

In the Lord's Day

A Study About the Rapture
and Judgment of Christians at
the Conclusion of the Present
Dispensation

Arlen L. Chitwood

In the
Lord's Day

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (II Cor. 5:10, 11a).

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By the Same Author —

HAD YE BELIEVED MOSES
THE MOST HIGH RULETH
FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN
LET US GO ON
REDEEMED FOR A PURPOSE
RUN TO WIN
MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM
THE BRIDE IN GENESIS
SEARCH FOR THE BRIDE
SEVEN, TEN GENERATIONS
GOD'S FIRSTBORN SONS
THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE
SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH
PROPHECY ON MOUNT OLIVET
THE TIME OF THE END
SO GREAT SALVATION
THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE
BROUGHT FORTH FROM ABOVE
THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE
SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL
SALVATION OF THE SOUL
BY FAITH
JUDE
RUTH
ESTHER

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FOREWORD

This book, *IN THE LORD'S DAY*, presents an overview of that taught in Revelation chapters one through four. And these four chapters have to do, centrally, with events pertaining to Christians after the present dispensation has run its course but before the Tribulation begins. These chapters have to do with Christians appearing before Christ's judgment seat (chs. 1-3) and with initial regal actions resulting from that judgment (ch. 4). And all of this anticipates the ensuing Tribulation and the Messianic Era which follows.

In that coming day when Christians appear before the judgment seat of Christ, "Every man's work shall be made manifest...it shall be revealed by [in] fire." There will be works comparable to "gold, silver, precious stones"; and there will be works comparable to "wood, hay, stubble." One set of material reveals works of intrinsic value, which will endure the fire; but the other set of material reveals valueless works, which will be burned in the fire.

Works performed by Christians during the present time can vary a great deal in worth. Such works can be performed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and redound to the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord; or such works can be performed under the leadership of man and redound to the praise, honor, and glory of man.

At the judgment seat, all will be revealed; for "the fire shall try *every man's work* of what sort it is."

"Works...Revealed by Fire"

Works emanate out of faithfulness to one's calling and bring faith to its proper goal, which will result in the salvation of one's soul (*cf.* James 2:14-26; I Peter 1:5-11). At the judgment seat, the worth of every man's work in this realm will be revealed; and decisions and determinations emanating out of this judgment will determine every man's position in the coming kingdom (*cf.* Matt. 16:24-27; 24:45-51; 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

“Judgment” on the basis of *works* is alien to the thinking of many Christians, for they have been exposed time and again to a proclamation of salvation by grace through faith apart from works, *unbalanced* by the proclamation of the coming judgment of Christians on the basis of works. The emphasis has been placed almost entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary, with little regard given to Christian living, the coming judgment seat, and the coming kingdom.

Teachings of this nature have centered almost solely around the salvation which we presently possess; and things having to do with the inheritance awaiting Christians, the salvation of the soul, etc., have been removed from their respective contexts and applied to our present salvation. Ministries centering around this type teaching in the Churches have produced both confusion and complacency in Christendom.

Then, there is another type widespread teaching in the Churches which recognizes works but has every Christian performing good works. The reasoning of those who teach along these lines centers around the thought that if a person is really saved he will produce good works; if, on the other hand he doesn't produce good works, this simply shows that he was never really saved in the first place. Aside from being completely contrary to any Scriptural teaching on the subject, such a teaching produces both an erroneous view of salvation by grace through faith and an erroneous view of issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ.

If every Christian produces good works to show that he has been saved, then works enter into an area where works cannot exist.

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Rom. 11:6).

(“Grace” is that which God is able to do completely apart from human intervention or merit.)

The presence or absence of works on the part of Christians can have no connection whatsoever with their prior reception of the finished work of Christ. Christ's finished work *allows* an individual to be placed in the position where *he can produce good works*. There is nothing in Scripture which teaches that he, of necessity, *will produce*

good works. Such would be completely contrary to the teaching of salvation by grace through faith apart from works. Man's works simply cannot enter into salvation by grace at any time, either preceding or following salvation.

Relative to eternal salvation, man simply cannot do anything to:

- 1) *Be saved.*
- 2) *Stay saved.*
- 3) *Show that he has been saved.*

If man could do any one of the three, salvation would cease to be by grace through faith, for man's works would have entered into an area where works of this nature cannot exist.

If it be maintained that every Christian *must* produce good works to show that he has been saved, then it *must* follow that every Christian would appear at the judgment seat of Christ with works which would "abide" the fire. Possessing works of this nature, every Christian would "receive a reward."

But such a thought is at once seen to be erroneous by reference to the text in I Corinthians chapter three. There will be Christians appearing at the judgment seat who will "suffer loss" and "be saved; yet so as by ["through"] fire" (v. 15). *ALL* of their works will be burned, but they themselves will "be saved," *i.e., they themselves will be delivered*. And this *deliverance* will occur "through fire."

This *deliverance* at the judgment seat can have nothing to do with eternal salvation, for all issues surrounding one's eternal salvation, whether during the present time or at the future judgment seat, are *past issues* (e.g., Christ's finished work at Calvary, the Spirit's finished work of breathing life into the one having no life, allowing him to pass "from death unto life"). God judged sin in the person of His Son at Calvary, God is satisfied, and the Spirit can breathe life into the one having no life on the basis of this finished work of God's Son.

And this work of the triune Godhead is a *past, finished deliverance* which could *never* be referred to in *the future sense* seen in I Cor. 3:15.

The *deliverance* seen in I Cor. 3:15 is, contextually, a *deliverance out of the fire at the judgment seat*. Though all of the person's works will be burned and he will appear naked in Christ's presence (Rev.

3:17, 18), he himself will not be burned. Rather, he will be delivered — *delivered from being burned with his works*.

But, though he himself will be delivered in this respect, “so as by [“through”] fire,” he will be unable to escape the dire consequences which will result from his works being consumed by the fire and his consequent naked appearance. And there can be no deliverance from these consequences, for there will have to be a “just recompense” — exact payment for services rendered in the house during the time of the Lord’s absence. If not, God would not be perfectly just and righteous in His dealings with His household servants.

One-sided views of the judgment seat which maintain that every Christian will appear with good works are little different than the teaching which ignores works. Confusion and complacency, once again, can only be the ultimate result.

Much of the preceding, erroneous teaching is fostered by a misunderstanding of I Cor. 4:5. This verse in the King James Version reads,

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

The problem emanates from both a mistranslation in the text and a noncontextual understanding of the words, “then shall every man have praise of God.” The words “every man” could be better translated “each man”; and the reference is back to *the faithful stewards* in verse two. Faithful stewards will, individually, receive praise from God; but there is nothing in Scripture which teaches that “every man,” which, apart from the context would also include *unfaithful stewards*, will receive such praise. To the contrary. Scripture quite clearly reveals that *both faithful and unfaithful stewards* will appear at the judgment seat, that the judgment seat will be operable in *two realms*, and that *faithful stewards alone* will receive praise of God.

