The message was not mitigated, diminished, or altered. That is precisely why it is said at the close of The Revelation, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev 22:18-19).

As clear as those words are, men have treated this book as though it was a literary toy, to be tossed about in their intellectual games and philosophical assumptions. They have added their opinions to the book, and ignored clear statements made in this book. Some who are in the churches have ignored this book, saying they cannot understand it – even though the message of

this book contains these words: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev 1:3).

The reason some cannot understand the book is that the things they have been taught conflict with it. The book simply does not fit into their theology – and that is a circumstance of such gravity that I fear to attempt to diagnose it.

God said the words of our text. They were delivered to Jesus, who did not alter them. He delivered them to an angel, who also did not alter them. The angel delivered them to John, who also did not alter them. To that point, everyone handling this word knew its Source, and did not dare tamper with it.

Not only was John's spirit revived by the words given to him, but all those who read and believe them are revived. These words are pregnant with spirit and life. We must not come to them with an academic magnifying class, language expertise, and imagined theological precision. Whatever part those things play in the good fight of faith, there comes a time when they must be laid aside. Only faith can grasp the words of Him who sits upon the throne!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 37 of 50

THE WATER OF LIFE, #2

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (Verse 6, Rev 21:1-8)

THEY ARE COME TO PASS: “IT IS DONE”

"It is done!" What a word is this! Only the Lord can speak in this manner, declaring things are "done" even before they have come to pass. Faith needs this kind of affirmation. It needs to hear the surety of the things upon which hope is founded. We "do not know what a day will bring forth" (Prov 27:1) – but we DO know the outcome of all things! We do not know if we will live or die by tomorrow (James 4:15) – but we DO know how everything will turn out! All of our foes will be vanquished, and all things will be made new! The Lord has declared it!

There is not the slightest chance this will not come to pass. The Lord of glory says, "IT IS DONE!" He has revealed what He has determined, and nothing can change that! Hear the word of the Lord. "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure . . . Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it" (Isa 46:9-11, NKJV). In the history of the world, no false God has ever made such a boast!

It is as though the Lord hurls the word in the devil's face, challenging him to overturn it, or cause

one jot or tittle of it to fail. At the very beginning, the Lord told the devil what He was going to do (Gen 3:15) – AND HE DID IT! He announced to Abraham that He was going to bless "all families of the earth" (Gen 12:3) – AND HE DID IT! He revealed He would cause a virgin to conceive and bring forth a Son, and that the government would be placed upon His shoulder (Isa 7:14; 9:6-7) – AND HE DID IT! He made known that He would give the Messiah "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom" (Dan 7:14) – AND HE DID IT!

Now, in the vision given to John, the Lord has taken us to the end of time – the conclusion of all things. He has declared the cessation of all trouble (Rev 21:4; 22:3), the consignment of the devil and all of his hosts to the lake of fire (Rev 19:20; 20:10,15), and the glorious triumph of the saints (Rev 12:10-11).

He calls upon believers to peruse everything that has been contaminated by sin, then tells them: "I make all things new!" Then, to secure the matter to our heart, He affirms, "IT IS DONE!" Speaking from the same perspective the Lord says elsewhere, "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3).

Why does the Lord speak in this manner? It is because faith requires this kind of word. Faith cannot take hold of ambiguity or things uncertain. Possibilities cannot sustain faith. It needs a sure word from God. We do need to know what to do – what the Lord "requires" of us (Mic 6:8). It has been revealed (Rom 12:1-21; Col 3:1-2; 1 Tim 6:12; Heb 12:12, etc). However, we do not live by the commandments, as much as we love them, and as necessary as they are. Faith thrives on Divine affirmation. "Your sins ARE forgiven you for his name's sake . . . you ARE not in the flesh but in the Spirit . . . you ARE the temple of God . . . but ye ARE washed, but ye ARE sanctified, but ye ARE justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God . . . you ARE no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," etc. (1 John 2:12; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:11; Eph 2:19). Faith takes hold of those affirmations and sustains us. We "live by faith" (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38), not obedience. It is faith that guarantees obedience.

Now faith hears the word, "IT IS DONE," and rests confidently upon it. It reasons that it is just a little while, and we will ever be with the Lord. As it is written, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb 10:37). Now, there is something to think about!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 38 of 50

ALPHA AND OMEGA

THE WATER OF LIFE, #3

"And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." (Verse 6, Rev 21:1-8)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Jesus has said this before (1:8,11), and will yet say it again (22:13). This is a word that needs to be riveted in our spirits. It speaks of our Lord's total control of things. The "Alpha" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and the "Omega" is the last. In this case, the alphabet stands for all that God has determined to do. It is what brings rationality and order to everything. There is no Divine determination that is not included in from Alpha to Omega," or "A to Z." The Lord controls and orchestrates it all! Some cannot receive that, but their persuasion has nothing whatsoever to do with the forming of God's will, the execution of it, or its finalization. The credit for salvation in its entirety goes to God (Rev 7:10; 19:1).

In the highest sense of the word, nothing has occurred, or can occur, outside the perimeter of God's will. The worst atrocity ever perpetrated by mankind was the death of God's Son. In that single deed, the wickedness of man was unveiled and confirmed. Yet, when assessing that wicked deed of men, the Spirit constrained Peter to say to the guilty parties, "Him, being delivered BY THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Note, Peter does not refer to God knowing before what they would do, but to them carrying out what God had DETERMINED to be done. Later, the church, joined together in one mind, said of that event, "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do WHATSOEVER THY HAND AND THY COUNSEL DETERMINED BEFORE TO BE DONE" (Acts 4:27-28). If this is not so, then men overturned the will of God, and I will say forthrightly, and without any equivocation, that anyone so persuaded is a fool.

But all of this is pointless if we make no connection with the good fight of faith. We must believe the Lord is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end concerning the destiny of His people also. He purposed their salvation (Rom 8:29-30). He provided the Savior who saved them (Gal 4:4-5; 1 John 4:9). He saved them (2 Tim 1:19). He keeps them (1 Pet 1:5). He will have them gathered together (Matt 24:31; Mk 13:27). And, He will bring them to glory (Heb 2:10). The glorified Christ shepherds His people (Heb 13:20), teaches them (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20), intercedes for them (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), and will "present [them] to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:27). He is, in every sense of the saying, "the Alpha and the Omega."

In this affirmation, the Lord is assuring our hearts that everything is in His control, and that He is ruling in our favor. When He is finished with the devil, He will cast him into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). When the purpose for the present heaven and earth has been completed, they will pass away, and the new heaven and earth will appear. When our warfare is finished, it will pass away, never again to be remembered. Tears will be wiped away, and death, sorrow, crying, and pain will come to an end. Everything will be made new – totally and refreshingly new. By Divine determination, IT IS DONE, guaranteeing the purpose of God will be gloriously completed in every sense of the word! You can count on that!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

THE WATER OF LIFE, #4

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (Verse 6, Rev 21:1-8)

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Now our attention is turned to the individual whose soul has been nurtured by grace. It is with great sadness that I must acknowledge the rarity of this type of person within the average church. Notwithstanding that condition, this is the ONLY kind of person that has any promise whatsoever of glory. Those who are not prepared to dwell forever with the Lord will not do so. Those who have not cultured an appetite for the water of life by drinking what has been given to those who live by faith, will never have access to it. For those who have NOT lived “unto” Christ (2 Cor 5:15), lived by faith (Heb 10:38), and walked in the Spirit (Gal 5:16), their thirst will never be assuaged – not in any sense. They will never be satisfied, gratified, or refreshed in any way. However, for those who have lived in fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), they will never thirst, never be dissatisfied, never be famished, and never lack refreshment – never!

The word "athirst," or "thirsty," is not a casual word. The word means to suffer from thirst, long for earnestly, and have a strong desire for. Jesus used this very word when pronouncing a blessing upon His people. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt 5:6). It is certain that these are the ONLY ones who will realize eternal satisfaction. If, in this world, an appetite and thirst for the Lord is not awakened, there is no hope of being forever with Him. When one contemplates the condition of the contemporary church, this is a most disturbing thought.

David thrice expressed this type of strong thirst. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God . . . My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water . . . My soul longs for You like a thirsty land" (Psa 42:2; 63:1; 143:6). If David could express such strong longings BEFORE grace brought salvation and the Spirit was given to men, what type of longings should be expected today? The truth is that David so far excels the average churchman that is it mind-boggling – and less was all that was available to him, while “more” and “abundance” is available to us.

One of the strongest affirmations of this type of thirst is expressed by Paul. It is a standard in the New Covenant. "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3:7-11, NKJV). That properly depicts "him that is athirst."

This promise cannot be overstated. At once you should be able to see it is largely irrelevant in

the nominal church. Furthermore, where it is found, it is rarely nourished and encouraged. The individual with a thirst like this is such a misfit in the average congregation that he is looked upon as strange and fanatical.

But the Lord Jesus sees such souls, and speaks to them with power. He knows their hearts, and how they long for His presence and blessing. These people confess, "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psa 84:10). Whatever the world offers them is paltry next to the promises of God. They will forfeit all of the world for but a moment in the courts of the Lord. That is what it means to be "thirsty."

Jesus was attracted to such people when He walked amongst us. On one occasion, during a great feast, Jesus stood and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38). Here is a unique aspect of the Kingdom. The thirsty person, after drinking, becomes a secondary resource. "OUT of his belly," or inmost being, will "flow rivers of living water." The drinking begins now, but will be brought to the level of thorough satisfaction in the world to come. How thirsty are you?

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 40 of 50

THE WATER OF LIFE, #5

“And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (Verse 6, Rev 21:1-8)

DIRECT KNOWLEDGE

Notice the glorious expression. "I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely." This is a promise of drinking from the Source, without receiving knowledge second hand. Now, in this world, the water comes to us through appointed means. The Scriptures, ministers, and edifying assemblies serve up the water. It is true, we draw from the well within, but what we have is nothing to be compared with the "FOUNTAIN of the water of life." There is more abundance for us. Presently, we are limited by our humanity, primarily because we are in a corruptible body.

“The fountain of the water of life freely” is an expression denoting thorough satisfaction – what is longed for is experienced in abundance. In this world, things for which a strong appetite exists may only be enjoyed in comparatively small measures. Often there is not an abundant supply of such things. Too, sometimes our appetites are not adequate to ingest large quantities of the thing that is desired.

But it is not so in the world to come! There, we will have the capacity to receive an abundance.

The Lord will never say, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Nor, indeed, will the words ever again be heard, "Melchizedek, of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (Heb 5:10-11).

The word "freely" means gratuitously. That is, He gives it because He wants to give it, and there is no charge. Here is the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa 55:1).

Suffice it to say, a religion that does not develop and sustain a voracious appetite for the things of God is a dangerous one. It will, unless overcome, keep a person out of heaven. Rest assured, there will be no one with the Lord who has not fervently desired to be with Him. Those with small appetites are tottering on the edge of a Christless eternity. They are not to be envied! The criticality of the situation is seen in the staggering multitudes of people with minuscule spiritual appetites in the modern church. In fact, there does not appear to be proportionately many "Christian" congregations that are serving up spiritual fare for people with healthy spiritual appetites.

You will observe that the promise assumes the existence of spiritual thirst – a strong desire for what the Lord has to give. That thirst begins in this world, but will not be fully satisfied until we are divested of our bodies and the carnal things associated with them, and the present heaven and earth pass away. Then we will be able to drink freely and enjoy complete satisfaction. Too, that condition will never end! A copious and unending supply for thirsty souls. What a blessed prospect for those who have developed a hearty appetite for eternal things!

INHERITING ALL THINGS

"He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev 21:7). The promises here expressed are not exaggerations. If anything, they are understated because of the infirmity of our flesh. Yet, it is rare that one hears reference to these "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet 1:4). It is as though the Lord piles blessing upon blessing in His commitments to His people. To this point in the Revelation 21, twelve glorious commitments have been made.

1. No more separation from God: The tabernacle of God with men. (Rev 21:3a)
2. The unhindered and obvious presence of the Lord: God dwelling with men. (Rev. 21:3b)
3. The revelation of our relationship to God: The saints will be His people. (Rev 21:3c)
4. No more Mediator required: God Himself with them, being their God. (Rev 21:3d)
5. The impact of all sorrow, trouble, and sin removed: God will wipe away all tears. (Rev 21:4a)
6. No more separation in any sense. The cessation of death. (Rev 21:4b)
7. Grief, heartache, and all forms of lamentation ended: The end of sorrow. (Rev 21:4c)
8. The call for help, deliverance, or rescue, will never again be heard: No more crying. (Rev 21:4d)
9. Agony, grief and affliction will never again be experienced: The termination of pain. (Rev 21:4d)
10. All things associated with and contaminated by sin will be removed from sight and memory:

no more . . .” (Rev 21:4e)

11. The former things passed away. (Rev 21:4f)

12. All things contaminated by sin will be recreated: Everything made new. (Rev 21:5)

Limited understanding and secondary knowledge will never again be experienced: There will be free access for the thirsty to the fountain of living water.