“If Any Man’s Work Abide”

“Rewards” are being reserved for *the faithful alone*. This is one side of the judgment seat. Christians have been “created in Christ Jesus

unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Works of this nature, performed by a Christian exhibiting faithfulness to his calling, will “abide” at the judgment seat. They will be manifested as works comparable to “gold, silver, precious stones” and will endure the fire. Such works will result in the Christian receiving a reward and a position with Christ in the kingdom.

Works which endure the fire will be the type works necessary to bring faith to its proper goal, resulting in the salvation of the Christian’s soul. Following the testing of such works, the Christian will receive *praise* from his Lord. He will hear his Lord say,

“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things...” (Matt. 25:21a, 23a).

And he will subsequently be positioned, in a regal capacity, among those destined to rule as joint-heirs with Christ (Matt. 24:45-47; 25:19-23; Luke 19:15-19).

“If Any Man’s Work Shall Be Burned”

“Suffering loss” is in store for the unfaithful. This is the other side of the judgment seat. It is possible for a Christian to appear before the judgment seat of Christ without one single good work to his credit. He will possess works, but not works done under the direction of the Holy Spirit, for the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord. Such works, comparable to “wood, hay, stubble,” will be burned. They will not endure the fire. But the Christian himself “shall be saved [‘delivered’]; yet so as by [‘through’] fire.”

The presence of works, the absence of works, or the type works can have no bearing on his eternal salvation, *wrought completely apart from his own works*. He will come out of this judgment, as Lot from Sodom, with nothing to show but escape from the condemnation befalling the unregenerate.

Works consumed by fire will be the type works unable to bring faith to its proper goal, resulting in the loss of the Christian’s soul. Following the testing of such works, the Christian will be *rebuked* by his Lord. He will hear his Lord say,

"Thou wicked and slothful servant..." (Matt. 25:26a).

Then, that which had been entrusted to him during the time of his Lord's absence will be taken from him. He will be denied a position with Christ in the kingdom, a position which could have been his had he previously exercised faithfulness in his calling; and he will then be appointed "his portion with the hypocrites." (Matt. 24:48-51; 25:19, 24-30; Luke 19:15, 20-26).

He will then find himself cast "without," into the place which Scripture calls, "the outer darkness" (ASV). In this place there will be "the weeping and the gnashing of teeth [an Eastern expression denoting deep grief]" (ASV) on the part of Christians who realize too late that they could have occupied one of the proffered positions with Christ in His kingdom. Their rights as firstborn sons — the rights of primogeniture — will have been forfeited; and they, as Esau, will *lift up their voices and weep*.

Receiving Rewards, Suffering Loss

Receiving rewards or suffering loss at the judgment seat of Christ are grave issues about which most Christians seem to know very little, or, for that matter, appear to even be concerned. But such will have no bearing upon the fact that there is a day coming in the not too-distant future when every Christian *MUST* render an account to his Lord for the "things done in his body" (II Cor. 5:10).

Events of that day will come to pass at the end of the present dispensation, immediately preceding the Messianic Era; *issues of that day* will surround a review of the works performed by Christians in view of their receiving rewards or suffering loss; the *purpose of that day*, aside from providing a "just recompense," will be to make decisions and determinations concerning Christians occupying positions with Christ in His 1,000-year rule from the heavens over the earth.

Everything is moving toward that 1,000-year Messianic Era when God's Son will reign supreme. Man's Day, in conjunction with *his rule* over the earth under Satan, is about to end; and the Lord's Day, in conjunction with *His rule* over the earth with His co-heirs, is about to commence.

1

Caught into His Presence (I)

I John, who am also your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man... (Rev. 1:9-13a).

John was on the Isle of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea (a northern branch of the Mediterranean Sea lying between Greece and Turkey), for a specifically stated purpose: "for ['because of'] the Word of God, and for ['because of'] the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 9; cf. v. 2). John was the one whom God had chosen to receive and record "the revelation ['the unveiling'] of Jesus Christ" (v. 1),

further described in verses two and nine as “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” And John had been taken to the Isle of Patmos *for this specific purpose*.

The Isle of Patmos was about ten miles long and six miles wide, and there was a penal colony on this island in John's day. The existence of this penal colony has given rise to a widely-held teaching that John had been imprisoned and exiled to this island by a Roman ruler because of his proclamation of the Word of God (usually understood as Domitian [who ruled from 81 A.D. to 96 A.D.]; and this Roman ruler is cited because of the widely accepted late date for the writing of the Book of Revelation).

The beginning of this teaching that John had been imprisoned and exiled to the Isle of Patmos can be traced back to at least the latter part of the second century, extending into the third century, a century or more after the Book of Revelation had been written. This was taught by several of the early Church fathers during this time (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius all taught this). And this same teaching has been passed down, taught through the centuries, and carried into modern times.

The teaching that John had been imprisoned and exiled to this island in the Aegean Sea though has *no basis in fact*. It is strictly *tradition*, and this teaching undoubtedly arose and has continued to be accepted down through the centuries because of a misunderstanding of the stated purpose for John being on this island, given in verse nine of the opening chapter. It is specifically stated that he was on this island for *one purpose*: “for [‘because of’] the Word of God, and for [‘because of’] the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

John, being on this island *because of the Word*, takes one back to that previously stated concerning the content of the book, in verses one and two. John was on the Isle of Patmos *for a purpose which he himself provides*, as the Spirit moved him to write. He was there “because of” *the revelation (the unveiling) of Jesus Christ* (the manner in which the book opens, introducing the subject matter of the book), which is declared to be “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (v. 2; cf. John 1:1, 14; Rev. 19:10b, 13). And the thought behind “because of,” contextually, would have to be understood in the sense of John being there to receive and

record God bringing to completion all that He desires man to know and understand concerning His Son — “the revelation [‘the unveiling’] of Jesus Christ.”

God seems to have an affinity for taking individuals whom He has chosen to isolated or out-of-the-way places to receive His revelation. Moses wrote the Pentateuch while in the desert; David wrote a number of Psalms while out in the hills being pursued by Saul; Ezekiel wrote from a place of exile, from Babylon; and Paul was seemingly taken to a place in Arabia to receive the revelation of the mystery, while later writing epistles from prisons.

Thus, it should not be thought strange at all to see God removing John from surroundings which the outside world offered and taking him to the remote Isle of Patmos to receive the capstone for all Scripture. In fact, something of this nature should be thought of far more as *expected* rather than strange.