Yet, the end is not yet! There will be a personal reward that will confirm the blessedness of the good fight of faith. The child of God will not simply receive some things. There will be no representative, or first fruit inheritance, like we experience while living by faith. Now we enjoy the "firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom 8:23). Then we will "inherit all things" (Rev 21:7).

This promise is exceedingly large! It includes the new earth (Psa 37:11), God Himself (Rom 8:17), and the Kingdom of God (Matt 25:34). Of old time, Hannah caught a glimpse of the magnitude of the saints' inheritance. In her prayer of thanksgiving for the birth of Samuel, she said the following. "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam 2:8). Isaiah spoke of those inheriting God's "mountains" (Isa 65:9). Paul reminded us "things to come" belong to the saints (1 Cor 3:22).

Also, "all things" include everything just mentioned. It will ALL be given to the INDIVIDUAL who overcomes by faith. Not one whit will be withheld from those who kept the faith and finished their course. Who, knowing this, is not willing to spend and be spent for the Lord? (2 Cor 12:15).

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 41 of 50

I WILL BE HIS GOD, AND HE WILL BE MY SON

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”
(Verse 7, Rev 21:1-8)

The PERSONAL aspect of glory needs to be seen. All of the saints will be there, to be sure. There will be aspects of glory that will be accentuated by the togetherness of the people of God. There are other facets of it, however, that are intensely personal. From a practical viewpoint, it will be just as though you are the only one there. There will be personal access to, and fellowship with, the Lord that has never before been experienced. In this world, we are only introduced to Divine fellowship. We have been "called into" it by grace (1 Cor 1:9). However, our present situation limits that fellowship to a significant degree. We are in a body incapable of being close to God. We are in a world that is at war with God. And we are in time, that eventually will be no more. But this will not be the case in the world to come!

Earlier, with an accent on the people of God, it was said, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with

MEN, and He will dwell with THEM, and THEY shall be His PEOPLE" (v 3). Now the promise becomes more personal: "and I will be HIS God, and he shall be My SON."

It is not that God will BEGIN to be our God, or that we will BEGIN to be His sons. We have already received "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father" (Rom 8:14-17). "NOW we are the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). Jesus is "bringing many sons to glory" – individuals who have already been adopted (Heb 2:10; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). But, as wonderful as this is, it is only introductory.

A CONDITIONAL SONSHIP

In this world, our sonship is conditional. This is because we have not yet been fully redeemed. We are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23). Until that occurs, we must be on guard, vigilant, and faithful.

There is a remarkable consistency in this representation.

1. Jesus associated being "children of the highest" with loving our enemies, doing good, lending, and hoping for nothing again – CONDITIONS (Lk 6:35).
2. Again, he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" – a CONDITION (Matt 5:9).
3. Those receiving Christ are given power to "become the sons of God" – a CONDITION (John 1:12).
4. Being "sons" and "daughters" of God is, in a sense, contingent upon separation from defiling influences – CONDITION (2 Cor 6:16-18).
5. Now, we are "all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" – a CONDITION (Gal 3:26).
6. Being the "sons of God without rebuke" is also related to us doing all things without murmuring and disputing – a CONDITION (Phil 2:15).

These things do not suggest we are NOT really sons of God. Nor, indeed, do they imply that we fall in and out of this relationship, never able to be confident of our status. What they do suggest is that our sonship cannot be taken for granted. It is something that must be demonstrated, or shown to be true. Our status of "sons of God" is held by faith. It is a real condition, but is conditioned upon faith, which overcomes all opposing influences (1 John 5:4-5).

In this world, Adam and Eve can be expelled from the very Garden in which God placed them (Gen 3:24). Israel can be thrown out of Canaan, after God placed them there (Jer 16:18; 24:5 Amos 7:11). Judas can "fall by transgression" after he was made an Apostle (Acts 1:25). Some can "depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim 4:1). We are in a war zone, and anyone who imagines there is no danger or jeopardy here has been lulled to sleep by unbelief.

But in the world to come, none of these conditions will exist. There will be no need for shield or armor. Vigilance and alertness, as we know it now, will not be required. No part of us will be unregenerated or require subordination. There will be no jeopardy, danger, or hostility in any form.

Thus, Divine fellowship will obtain a consistency and thoroughness that could not be experienced this side of the veil. That is the condition to which God refers when He says, "I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Then, there will be no "IF's." Until then, they are very present (Matt 6:14; 17:20; 8:31; 15:7,10,14; Rom 4:24; 6:5,8; 8:13; 1 Cor 11:31; 15:2; Gal 5:18; 6:9; Col 1:23; 1 Thess 4:14; 2 Tim 2:11,12; Heb 2:3; 3:6,7,14,15; 4:7; 10:26; 12:25; 1 Pet 1:17; 2 Pet 1:10; 1 John 1:6,7,8,9,10; 2:10; 4:12; 5:9,14,15).

Again, this by no means suggests believers live in uncertainty and fear. Faith produces an assurance and confidence that stabilizes the soul (Heb 11:1), enabling it to live triumphantly in "this present evil world" (1 John 5:4-5). There is such a thing as the "full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:22), and blessed is the person possessing it. But faith is the solitary means by which this is accomplished, and faith is not automatic.

Thus when the Lord says, "I will be his God, and he shall be My son," He means not a solitary influence will diminish or threaten that status. There will be no conditions attached to His presence, because there will be no liabilities or enemies with which to contend. There will be a personal identity with Him that can scarcely be imagined in this world, and it will be glorious! This, dear reader, is what God has called you to!

A FINAL WORD ABOUT THE UNGODLY

"But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Rev 21:8, ASV). This book began with the assessment of Christ's churches (Chapters two and three). Faults and deficiencies were found in them that jeopardized their relationship to Him. Some were close to being vomited up by Jesus, cast away from His presence. These conditions existed because we are in the realm of danger – an evil world. Now, lest His church become complacent, the Lord reminds us of the destiny of those who do not fit into the world to come. His words are stern and to the point. If believed, they will assist us in separating ourselves from contaminating influences.

None of the promises just recounted are for those now reviewed. Rather, there is a "part" reserved for them in the "lake of fire." That very circumstance reveals the abomination of these individuals.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 42 of 50

THE FEARFUL

“ But THE FEARFUL, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Verse 8, Rev 21:1-8)

These are not those who fear the Lord, but those with the "spirit of bondage UNTO FEAR" (Rom 8:15). Having the "spirit of fear," they hide themselves from God. They do not draw near to God because His is contrary to them. They are dominated by "the fear of death," and thus devote themselves to things that cause them to ignore that reality. Their dread of facing the Lord does not compel them to seek Him, but to ignore Him. They run from Him IN FEAR, rather than running to Him in reverence and godly fear.

“The fearful” are those who, even though in Christ there is the remedy for sin (Heb 9:26), the purging of the conscience (Heb 9:14), and the right to draw near to God by means of a new and living way (Heb 10:22), THE FEARFUL draw back, like Israel, asking that God speak no more to them: “let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Ex 20:19).

Their fearfulness "surprises" them. As it is written, “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (Isa 33:14). The idea is that such people do not think of God, live for Him, or plan to meet Him. When suddenly they are confronted with Him, or made aware of His Person, fearfulness rushed into them, thrusting them from Him.

THE FEARFUL are those who draw back instead of drawing near. As it is written, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man DRAW BACK, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back UNTO PERDITION; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:38-39). To say the least, that is an arresting word.

Salvation is calculated to make drawing near to God possible. The Gospel announces this can be done. Jesus still cries out to the multitudes, “Come unto Me” (Matt 11:28). Speaking as a man, this is such a serious matter with God, that He will, in the end, condemn those who did not draw near to Him. It is NOT all right to remain in the darkness of the world for fear of stepping into the Light. It is NOT right to be afraid of a Gracious and Merciful God! It is NOT right to stand aloof from the One upon whom the iniquity of us all was placed. In this marvelous “day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2), how can it possibly be right to become absorbed with the things of “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). How can it possibly be in any way acceptable to ignore “the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). What would move people to live in such a manner?

It is fearfulness – fear that maintains a distance between the individual and the Living God. Fear that causes men to hide like Adam and Eve, for fear of confronting the One whom they are ignoring, and even disobeying. The astounding thing is that there is a form of religion that allows, and even encouraged people to live in aloofness from God. It allows people to wear the name “Christian” while rarely feeding upon His Word, which alone can sustain them (Lk 4:4). In fact, this fraudulent church will even offer assistance to be lacking a consciousness of the Living God. It will reduce the frequency and length of their gatherings. It will provide more entertainment, and less and less edification. It will provide an environment where the people are

less likely to think of God being present – an environment of casualness and non-sobriety.

I realize there are some who think it makes no difference how you conduct yourself in the presence of the Lord. But such people are inexcusably ignorant. We have an inspired record of God confronting people at an inopportune time – Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8-24). There were other people who confronted Deity, either directly or through an angel. Here are a few of them: Enoch (Gen 5:22-23); Noah (Gen 6:13-21), Abraham (Gen 12:1,7; 13:14; 15:1-13;), Isaac (Gen 26:24), Jacob (Gen 28:15;), Moses (Ex 3:4-4:19), Israel (Judges 2:1-4), Solomon (1 Kgs 3:5; 9:2), Gideon (Judges 6:11-17), Samson's mother and father (Judges 13:6–21); Elijah (1 Kgs 19:5-18); Zacharias (Lk 1:11-20), Joseph (Matt 2:19), Cornelius (Acts 10:3-7); Peter (Acts 10:9-21; 12:7-10), Paul (Acts 9:3-6; 27:23-24); John (Rev 1:10-22:21).

If you are familiar with these, rehearse them in your mind. If you are not, read the texts and become familiar with the incidents. See if you can find any element of casualness, indifference, or disinterest. Observe if any godly person requested that the Lord or His angel cease to speak.

Those who are repulsed by the Lord will certainly have no place in His presence! Let it be clear in your mind – those who are repelled by the Lord will be excluded from His presence – and there will be no exceptions.

Salvation, among other things, is calculated to enable you to dwell in the presence of the Lord in a state of focused interest and thankfulness.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 43 of 50

THE UNBELIEVING

“But the fearful, and UNBELIEVING, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Verse 8, Rev 21:1-8)

What a dreadful description: the “UNBELIEVING! This is the individual who has not believed "the record God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:10-11). The "unbelieving" are those without faith, who possess neither the substance of things hoped for nor the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1). They stagger at the promises of God, and are not persuaded that God is able to do what He has promised (Rom 4:20-21).

THE UNBELIEVING

It is written that “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Tit 1:15). Nothing that they do is right, or pure, or acceptable. Everything they think and do is permeated and dominated by their unbelief. Their mind and their conscience is defiled, contaminated, impure, infected, and polluted. They may appear nice, cultured, and even profitable, but they are walking

tinderboxes, and are spiritually flammable. Jesus “upbraided” people “with their unbelief” (Mk 16:14). Unbelief makes a person “stagger” at the promises of God (Rom 4:20). Unbelief causes a person to “fall” (Heb 4:11).

Because of their unbelief, everything they do is defiled. As it is written, "but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work" (Tit 1:15).

Being "unbelieving" particularly applies to refusing the Gospel. Removing all doubt about the matter, Jesus said concerning the Himself and the Gospel, "he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk 16:16). In another place He said, "if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). Unbelief caused some of the Israelites to be broken off (Rom 11:20). It makes the heart "evil," causing the individual to "depart from the living God" (Heb 3:12). Of old time, Israel "could not enter" into Canaan "because of unbelief" (Heb 3:19). It will also exclude people from glory, and be the cause of them being cast into the lake of fire. The person who is condemned, Jesus said, will be appointed “his portion with THE UNBELIEVERS” (Lk 12:46). Solemnly those in Christ are admonished, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14).