But why *this particular island*? The answer is probably in its location. The Isle of Patmos, along with being a place removed from the outside world, was located out in a part of the Mediterranean Sea, with the “sea” being used in Scripture to depict *the Gentile nations*.

The Book of Revelation is first of all about *the Church*, as it presently exists among the nations and as it will exist once the Church has been removed from the nations (chs. 1-5, 19a, 20a); and the book is also about *Israel* out among the nations and that which will occur once Israel has been brought to the place of repentance (chs. 5-20a).

Thus, to see John removed from his surroundings and taken to an isolated, out-of-the-way place located out in the sea can only be seen as quite appropriate for the subject matter at hand. It can be seen as one of the many ways *significance* always surrounds acts of a triune God.

I Became in Spirit

Verse ten should literally read, “I became in spirit in the Lord’s day...” And John was not only removed in this manner from the Isle of Patmos into heaven but he was also moved forward

in time as well. John was moved forward to a time at the end of the present dispensation.

(John's removal from the Isle of Patmos into heaven is simply stated to have been "in spirit." Chapter four [vv. 1, 2], depicting the same scene again, adds information. And whether this was an actual bodily removal or a removal by means of visions is unrevealed and immaterial to the literality of and teachings drawn from the subject matter at hand [cf. Dan. 7:1, 2; 8:1, 2; 10:1].

Also note that Paul, after he had been taken into what was seemingly Arabia, in like manner, was also evidently removed into heaven to receive the revelation of the mystery [cf. II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-18; Eph. 3:1-6].)

John, once removed from the Isle of Patmos into heaven, was shown things which would occur relative to the Church (judgment, with a view to the impending Messianic Era) and corresponding things relative to the transfer of the government of the earth from angels to man (chs. 1b-4; cf. Heb. 2:5). And he was then shown things preparatory to the redemption of the inheritance, which had to do with both *heavenly* and *earthly* spheres of the kingdom about to exist under *Christ, His co-heirs, Israel, and the nations* (ch. 5).

John was then moved farther forward in time, into and through seven subsequent years (Daniel's unfulfilled Seventieth Week, the Tribulation). And he was shown things which would transpire on earth relative to Israel and the nations during and immediately following these seven years (chs. 6-19).

And during this time, not only would "the inheritance" be redeemed *through judgment* (the judgments of the Tribulation) but "the bride" previously shown forth at the judgment seat *would become the Son's wife*, allowing the Son to be in a position to reign (cf. Gen. 2:18).

(According to the manner in which God established matters in the beginning relative to man holding the sceptre in the stead of Satan and his angels, a sovereign cannot reign apart from possessing a consort queen [Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-24]. The man and woman must reign *together*, seated on the throne as *one complete being*.)

Thus, God's Son today is *not* in a position to assume the sceptre and reign. He *must* have a wife to ascend the throne with Him, a wife which, in the antitype of Eve in Gen. 2, is not only *part of His body* but *will complete Him* [cf. Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23, 30; Heb. 2:10]. And the Son will not possess a wife in the manner seen in the type until the end of the coming Tribulation [cf. Ruth 3, 4].

A knowledge of this fact will address, resolve, and put to rest widely-held false teachings concerning a present existence of some type mystery form of the kingdom in which the Son is presently reigning; or, others become more specific and see the Son already seated on David's throne within this purported mystery form of the kingdom.

The preceding may sound strange to those properly instructed in things pertaining to the kingdom [cf. Matt. 13:52]. And so it should. Strange though or not, all of the preceding is widely held in Christian circles today, even taught in numerous Bible schools and seminaries. But the one Biblical fact concerning *the necessity* of the man and the woman ascending the throne *together* will, alone, show the fallacy of such teachings, for Christ *does not* presently have a wife to ascend the throne with Him.

Aside from the preceding, though there are two anointed Kings in relation to the earth today [Christ and Satan], as there were two anointed kings in Israel during the days of David and Saul, *only One* can hold the sceptre at any given time.

In the type, Saul held the sceptre *until* he was put down and his crown taken and given to David. *Only then* did David and his faithful men take the sceptre and reign in Israel [cf. I Sam. 31:1-6; II Sam. 1:4-10; 5:3].

And matters *can only be exactly the same in the antitype*. Satan will hold the sceptre *until* he is put down and his crown taken and given to Christ. *Only then* will Christ and His faithful co-heirs take the sceptre and reign over the earth.)

Then, beyond events of the Tribulation, John was moved even farther forward in time. He was moved through events immediately following the Tribulation, extending into the Messianic Era itself (ch. 20a). After that, revelation continues with John being shown events which will occur at the end of the Messianic Era relative to Satan, his angels, and his followers among men on earth, along with the judgment of the unsaved dead (ch. 20b).

And that which John was shown doesn't stop with events at the end of the Messianic Era. Rather, John was moved even farther forward in time and shown things having to do with the eternal ages beyond the Messianic Era, when man will hold the sceptre relative to a rule extending beyond this earth, out into the universe itself (chs. 21, 22).

And a person being moved into another time and place and being shown events occurring during this future time, in this place, is not something new in Scripture. Ezekiel, in Babylonian captivity, was moved not only to another location (to Jerusalem) but was moved both back in time and forward in time.

Ezekiel, through visions, was removed from Babylon, placed in Jerusalem, and shown things which had occurred both before the captivity and which were yet to occur (Ezek. 8-11).

The captivity took place in stages, beginning about 605 B.C., but the Glory did not depart until almost twenty years later, in 586 B.C.

Ezekiel had been among the early captives transported to Babylon, and it was around the middle of this period (about 595 B.C.) when the Spirit entered into Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:2), began showing him things (2:3ff), "lifted" him "up between the earth and the heaven," and carried him "in the visions of God to Jerusalem" (8:3).

Ezekiel, at first, was moved *back in time*, allowing him to see the abominations existing among the Jewish people which had resulted in the captivity. Then he was moved *forward in time*, allowing him to see the end result — the Jewish people not only in captivity but the resulting departure of the Glory (chs. 8-11).

"Time," rather than being a constant, is *relative*. Not only is this revealed in Scripture but man has been allowed to discover and see this even in his secular science. This is part of the theory of relativity which Albert Einstein (a Jew) was allowed to discover and demonstrate through the science of mathematics (showing a small part of that which God had previously established through His unchangeable laws in physics and mathematics).

And, if God so chooses (which He has done at times), He can take a man, place him in another location, and move him either back in time or forward in time in that location. Man can't operate in this sphere, but the One Who designed and created all of this can.

Then, within the scope of God doing this, *one thing* which guarantees the future occurrence of that seen throughout the Book of Revelation is the fact that, in one respect, all of that seen in this book *has already occurred*. And changes can't take place in that which has already occurred.