This is not the absence of intellectual assent, but a refusal to trust in and rely upon the Christ declared in the Gospel. With the exception of my good father and mother, I was reared in a church environment that did not stress faith or warn of unbelief. Many notable preachers and teachers were so afraid of being classed with those holding a spurious view of faith, that they nearly ignored faith altogether. Consequently, speaking for myself, I had to navigate through very difficult theological straits to finally see the true value of faith and the eternal jeopardy of unbelief. Although it is grievous to talk about, many of us know how prevalent unbelief is in, what appears to be, the majority of the churches. People do not like to hear about it, and think those who do mention it are being unduly critical. But their fervor is institutional fervor, not spiritual perception and concern. Jesus did not have so much as one weightless mote of respect for unbelief – the failure to trust Him fully and without reservation. When His own disciples were fearful in a life-threatening storm, He said to them, “Where is your faith?” (Lk 8:25). He said to Thomas, one of His apostles, “be not faithless but believing” (John 20:27). Once He said to nine of His apostles, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?” (Matt 17:17).

Where faith is absent, the individual is invariably overcome, for faith “is the victory that overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4-5). We are “sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18), “live by faith” (Rom 1:17), are “justified by faith” (Rom 5:1), have “access by faith into this grace” (Rom 5:2), “walk by faith” (2 Cor 5:7), “stand by faith” (2 Cor 1:24), “are children of God by faith” (Gal 5:5), and Christ dwells in our hearts “by faith” (Eph 3:17). It is no wonder, therefore, that the “unbelieving” will “have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

Fight to believe (1 Tim 6:12). Expend every effort possible to avoid being an “unbeliever.”

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 44 of 50

THE ABOMINABLE

“ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and THE ABOMINABLE, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Verse 8, Rev 21:1-8)

There are people who are themselves "abominable." The Spirit refers to those who profess they know God, but deny Him in their works, as "abominable" or "detestable" (Tit 1:16). This is the opposite of being "beloved" or "precious" in the sight of the Lord (Deut 33:12; Isa 43:4). Those who imagine that God has an attraction to everyone are sorely mistaken! He has provided a salvation that is made available to everyone, or “whosoever wills” – “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). Technically speaking, the “whosoever” is anyone who wants what is offered in Christ Jesus – whoever desires what is presented in the Gospel of Christ – remission of sin (Acts 2:38; 10:43), reconciliation to God (Rom 5:10), access to God (Eph 3:12), Divine empowerment to do His will (John 7:17; Heb 13:21), to dwell forever with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17), and much more.

Let it be clear that God has not provided salvation for those who do not want it. No favorable allowance is made for the person who does not desire the salvation of God, seeking first His kingdom and righteousness (Matt 6:33).

There are some people who are personally reprehensible to God. "All who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the LORD your God . . . For the perverse person is an abomination to the LORD . . . These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are AN ABOMINATION to Him: . . . A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren" (Deut 25:16; Prov 3:32; 6:16-19). At one point the Lord's own inheritance, Israel, became obnoxious to Him. It is written, "Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, So that He abhorred His own inheritance" (Psa 106:40).

The word “abominable” is translated from a word [bdelusso] that means, “to render foul, to cause to be abhorred” (THAYER), “abhor, detest” (GINGRICH), “strongly detest something on the basis that it is abominable – to abhor, to abominate” (LOUW-NIDA). The text with which we are dealing speaks of people – people whom God will reject, having them cast into the lake of fire, which is “hell.” It is people who are classified as “fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars.” These are also people who have rejected Christ as the “Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). They have refused to believe the Gospel, which is the means through which they could have been saved (Rom 1:16). Even though God created them, and purchased them, they rejected Him, and refused to submit to Him. As such, they became detestable to Him. Their rebellion emitted a foul odor to Him. Uninformed men may have told them God loved them – but that is not the whole truth. He loved them in the sense of providing a way out of the condemned state. The salvation

that was set before them was very real, and very effective. But they responded with worldly pride and a preference for their own will over the will of God. Now, in a revealed sense, instead of being loved, they became an abomination to God Almighty, and He referred to them as “abominable.”

The response of God to recalcitrance is expressed toward Israel, who spurned His love. His words are not ambiguous. “But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would [have] none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” (Psa 81:11-6).

It is no wonder such individuals will not enter the Kingdom, but rather be cast into the lake of fire. I find it a matter of great concern that some believe such people do not even exist. They are convinced God "loves everybody," and is incapable of hating any one. It is written, "But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates," and "You hate all workers of iniquity" (Psa 11:5; 5:5). Again, it is written, "My heritage is to Me like a lion in the forest; It cries out against Me; Therefore I have hated it" (Jer 12:8). Men do well to avoid falling into this category!

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 45 of 50

MURDERERS

“ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and MURDERERS, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Rev 21:1-8)

Because man is made in the image of God, murder is a particularly serious sin. For man to take life that God has given is an attack against the Almighty Himself. The first murderer was Cain. The Spirit says of him, "who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother" (1 John 3:12). Jesus said of the devil, "He was a MURDERER from the beginning" (John 8:44), thereby confirming he is the influence behind all murder. He works through those who are subject to him, in whom he lives and expresses himself. Wherever there is a murder, the devil has been present, and has had his way. Men may speak about mental disturbance, intellectual confusion, depression, and the effect of drugs – but Satan is a murderer and the author of it, wherever it is found.

Murder is deliberately and intentionally taking the life of another. The Law of Moses differentiated between willfully killing someone (Num 35:16-21), and accidentally doing so, without intention or hatred (Num 35:22-23). Even heathen people knew that murder was a capital crime (Acts 28:4). Roman law recognized murder in this way. You may recall when Paul

was arrested at the insistence of the Jews, he said, “For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar” (Acts 25:11).

In our time the church has grown weak on the matter of murder. It is a transgression that men are not treating as God has instructed them to. One of the functions of government is proper execution. After telling us that governmental powers “are ordained of God” (Rom 13:1), the Spirit affirms, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same” (Rom 13:2-3). Concerning these rulers He adds, “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for HE BEARETH NOT THE SWORD IN VAIN: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom 13:3). The role of government is to encourage the doing of good, and stifle the expression of evil – period! The fact that we have established a different kind of government does not change what God has said.

As with every other form of authority, whether domestic or social, no person who contradicts the law of God is to be heeded as though his authority was valid in matters pertaining to one’s identity with God. That is true of wives with unbelieving husbands, children with unbelieving parents, and governmental allegiance. No person, regardless of their position in society, has a right to command anyone to do something God forbids, or not to do something that God commands. Regarding the matter under consideration, this applies to the proper handling of murderers.