Time and Place into Which John Was Taken

John was removed from the Isle of Patmos and was not only transported into the Lord's Day but was moved forward in time as well. John was removed from Man's Day on earth and transported into the Lord's Day in heaven (or, *the Day of the Lord*, as it is referred to numerous other places in Scripture). And he was moved forward in time to the end of the present dispensation, to the time of the removal of the Church preceding the Tribulation.

In relation to the earth, Man's Day will last for 6,000 years — extending from the creation of man to the end of the Tribulation. Then, when Man's Day has been brought to a close, the Lord's Day will begin.

But this has to do with Man's Day and the Lord's Day in relation to *the earth*. Moving outside the earth, a person would move outside the bounds of Man's Day and move into a day which has always existed — *the Lord's Day*. Christ, for example, while on earth said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56; cf. Mark 12:27). Abraham, removed from Man's Day on earth, found himself in a place separate from Man's Day. He found himself in *the Lord's Day*. And exactly the same thing is seen concerning the removal of the Church at the end of the present dispensation in both I Thess. 4:13-5:4 and Rev. 1:10-20.

If man is removed from the earth at any time during Man's Day he finds himself in *the Lord's Day*. This is why Abraham found himself in the Lord's Day in time past, and this is why the Church, once removed from the earth at the time of the rapture, will find itself in *the Lord's Day* as well.

Man's Day and the Lord's Day *cannot* run concurrently on earth. Man's Day, in this respect, has to run its course and be brought to a close before the Lord's Day can begin on earth.

(Any thought that the expression, "the Lord's day," in Rev. 1:10 is referencing a time other than *the Day of the Lord* is really not open for discussion. Such a thought is completely out of line with both the context and related Scripture.

The widely-held teaching that "the Lord's day" in this verse is a reference to the first day of the week, to Sunday, finds no support anywhere in Scripture. "Sunday" is never referred to as *the Lord's Day* in Scripture [unless this verse is the exception, which, contextually, it evidently isn't].

As will later be shown, this section of the Book of Revelation parallels I Thess. 4:13-5:4, where the expression "the day of the Lord" is used.

In this same respect, also note Ps. 118:24,

"This is *the day* which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

This verse is often quoted out of context and applied to *a day* during the present time, during Man's Day. This verse though is set within a Messianic passage and has to do with the future Messianic Era when the Lord's Day will replace Man's Day on earth. And any application to present time would have to involve a secondary application of the verse.)

It is commonly taught that either all or part of the coming Tribulation (Daniel's unfulfilled Seventieth Week [Dan. 9:24-27], the last seven years of Man's Day) forms the beginning of the Lord's Day. Such a teaching has Man's Day and the Lord's Day existing at the same time on earth during the last seven years of Man's Day.

Not only is this *not possible*, and not only is this *not taught* anywhere in Scripture, but Scripture teaches *just the opposite* relative to the timing of the beginning of the Lord's Day on earth.

In the Book of Joel, following the Day of the Lord being introduced in connection with judgment befalling the nations (1:15; 2:1), the timing of the beginning of the Day of the Lord is seen. In Joel 2:27-3:21, the beginning of the Day of the Lord on earth is clearly seen to be *following Christ's return to the earth at the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week, after Man's Day has run its course*. Joel's prophecy, in actuality, *cannot* be understood after any other fashion.

(A place where many go seeking to show that the last seven years of Man's Day, Daniel's Seventieth Week, is referred to in Scripture as *the Day of the Lord* is I Thess. 5:2-4. They seek to make these verses relate to the unsaved remaining on earth following the removal of the Church, seen at the end of the preceding chapter [vv. 13-18]. But, understanding these verses both contextually and in the light of other Scripture [e.g., Joel's prophecy], it is quite evident that this cannot be the case. These verses, continuing from the previous chapter, have to do with Christians removed from Man's Day and placed in the Lord's Day at the end of the present dispensation.

Also, many seek to do this same thing with Rev. 1:10, saying that John was removed into heaven and shown events of the Tribulation, which they relate to the mention of the Lord's Day in this verse. Such individuals seek to teach that the Lord's Day in chapter one relates to events of the Tribulation, beginning in chapter six.

But exactly the same thing can be said here that was said about the incorrect understanding of I Thess. 5:2-4. Contextually, and in the light of other Scripture [again *ref.* Joel's prophecy], neither can be understood as they are often taught.

Revelation 1:10, contextually, has to do with Christians removed from the earth at the end of the present dispensation and placed in the Lord's Day, for this is the scene presented in the verses immediately following [vv. 11-20]. Events of the Tribulation seen beginning in chapter six do not occur during the Lord's Day. Rather, they occur during the last seven years of Man's Day.

That "the Lord's day" couldn't refer to time on earth during the Tribulation is shown another way in the book. John was removed into the Lord's Day *before* the Tribulation began on earth; and, if the Lord's Day is understood correctly, John would have remained in the Lord's Day, in heaven, not only when moved through time covering the Tribulation but also when moved through time beyond the Tribulation into the Millennium.)

That Which John Saw

John being removed from the earth into heaven foreshadows the removal of the Church at the end of the dispensation. Not only was he removed from Man's Day into the Lord's Day but a *trumpet* is seen connected with this removal in both Rev. 1:10 and

Rev. 4:1, where the same scene is repeated (for reasons which are discussed in Chapter IV of this book). And this is in complete keeping with I Thess. 4:13-5:9, where Christians are removed from the earth in connection with a trumpet (4:16), being removed from Man's Day into the Lord's Day (5:2-4).

John, through his experiences, depicting the Church being removed into heaven at the end of the dispensation, then relates things about the appearance of the Church in Christ's presence in that day. John sees "seven golden candlesticks," and in the midst of the seven candlesticks he sees *Christ in all His Glory*, described as One Whose "countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (v. 16); or, as previously described by Paul when He saw Christ enswathed in this same covering of Glory, as he traveled from Jerusalem to Damascus: "above the brightness of the ['midday'] sun" (Acts 26:13).

The "seven candlesticks" are stated to be *the seven Churches* (named in v. 11, with details provided about each in chs. 2, 3). The number "seven" is one of five numbers used in Scripture to show *completeness* in one form or another (the others are *three, ten, twelve, and forty*). The number "seven" shows *the completeness of that which is in view*, and this is a number used particularly concerning the judgments seen occurring throughout a large part of the book beginning in chapter six. There are *seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials*, showing *God's complete judgment upon Israel and the nations during this period*. This is what it will take (God's complete judgment, occurring in the manner presented in this book) to bring Israel to *the place of repentance*, which will, in turn, allow numerous necessary events to occur prior to the ushering in of the Messianic Era.

All seven Churches seen in Christ's presence at this time depict *the complete Church* being removed from the earth at the time of the rapture. The Church in Philadelphia (which had kept *the word of Christ's patience*) and the Church in Laodicea (which is described as *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*) are seen in Christ's presence *together following the rapture, both awaiting the same thing — judgment, with a view to the Messianic Era*.

It is widely but erroneously taught that only part of the Church

(the faithful) will be removed at the time of the rapture (an event which those teaching along these lines usually see occurring before the Tribulation), with the remaining Christians left behind to go through either part or all of the Tribulation (as to whether it is *part* or *all* depends on who is doing the teaching; this false teaching takes numerous forms).

As any corruption of Biblical doctrine, erroneous teachings concerning the rapture emanate from a failure to begin with the Old Testament types and properly understand these types in the light of their New Testament antitypes. Beginning with the types and progressing in a correct manner from that point, *it would not be possible to teach a selective-type rapture from Scripture.*

And the preceding would be true of any Biblical doctrine. One has to begin with the Old Testament types, properly understand these types, and then move on into the New Testament antitypes and see the proper relationship between the types and the antitypes. If Christians would do this, *there would be far more uniformity of interpretation of Scripture throughout Christendom.*

God has interwoven types throughout Biblical history for *an evident reason.* They are there *to help man properly understand the antitypes.* And any Christian ignoring the types is not only failing to study Scripture after the manner in which God structured His Word but he is doing this to his own peril and to the peril of any to whom he might minister.

The importance of correctly studying Scripture after the fashion in which it has been structured cannot be overemphasized.

2

Caught into His Presence (II)

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter (Rev. 1:12-19).

Everything about the revealed identity and description of Christ in Rev. 1:12-18 is both *Messianic* and *judgmental* in nature. God's dispensational work relative to the Church is presented as *complete*

at this time. The Spirit will have *completed* His 2,000-year search for a bride for God's Son; and *the complete Church* (shown by *the seven candlesticks*) — all Christians, both the resurrected and the ones living at that time — will have been removed from Man's Day on earth and placed in the Lord's Day in heaven.

Everything, from this point forward, not only moves beyond the Spirit's work of procuring a bride for the Son but it also moves beyond Christ's work as High Priest on behalf of Christians — a work being performed *solely for Christians during the present dispensation alone.* And since Christ's high priestly work on behalf of Christians *cannot exist beyond the present dispensation* — beyond the time Christians are removed into the heavens (as seen in Revelation chapter one), bringing the dispensation to a close — the popular view which depicts Christ as High Priest in Rev. 1:12-18, rather than Judge, *cannot possibly be correct.* Rather, matters at this point can only have to do with Christ's future work as *Judge*, which will occur after the dispensation has been completed but preceding the Messianic Era.

And this is *exactly* how matters are clearly presented in the latter part of this first chapter — *the complete Church in Christ's presence, awaiting judgment, with a view to the Messianic Era.*

The Son of Man

With the Church in Christ's presence in the Lord's Day, Christ is introduced in Rev. 1:13a by the title, "Son of man." That which follows this introductory title in verses 13b-16 is *a description* of the "Son of man" as He will appear in that coming day after the Church has been removed from Man's Day on earth and placed in Christ's presence in the Lord's Day in heaven.

"Son of man" is *a Messianic* title, first seen in Scripture in Ps. 8:4, then in Dan. 7:13. Both of these Old Testament verses are set within Messianic passages and establish, in *an unchangeable fashion*, exactly how the title *must* be understood throughout the eighty-eight times it appears in the New Testament.

The title *must* be understood in the New Testament *after the exact manner in which it was previously introduced in the Old Testa-*

ment. That is to say, *after being introduced as a Messianic title in the Old Testament, "Son of man" must be understood as a Messianic title throughout its usage in the New Testament.* This is simply one of the many ways in which God has structured His Word, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

The title appears eighty-four times throughout the gospel accounts, where Christ used the title numerous times referring to Himself. Then, outside the gospel accounts in the New Testament, the title is only used four times — Acts 7:56; Heb. 2:6 (a quotation from Ps. 8:4); Rev. 1:13; 14:14.

Christ used the title in Luke 19:10 to describe *His mission* at the time of His first coming — “to seek and to save that which was lost” (a Messianic title associated, contextually, with salvation for the Jewish people in relation to the proffered kingdom). The title is used in connection with *Christ's betrayal, death, and resurrection* in Matt. 12:40; 20:18; 26:2 (note that salvation provided through Christ's finished work at Calvary is for a purpose; salvation has to do with man ultimately being placed back in the position for which he was created, which will be realized in the Messianic Era). It is used pertaining to events surrounding *Christ's second advent* in Matt. 24:27-44; Luke 12:40 (events surrounding Christ's return, with a view to the Messianic Era). And it is used relative to the Father having committed *all judgment* to the Son in John 5:22-27 (judgment such as that of Christians at Christ's judgment seat, with a view to the Messianic Era).

The broad use of the title, “Son of man,” throughout Christ's earthly ministry at the time of His first coming would serve to illustrate a little-appreciated fact. *Everything* surrounding His first coming — His birth, His ministry to Israel, His death, burial, resurrection, and His ascension — had *Messianic ramifications*.

John 1:11 would serve to illustrate the point in one fashion:

“He came unto his own [neuter in Gk. text, *His Own things*], and his own [masculine in Gk. text, *His Own people, the Jewish people*] received him not.”

His Own things had to do with those things associated with the title, “Son of man.” It had to do with His being born “King of

the Jews" (Matt. 2:2); it had to do with the message proclaimed throughout His earthly ministry, a message to the Jewish people pertaining to the kingdom (Matt. 4:17-25; 10:5-8; Luke 10:1ff); it had to do with the throne of David (Luke 1:31-33; cf. II Sam. 7:12-16; Zech. 6:12, 13); it had to do with the title placed over His head at the time of His crucifixion (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19); and it had to do with the message which He proclaimed following His resurrection, preceding His ascension (Luke 24:25-27, 44; Acts 1:3).

Then note Christ's question and the disciples' response in this same respect in Matt. 16:13-16:

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The reference to "Christ" in Peter's response had to do with acknowledging Jesus as *the Messiah*, the One Who would rule and reign; and the reference to "Son" had to do with *His firstborn status*. He was God's firstborn Son, the One Who would exercise the rights of primogeniture (kingly, priestly, and double portion rights), all carrying *Messianic ramifications* in complete keeping with the titles "Messiah" and "Son of man."

Peter had acknowledged the Son of Man's true identity — the One Who would rule and reign as the great King-Priest over the double portion of the Father's goods, in both heavenly and earthly spheres of the kingdom. And Peter's statement prompted Christ to respond by saying,

"...Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven (v. 17b).

In Revelation chapter one, the Spirit moved John to introduce Christ as *Judge* through calling attention to His Messianic title.