Can a murderer be forgiven? This point is never immediately addressed in Scripture, although I do not doubt the possibility. There is the matter of David, who instructed his military leaders to place Bathsheba’s husband in the front line of the battle, where he would be killed (2 Sam 11:14-17). David did not personally slay Uriah. That certainly did not make his action right, but it confirms that incident cannot be used to excuse a murderer, as defined by God.

The Spirit expands this sin to include hating ones brother in Christ. "Whoever hates his brother is A MURDERER, and you know that NO MURDERER has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). That is a kind of murder that is regularly being committed. To “hate” ones brother involves seeing him in need, yet ignoring it. John writes of such a person, “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him” (1 John 3:17). It also includes treating a legitimate child of God as though God had not accepted him. I realize this requires wisdom, but men are not allowed the luxury of making mistakes when determining who is a legitimate child of God. God gives us tests that will lead us to a proper conclusion.

1. He that is of God heareth the words of God (John 8:47).
2. Whoever hears the words of Jesus and does them is wise; whoever does not is a fool (Matt 7:24-27).
3. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His (Rom 8:9).
4. Whoever does not love the Lord Jesus Christ is accursed (1 Cor 16:22).

5. Whoever does not do righteousness is not of God (1 John 3:10).
6. He that keeps His commandments dwells in Him (1 John 3:24).
7. Any person in Christ is a new creation; old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Cor 5:17).
8. Whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God (1 John 4:3).
9. He that knows God hears the apostles, those who do not hear them are not of God (1 John 4:6).

If people do not know how to recognize these factors, then they must refrain from evaluating people until they are able to do so.

Sectarianism and division teach people to hate some of their brethren. They measure other believers with their own standard of measurement, doing it so they can preserve their own sectarian identity. They class other believers, giving them names that reflect their own ignorance, in order that they may lawfully ignore them. The Jews had their own sects – like the scribes, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes; the Sanhedrin, even became a sect unto itself. These were arrogant, looking down on the other people, and even plotting and promoting the death of the Lord Jesus Christ – all in the name of religion!

There is no hope of a murderer entering heaven. At some point, such must be separated from this category of persons – murderers – or they will have their part in the lake of fire.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 46 of 50

WHOREMONGERS

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and WHOREMONGERS, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Verse 8, Rev 21:1-8)

Other versions use the word "sexually immoral" (NKJV), "fornicators" (RSV), "immoral persons" (NASB), "sexual sinners" (GWN), and "the lewd and adulterous" (AMPLIFIED). The Greek word used here is " pornos." The lexical definition of this word is, "In the NT a man who has sexual intercourse with a prostitute fornicator, sexually immoral person; distinguished from 'mpoxos' (adulterer) and 'arsenokoitas' (sodomite or homosexual)" (FRIBERG), "In the NT a man who has sexual intercourse with a prostitute fornicator, sexually immoral person (1C 5.9); distinguished from adulterer and sodomite or homosexual (LOUW-NIDA).

The Greek definition is driven by Greek philosophers, and, in my opinion, is too general and toned down. Remember, this is included in the Lord's description of those who will be damned, cast into the lake of fire, – consigned to hellfire. Today there are churches who have embraced recovery programs to assist people in overcoming this kind of sin. But it is treated as though it was a controllable habit, and not something that will lead a person right into Hell. There are

staggering numbers of preachers and religious leaders that are in this category. I know of at least one recovery ministry that concentrates on getting preachers and religious leaders out of this category of sin. That ministry reports that it is not able to keep up with the staggering numbers of men so characterized.

In our day, and in view of Jesus' words – “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt 5:28) – this also applies to the person who is enslaved to pornography, a sin of more recent promotion and popularity. Men refer to being “addicted to pornography” – a compromising and watered down definition. Such people are “whoremongers.” These are people who seek to satisfy fleshly desires outside of marriage.

Here is a sin that has become tolerable in our age. Palatable terms like "live-in" and some "single mothers," have been sanctified by members of the church-world, to say nothing of "same-sex marriages." It is not at all surprising to find fornication, and even sodomy, in the average church. In some larger churches, it is not at all uncommon to have young single women in the congregation who have children outside of marriage. Some churches with which I am personally familiar, have baby showers for these girls, treating their pregnancy as though it was little more than a mistake, or resulted from momentary flawed judgment. Often it is treated with sympathy, and viewed as a simple weakness. But this is not the case at all.

There will be no exception to this proclamation from the Holy One. Whoremongers, the immoral, fornicators, and the likes, will “their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). This is a truth that is evident to the faithful. "For this YE KNOW, that NO WHOREMONGER . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph 5:5). The Amplified Bible reads, “For be sure of this: that no person practicing sexual vice or impurity in thought or in life . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” There is no such thing as a real “Christian” who practices this sin.

The Almighty God will not retract His words. Anyone who falls into the class of a “whoremonger” has got to get out of that category, because he is but one step away from the lake of fire. The salvation of God is the only thing that provides deliverance from this sin. In Christ there is remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 10:43; Rom 3:25), justification from all things (Acts 13:39), and a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). Those are things that no recovery system can offer, and they are the only escape route from this transgression.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 47 of 50

SORCERERS

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and SORCERERS, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Verse 8, Rev 21:1-8)

Sorcery is frequently condemned in scripture. Pharaoh had sorcerers who opposed Moses. In

fact, after Aaron turned his rod into a serpent, they turned their rods into serpents, that Aaron's serpent swallowed them, confirming the serpents of the sorcerers were not imaginary (Ex 7:11-12). They also duplicated the first two plagues (Ex 7:20-22; 8:5-7), but could not duplicate the others (Ex 8:17-19).

Israel allowed sorcerers to creep into their presence and determine what they did (Jer 27:9). Nebuchadnezzar also had sorcerers (Dan 2:2). Malachi prophesied against sorcerers that had gained prominence among the people (Mal 3:5). Paul confronted a sorcerer in Paphos (Acts 13:6,8), and Peter encountered one in Samaria (Acts 8:9). What is sorcery, and why is it condemned.

Because the word "sorcery" comes from the Greek word "mag-eu-ov," and means to practice magic (Thayer), some have concluded it was mere slight of hand, or an appearance of something supernatural. That, however, is a modern definition of magic. The "magicians" of the Bible were not at all like the entertaining magicians of our day (Gen 41:8; Ex 7:11-12; Dan 1:20).