Then the Spirit moved John to describe the “Son of man” as He will appear in that coming day. And this is the person which all Christians will one day see, to be introduced by this same Messianic title, Who will be seen exactly as described in the account.

(Events of that coming day cannot possibly occur after any other fashion than seen in Revelation chapter one, for John, having been moved forward into that future day and time, has already seen these things occur. And *no change* can take place in that which has already occurred.)

And the “Son of man,” as well, is the person Who will subsequently return to the earth at the complete end of Man’s Day in order to bring all things portended by this title to pass, concluded by the ushering in of the Messianic Era (*cf.* Rev. 19b-20a).

1) *Manner in Which Clothed*

Christ, as “Son of man,” is seen “clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps [‘breasts’] with a golden girdle” (v. 13b).

This garment could describe the type clothing worn by either *a priest or a judge*. And the introductory title, “Son of man,” could easily relate to either, for there is really no realm of Christ’s ministry at any point in time that does not, after some fashion, have for its goal *the Messianic Era*.

It matters not whether events during past, present, or future time are being dealt with (future time preceding the Messianic Era), *all of God’s work* from the very beginning in Genesis chapter one has *one goal in view*. *All work* (restorative work) throughout the six days in this chapter — which foreshadows all work (restorative work) throughout the six days, the 6,000 years of Man’s Day — has *one goal in view*. And that is clearly set forth in this opening section of Scripture, establishing a foundation upon which all subsequent Scripture rests.

The seventh day, the Sabbath, a day of rest, followed six days of restorative work in the opening thirty-four verses of Scripture. And, in that which this opening section of Scripture foreshadows, a seventh day, a seventh 1,000-year period — the Sabbath rest awaiting the people of God (Heb. 4:4-9), the Messianic Era — will follow

six days of restorative work, 6,000 years of restorative work.

Thus, the title "Son of man" could be used of Christ relative to His ministry either as *High Priest* or as *Judge*, allowing this title to be used of Christ relative to work both present and future.

As *High Priest*, performing a work solely for Christians, Christ is providing a present cleansing for the "many sons" whom He is about to bring "unto glory" (Heb. 2:10). He is providing a cleansing for all Christians who avail themselves of that being provided, which would be seen particularly in matters surrounding His bride, for whom the Spirit is presently searching (cf. Gen. 24:1ff; John 13:8-11; I John 1:5-10). And this is a work which, as all His works preceding the Messianic Era, has *the Messianic Era in view*.

As *Judge* in a future day, all Christians will stand in His presence to render an account. And the Spirit's work during the present dispensation will, exactly as seen in the type in Gen. 24, be shown to have been successful.

The works of Christians will be tried "by ['in'] fire." And through decisions and determinations at the judgment seat, numerous Christians will be shown qualified to be among those comprising that part of Christ's body which will not only be revealed as His bride but complete the Son, allowing Him to reign (cf. I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10, 11; Heb. 2:10).

(Exactly as in the type, the second Man, the last Adam will have a bride taken from His body which, when presented back to Him will provide a *completeness* not heretofore existing, allowing Him to ascend the throne — the man and the woman together — as one complete being.)

Though both the title "Son of man" and the description of Christ in "a garment down to the foot" could relate to or describe Christ as either *High Priest* or *Judge*, two things in the text show that *only the latter* can possibly be in view.

First, note the timing of the scene. Events depicted, contextually, can only occur *beyond* the present dispensation. And as previously shown, Christ's ministry as High Priest is for Christians at a particular time, during time covered by the present dispensation, not beyond. Thus, the scene *cannot possibly* have to do with

Christ's high priestly work.

Second, the girdle is seen about Christ's breasts, which is the position of the girdle on the dress of a judge, not a priest. A priest wore the girdle about his waist, and would often use the girdle to tuck things into (e.g., a towel, parts of his priestly robe) as he went about his work. This is the apparent scene when Christ girded himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet in John chapter thirteen, foreshadowing His future priestly work on behalf of Christians.

(Note in Rev. 15:6 that the seven angels having the seven last plagues [the concluding judgments during the Tribulation] are each clothed in "pure and white linen" and are girded with "golden girdles" *about their breasts*. The scene is one of *judgment*, and the girdles are seen in their proper place for this type activity.)

2) Descriptive Characteristics

The description of the One seen in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, following His identifying title ("Son of man") and the description of His dress, begins with a statement which can only refer to both *His longevity and holiness* — "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow" (v. 14a). The One Who has always existed and always will exist, the One without beginning or ending (John 1:1, 2, 14), the One without sin Who judged sin at Calvary (II Cor. 5:21), is about to judge Christians relative to works (I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10, 11).

It is common in Scripture to introduce a member of the God-head through the means seen here, through stating something characteristic of the person.

Note, for example, how the prayer often referred to as "the Lord's prayer" in Matt. 6:9-13 begins: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (v. 9b). The Father is addressed, and a characterizing statement about the Father follows. Then the subject of the prayer begins: "Thy kingdom come..." (v. 10a).

Or, note how each of the seven letters to the Churches begins in Revelation chapters two and three. Each begins with a descriptive statement concerning Christ, taken either directly from chapter one or from that portended by the things stated in this chapter.

Only then does the subject matter of each epistle begin.

And, as in Matt. 6:9-13, after one statement concerning a member of the Godhead in Rev. 1:14 ("His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow"), the text then goes immediately into the subject matter at hand — *judgment*. The One in the midst of the seven candlesticks is seen having *eyes* "as a flame of fire," *feet* "like unto fine brass," *a voice* "as the sound of many waters," *a sharp two-edged sword* coming from "his mouth," and a *countenance* described "as the sun shining in his strength."

"Fire," "brass," and "a sword" all speak of *different aspects of judgment*. "Fire" and "brass" are seen relative to *a judgment for sin in the tabernacle ministry in Israel*. Fire burned on the altar in the courtyard in connection with sacrifices, and both the altar and the laver (also in the courtyard) were constructed of brass. This is where sin was judged through sacrifices and washings. Then note the use of "a sword" in *a judgmental scene at the time of Christ's return* in Rev. 19:15.

During Christ's earthly ministry, on one occasion the Pharisees and chief priests sent men to take Him and bring Him into their presence. But the men returned empty-handed, saying, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:32, 45, 46). On a subsequent occasion, when Judas led a band of men to take Christ, the men were caused *to fall backward to the ground* at the sound of His voice when He identified Himself by saying, "I am he [*lit.*, 'I Am']" (John 18:3-8).

(The correct translation of Jesus' response in John 18:5, 6, 8 is "I Am," not "I am he," identifying Himself with the God of the O.T. in Ex. 3:14. And there is a repeated emphasis on the pronoun, "I." Brought over into English, the response would be similar to saying, "I Myself, I Am.")