ACADEMIC DEFINITION – "In its modern accepted sense magic may be described as the art of bringing about results beyond man's own power by superhuman agencies. In the wide sense of this definition divination is only a species of magic, i.e. magic used as a means of securing secret knowledge, especially a knowledge of the future. Divination and magic bear a similar relation to prophecy and miracle respectively, the first and third implying special knowledge, the second and fourth special power. But divination has to do generally with omens, and it is better for this and other reasons to notice the two subjects – magic and divination – apart as is done in the present work." (from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

Sorcery has to do with unlawful knowledge – knowledge attained from unlawful sources. An example of this type of knowledge is found in a woman from Ephesus who possessed a "spirit of divination." This woman followed Paul for many days crying out, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:1-17). Technically, she could not have been more correct. Yet, the knowledge was not obtained lawfully. Therefore, "Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" (17:18).

A similar example is found when Jesus confronted a man with an unclean spirit in a Capernaum synagogue. The spirit cried out to Jesus, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are; the Holy One of God!" (Mark 1:24). The statements concerning Jesus were precisely true, but they were not lawful when coming from an unclean spirit. Therefore Jesus rebuked the spirit saying, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him" (1:25).

The sin of sorcery has been popularized in our day through witchcraft (Wicca), astrology, fortune telling, and psychic phenomenon. A former first lady of our land (Johnson) even sought knowledge from such sources. Law enforcement agencies frequently hire psychics to track down criminals or obtain detailed information about mysterious crimes. Millions of people regulate their lives according to astrological charts, placing great stock in the "sign" under which they were born. These are all condemned practices.

For some, this is all a lot of delusion. However, the Scriptures do not represent sorcery as a harmless bit of human manipulation. Moses warned the people about contact with such people. "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God" (Lev 19:31). He does not say to avoid those who SAY they have "familiar spirits," but with those who HAVE them! Manasseh is said to have "dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards" (2 Chron 33:6).

Isaiah also warned the people of God not to seek knowledge from such sources. "And when they say to you, Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter, should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:19-20). Seeking consultation from the realm of the dead is condemned by God.

King Saul, after being abandoned by God, sought counsel from a witch. That witch called Samuel back from the dead. Some say it was really a demon that came back. Such people, however, do not address the words of that spirit. Here is how the Holy Spirit had his words written up:

“And SAMUEL SAID to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. Then SAID SAMUEL, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David: Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be WITH ME: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam 28:15-19).”

Whatever a person may think of that message, there is not a flaw in it. However, it was obtained by unlawful means.

I have provided this somewhat extended explanation because a prevalent view among some of the people with whom I have been identified. Many of them do not see sorcery as real, but consider it as delusion and mere fantasy. If that is the case, this is the only instance in the Bible where a sin that is unreal is condemned.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and IDOLATERS, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Verse 8, Rev 21:1-8)

IDOLATERS

Here is a sin that ranks unusually high. It was specifically condemned in the Ten Commandments, which defined sin (Rom 3:20): “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God (Ex 20:3-5). The leaders of the church in Jerusalem sent letters to Gentiles churches, exhorting them to “abstain from pollutions of idols” (Acts 15:20). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Cor 10:14). “Idolatry” is listed in “the works of the flesh,” which will exclude one from the kingdom of God (Gal 5:20).

Idolatry involves the ascription of Divine qualities to something other than God, then yielding service to that “idol.” The Spirit informs us that those serving idols are really worshiping demons (Lev 17:7; 1 Cor 10:20).

In Christ, the meaning of idolatry is expanded, and is an especially heinous sin, owing to the greater revelation of God that is realized through Christ (Matt 11:27; 1 John 5:20). The Spirit provides a particular perspective of idolatry. The perspective is delivered in view of this unalterable fact: “When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col 3:4). In view of that Divinely scheduled event, everyone in Christ is told, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Col 3:5-6). In this case, idolatry is serving ones own appetites and desires, something quite common in our day – covetousness.

We Americans live in a society that promotes covetousness, constantly holding out before us conveniences and luxuries that we are told we need. All such covetousness is strictly self-centered, and requires one to ignore the Living God, who “According as His Divine power hath given unto us ALL THINGS that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet 1:3) – and those are “things” that ARE sorely needed! The church is also admonished to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Cor 12:31) – but that is not self-interest, but interest in edifying the body of Christ (Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 12:12-27).

Keep in mind a covetous, or grasping, spirit, that desires more and more of this world’s goods, will exclude a person from entrance into glory. In fact, our text states there is a place in the lake of fire for those who commit idolatry by coveting.

ANOTHER EVEN MORE SUBTLE FORM OF IDOLATRY

There is an even more subtle form of idolatry that is growing in the church-world. Paul referred to it as “another Jesus” (2 Cor 11:4). Jesus referred to “false Christs” (Matt 24:24). There is a “Jesus” being held out before the people today that differs significantly from the one revealed in “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11). To get even more specific, John urges believers to keep themselves from idols, doing it in a stirring revelation and exhortation. “And

we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. THIS IS THE TRUE GOD, AND ETERNAL LIFE” (1 John 5:20).

By saying “IS come,” the Spirit means that Jesus is come, and has remained in the capacity described. He is administering an understanding of God – the “true,” or real, God. Not only is the God of whom Jesus is giving us an understanding, the “true God,” knowing God is “eternal life” – which is precisely what Jesus said in His Gethsemane prayer: “And THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

When Jesus walked among men, He said this of Himself: “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt 11:27). The text in First John 5:20 is affirming that this ministry of Jesus –i.e. giving an understanding and knowledge of God – is the ongoing ministry of our Lord and Savior. That is certainly plain enough.

However, John then adds this sobering word: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:21). In this case, an idol, or false God, is any God other than the One of whom Jesus gives us an understanding. There is a God being declared among some Christians that never gets angry, never judges, and has nothing to do with calamity. That is NOT “the True God and everlasting life.” There is a God being proclaimed who is going to save everyone, and will condemn no one. That is NOT “the True God and everlasting life.” There is a God declared who does not make people a new creation, in which old things pass away and all things become new (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). That is NOT “the True God and everlasting life.” There is a God being set before the people who justifies men by their works (Rom 4:2,6; Gal 2:16; Tit 3:5). That is NOT “the True God and everlasting life.” There is also a God whose primary work is not maturing people in Christ (Eph 4:11-16). That is NOT “the True God and everlasting life.” There is even a God being embraced who does not consider the wisdom of this world to be “foolishness” (1 Cor 3:19). That is NOT “the True God and everlasting life.”