And Peter experienced Christ's piercing eyes after he had, three times, denied the One Whom, only a short time earlier, he had emphatically declared that *he would never deny* (Matt. 26:35; Luke 22:33).

It is recorded in Luke 22:61, following this triad of denials, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter..." And it is evi-

dent from the text that Peter fully observed and experienced the Lord's actions.

The word for "look" in the Greek text is not just the regular word for "look" (*blepo*). Rather, it is an intensified form of this word (*emblepo*). Christ didn't just look at Peter. He looked into Peter's eyes in a manner which *penetrated his very being*. And Peter knew it, *he experienced it*, which caused him *to go out and weep bitterly*.

Every Christian in that coming day will stand before Christ as *Judge*, with His piercing eyes, "as a flame of fire," and His voice, "as the sound of many waters." And Peter's reaction to Christ's piercing and penetrating look in a past day will be the experience of numerous disobedient Christians in a future day, causing them to do *exactly* the same thing which Peter did — *go out and weep bitterly*.

Then, as if that will not be enough, His countenance, with a body enswathed in a covering of glory, will be "as the sun shineth in his strength" (v. 16); and judgment meted out will consist of completely righteous decisions and determinations by the One Who has existed from eternity, identified with the God of the Old Testament.

Seven Stars, Seven Candlesticks

Christ is seen holding *seven stars* in His right hand as He stands in the midst of *seven candlesticks*. He holds one and walks in the midst of the other. And that which the metaphors are used to represent is clearly stated in the closing words of chapter one, immediately prior to the seven short epistles to the seven Churches in chapters two and three:

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are *the angels of the seven Churches*: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are *the seven Churches*" (v. 20).

The Book of Revelation is filled with angelic activity, and there is no reason to think that these seven angels represent anything other than angels. They are specifically stated to be angels of

Churches, and in chapters two and three, each epistle is addressed to the angel of a particular Church.

This would be in perfect keeping with the reference to angels in Heb. 1:14:

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation [*lit.*, ...‘to minister for the sake of the ones about to inherit salvation’].”

And note something about the seven epistles in chapters two and three. The things in these two chapters form a continuation from chapter one. And though it is evident that *a history of Christendom* is shown through activity in seven Churches existing in the first century at the time John wrote, the epistles, in their contextual setting, can only show *more particularly things future* — *things about the judgment seat, continuing from chapter one.*

Each epistle is structured *exactly the same way*:

- 1) *I know thy works.*
- 2) *A call to repentance, or to heed the Lord's command.*
- 3) *Then, an overcomer's promise.*

That dealt with at the judgment seat will be 1) *works*, which will show whether those being judged 2) *did or did not repent or obey the Lord's command.* And this will be with 3) *a view to realizing or not realizing the overcomer's promises*, which have to do with realizing or not realizing an inheritance with Christ during the coming age.

Angelic activity seen in Heb. 1:14 is with a view to exactly the same thing seen in Revelation chapters one through three relative to Christians. And an angel occupying an appointed position in relation to each of the seven Churches would be in perfect keeping with this thought. In that respect, there would be an angel placed over each Church, and there would be other angels ministering to Christians within each Church, with the ministry of all the angels having *one goal in view* — Christians overcoming during Man's Day in order that they might realize an inheritance during the Lord's Day (*cf.* Heb. 2:5).

(A popular interpretation of the seven angels seeks to identify them as *the pastors* of the seven Churches. This would be somewhat based on the fact that the Greek word translated “angel” [*aggelos*] means “messenger” and is used of men in that respect a few times in Scripture [Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; James 2:25]. However, this type understanding of *aggelos* occurs in only a scattering of the numerous times that the word appears in the N.T., referring mainly to “angels,” not men.

In the Book of Revelation, the word *aggelos* appears sixty-six times beyond chapters one through three, and the word is not used a single time throughout this remaining part of the book referring to men. Also, to say that the word *aggelos* in chapters one through three refers to the pastors of the seven Churches would be out of line with the manner in which the N.T. presents pastors in the Churches. In the N.T., when pastors are spoken of in connection with Churches, there is no such thing as a Church with one pastor. Churches in the N.T. are always seen having more than one pastor, or elder [*cf.* Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14].)

Thus, that depicted in Revelation chapters one through three evidently has to do with angelic activity in the Churches, angelic activity among Christians during the present dispensation. And this activity has to do with a ministry among Christians, with a view to Christians overcoming and realizing an inheritance with Christ during the coming age.

A history of the Church throughout the dispensation is presented through the manner in which chapters two and three are structured; but, more particularly and contextually, the two chapters simply present *a continuation from chapter one* and have to do with details surrounding the coming judgment of Christians, with material in the chapters dropping back and including the necessity of present preparation.

Write...

After John had seen the complete Church in heaven, appearing before Christ in judgment, he was told to “Write...” And that which he was told to write provides *a threefold outline of the book*.

“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter [*lit.*, ‘after these things’]” (v. 19).

“The things which thou hast seen” could only refer to the things in chapter one, preceding verse nineteen, for that is all John had seen thus far.

Then, “the things which are,” will have to be understood two ways, in keeping with the two ways chapters two and three are to be understood:

1) “The things which are” would, first of all, have to be understood as the things which John was witnessing at that time, in the future, in the Lord’s Day (which would be the things which he had seen in the previous verses, *i.e.*, in this respect, “the things which are” would be the same as “the things which thou hast seen”).

John had seen *the complete Church in heaven appearing before Christ in judgment. And this, of necessity, would have to extend into and include that seen in chapters two and three — the seven epistles to the seven Churches.*

2) Then, “the things which are,” as well, would have to do with the secondary manner in which chapters two and three are to be understood — *showing a history of Christendom relative to the proclamation of the Word of the Kingdom during the present dispensation.* This history would begin with Ephesus, which *had left its first love*, and end with Laodicea, which was “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (2:4; 3:17).

In this respect, “the things which are,” from John’s perspective, though at a future time, *would reach back into the present dispensation.*

(Refer to the next two chapters in this book, Chapters III, IV, for additional information on the preceding.)

Then, “the things which shall be hereafter [Gk., *meta tauta*, ‘after these things’]” could only refer to events beginning in chapter four where this expression (*meta tauta*) is used twice in the first verse. “The things which shall be hereafter [‘after these things’]” would refer to events occurring *after the present dispensation, after subsequent events surrounding the judgment seat (chs. 1-3); and these following events would encompass that seen throughout the remainder of the book (chs. 4-22).*

3

Judged in His Presence

Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus... Smyrna... Pergamos... Thyatira... Sardis... Philadelphia... Laodicea write...
(Rev. 2:1a, 8a, 12a, 18a; 3:1a, 7a, 14a).