Misrepresentations of God are really the presentation of an idol – whether the person doing it knows it or not. The mandate from heaven is clear, and is to be diligently heeded: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols!” (1 John 5:21). The reason? – “But . . . idolaters, . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). Now, there is something to think about.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

Lesson 49 of 50

ALL LIARS

“ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and ALL LIARS, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Rev 21:1-8)

This involves more than simple misrepresentations of the facts, although that is certainly not excluded. "All liars" are those under the powerful sway of Satan – people who cannot consistently speak the truth. Jesus said of the devil, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44). The "liar" is one who distorts, exaggerates, minimizes, understates, overstates, and misrepresents the facts – and even represents fiction and imagination as though they were facts. However, that is only general. The Spirit gets down to specifics when speaking of "liars."

Moved by the Spirit, John further defines the liar. "Who is A LIAR but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). In particular, this is the person who teaches Christ improperly, does not believe on Christ, submit to Him, and live for Him. Such a person is living lie – a lie incarnate. This includes those who misrepresent Christ Jesus, luring people away from Him and His great salvation to a fictitious Christ who cannot save, transform, renew, deliver, feed, and direct – and will tolerate their ungodliness.

John also referred to a "liar" as one who claimed to know Christ, yet does not keep His commandments. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is A LIAR, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). This being true, the nominal church has become a haven for liars. As unsavory as it is to say, there are churches that lead people who refuse to keep the commandments of Jesus, to think they are saved and are His disciples.

John also identified the person saying he loved God, while hating his brother, as A LIAR. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is A LIAR" (1 John 4:20). In this case, sectarianism has sanctified the despising of some of God's children – some of Christ's brethren – by making their sectarian dogmas the basis of fellowship. Such an approach is nothing less than a "form of godliness that denies the power," for it often allows flagrant sins to remain among its members, teaching the people to manage sin rather than refusing to commit it.

Paul described the liar as one whose words contradict the word of the Lord. "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man A LIAR; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged" (Rom 3:4). No person can possibly escape the judgment of God who insists on speaking in contradiction of Him. Those who speak in such a manner – and many of us were one in that number – must repent of their misrepresentations, and come into agreement with the Living God. Solomon said, "Add thou not unto His words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found A LIAR" (Prov 30:6). Isaiah reminded the people that fearing men leads to becoming a liar: "And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that THOU HAST LIED, and hast not remembered Me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held My peace even of old, and thou fearest Me not?" (Isa 57:11). God asks the people who refuse to be healed by Him, "wilt thou be altogether unto Me as A LIAR" (Jer 15:18). In misrepresenting how much they gave to the church for proper distribution, Peter said Ananias and Sapphira Lied "to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:3), and they "lied unto God" (Acts 5:4).

Jesus said that the devil himself is the "father" of lies: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is A

LIAR, and the father of it” (John 8:44).

All such people will be cast into the lake of fire. By their words, they have confirmed they are not possessors of the Divine nature.

There is no chance that people so characterized will enter heaven. Either they become separate from these things in this world, or they will be excluded from the one to come.

All of these traits are contradictory of the Divine nature. Those dominated by them, by that very circumstance, have excluded themselves from the presence of the Lord. These sins remove an appetite for, and appreciation of, the living God.

WHEN GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Verse 8, Rev 21:1-8)

Lesson 50 of 50

THEIR PART (FINAL)

Not only do the people mentioned in this text NOT fit into glory, they DO fit into hell. There is no place for them in the Lord's presence, but there IS a place for them in the lake of fire. These "shall have THEIR PART in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." However, there will be no pleasantries, satisfaction, or advantage of any kind for those who have THEIR PART in the lake of fire.

ETERNITY WILL CONFIRM WHERE THE INDIVIDUAL BELONGS! In this world, every person is becoming acclimated to an eternal environment. Those who have nurtured godless appetites and lived apart from the Lord will find they simply do not fit into the "world to come." That world will be even more offensive to them than it was when they rejected it in this world by refusing to believe on, live for, and intently bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who have "their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone" will not find it pleasant in any way. They will fit in there, or be suitable for that horrible place, but not experientially. Being incongruous with the realm of glory, their natures will only blend with the order of pain and rejection. Heaven will be distasteful to them, but they will find no relief in the lake of fire. From one point of view, there will be no place where they will be comfortable. All ability to enjoy, be comforted, and be satisfied will be withdrawn from them. They chose to reject the Divinely appointed remedy. It is, to be sure, a most dreadful consideration. They will be miserable in their eternal dwelling. They will have no friends, no relief, no satisfaction, and no way to accomplish anything. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Some people think it is demeaning to think of God in this way. It is, however, demeaning not to think of and serve the Living God now. Such people should have thought of a merciful God

while they were upon the earth. James says of those who have spurned the mercy of God, “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13). It is in this world, under the gracious administration of Jesus Christ, that mercy “exults victoriously over judgment” (AMPLIFIED). However that is not the experience of those consigned to the lake of fire – the teaching of the annihilationists notwithstanding.

CONCLUSION

Salvation is designed to develop and nurture an appetite for the glory to come. If the individual does not have a yearning for glory, he will not participate in it. It is most disconcerting to consider the smallness of spiritual yearning that dominates the professed church. It is a condition that is most serious, yet is almost universally ignored. Professional religion caters to the small spiritual appetite. Brevity is the epitaph over most religious gatherings. The people are not there long enough to really get anything from God. What is more, they love to have it so (Jer 5:31). While the entertainment and athletic media lengthens their programs, the church is shortening its program, even curtailing the number of times they meet together.

And why does this condition exist? Because there is an absence of enjoyment of the things of the Spirit of God! Some are even bold enough to join the evil Israelites in their petition to the prophets. "Who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' And to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits'" (Isa 30:10). Woe to the person who succumbs to such demands!

Faith cultures an appetite for what God has promised! It constrains the believer to move toward the fulfilment of those promises by pondering them and preparing for their realization.

This is one of the primary ways we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven (Matt 6:19-20). There has been a lot of frothy things said about such treasures, and how they are to be "laid up." It is accomplished by setting "your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth" (Col 3:1). If that does not occur, there is no chance of obtaining those things.

In the end, everyone will get what they want. Those who earnestly desired the Lord will inherit Him. Those who did not want Him will go into a Godless eternity – and they will not want it then. Now is the time to nurture the proper appetites and longings. Now is the time to develop a yearning for what God has promised.

– Given O. Blakely