The seven epistles directed to seven Churches in Asia in Revelation chapters two and three form *a continuation* from introductory, foundational material in chapter one. And if this connection between chapter one and chapters two and three is not understood, the main thrust of that presented in these seven short epistles will be missed.

In the first chapter, the seven Churches are seen in heaven in Christ's presence *in the Lord's Day*, not here on earth separated from Christ's presence (a personal, bodily presence, as seen in this chapter) during Man's Day (v. 10). And these seven Churches are further seen in Christ's presence when He is exercising a position as *Judge* (a future role which Christ will enter at the conclusion of the present dispensation), not a position as High Priest (Christ's office and work throughout the present dispensation in the heavenly sanctuary, on behalf of Christians).

Thus, the entire scene is not only *future and judicial* but *removed from the earth and in the heavens*. Since *the complete Church*, shown by the number of the Churches ("seven," showing *the completeness of that which is in view*), is seen in heaven, this can only have to do with events following the removal of the Church from the earth at the end of the dispensation; and since the complete Church is seen in Christ's presence at this time, with Christ occupying a judicial role, this can only have to do with the future appearance of all Christians before the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10, 11).

This, in turn, provides the basis for the continuation of the same subject matter in chapters two and three, where specific information is provided relative to each of the seven Churches previously introduced in chapter one. And though it is evident that *a history of Christendom* is shown through activity in these seven Churches existing in the first century at the time John penned these two chapters, the epistles, in their contextual setting, can only show *more particularly things future* — *things surrounding the judgment seat, continuing from chapter one.*

Each epistle is structured *exactly the same way, following a brief, descriptive depiction of the Son:*

- 1) *Beginning with Christ's statement, "I know thy works."*
- 2) *Then, a call to repentance, or to heed the Lord's command.*
- 3) *Then, an overcomer's promise.*

(Note also in chapters two and three that *Christ speaks to the Churches as Judge* [e.g., cf. 1:13-16, 20; 2:1, 12, 18], *a role which He will not occupy until the present dispensation has drawn to a close.*)

And this is in perfect keeping with the judicial scene presented in chapter one, introducing chapters two and three, with chapter one providing necessary foundational material which would allow an individual to properly understand Christ's words to the seven Churches within their contextual setting. That dealt with at the judgment seat will be 1) *works*, which will show whether those being judged 2) *did or did not repent, or obey the Lord's command.* And this will be with 3) *a view to realizing or not realizing the overcomer's promises*, which have to do with realizing or not realizing an inheritance with Christ during the coming age.

I Know Thy Works

The basis for all judgment in Scripture is *works*. God judged sin at Calvary on the basis of *His Son's finished work* (John 19:30); Christians will be judged at the end of the present dispensation on *the basis of works* (I Cor. 3:12-15; II Cor. 5:10, 11); Israel will be judged following the future Tribulation on *the basis of works*

(Ezek. 20:34-38; 44:9-16); Gentiles coming out of the Tribulation will be judged on *the basis of works* (Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:4-6); and even the unsaved will be judged following the Millennium on *the basis of works* (Rev. 20:11-15).

Faith though cannot be separated from *works* in the preceding respect (except for the unsaved, who are in no position to exercise faith), for “without faith *it is impossible* to please him [God]” (Heb. 11:6a).

But, in relation to *judgment*, God looks at the final analysis of the matter. *Works emanate out of faith*, with works forming that which *results from faith* (James 2:14-26). And it is *these resulting works* which are at the forefront when *judgment* is in view.

A saved person can either exercise faithfulness or unfaithfulness, with works emanating from both. In I Cor. 3:12, this is set forth in *the two types of works* presented. *One type* is depicted by the words “gold, silver, precious stones,” and *the other type* is depicted by the words “wood, hay, stubble.” Works will be tried by *fire* at the judgment seat (v. 13). That depicted by “gold, silver, precious stones,” *emanating out of faithfulness*, will pass through the fire unscathed; but that depicted by “wood, hay, stubble,” *resulting from unfaithfulness*, will be consumed by the fire.

Those individuals shown to have possessed works described by the former (“gold, silver, precious stones”) will experience the end result of the salvation of their souls, which will allow them to have a part in activities attendant the bride and Christ’s coming reign. But those individuals shown to have possessed works described by the latter (“wood, hay, stubble”) will, instead, “suffer loss” (the loss of their souls), though they themselves will be “saved [their eternal salvation unaffected]; yet so as by [‘through’] fire” (I Cor. 3:15).

Relative to the unsaved, “faith” is not in the picture. But, still, even though “faith” is absent, all that can remain to come under judgment are *works*. Thus, the unsaved, as the saved, are judged on the basis of *works*, for there is nothing else upon which they could be judged.

The unsaved can’t be judged on the basis of prior *unbelief* in Christ, no more so than can the saved be judged on the basis of prior *belief* in Christ. According to John 3:18, the unsaved *have*

already been judged (as the matter pertains to Christ and His finished work at Calvary, for they have not believed), and no judgment awaits the saved (also as the matter pertains to Christ and His finished work at Calvary, for they have believed).

This remains true of both the saved and the unsaved because God has already judged sin in the person of His Son. Thus, this is *a completed and closed matter, for God has already been satisfied*. And, resultingly, there can be no further judgment on this issue:

“He that believeth on him is not condemned [‘is not judged’]: but he that believeth not is condemned already [‘has already been judged’], because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.”

The second word “condemned [‘judged’]” and the subsequent word “believed” (both used relative to the unsaved) are both in the perfect tense in the Greek text, pointing to action completed in past time with the results of this action existing during present time in a finished state. Consequently, for the unsaved, this will *never* be an issue in future time. It can’t be an issue in future time. Such would be impossible. Relative to their eternal destiny, the unsaved have already been judged (past) because of unbelief (past). *Nothing* surrounding judgment, as it pertains to this matter, can be carried beyond this point in past time.

And exactly the same future non-judgmental situation exists for the saved relative to their eternal destiny, for the same reason. The saved, exactly as the unsaved, have already been judged. But in their case, *belief*, not unbelief, enters into the matter. And, exactly as in the case of the unsaved, *nothing* surrounding judgment, as it pertains to this entire matter, can be carried beyond this point in past time.

For the saved though, unlike the unsaved, judgment has taken place through a Substitute Who has paid sin’s penalty (death) on their behalf. And everything surrounding the matter has been taken care of *in past time*, by Another, with *God being satisfied*.

(In the preceding respect, as seen in John 3:18, because judgment has taken place for the saved through a Substitute, there can be no past judgment for *the individual per se*. But, for the unsaved, since a

Substitute is not in view, this past judgment would have to pertain to *the individual himself*. And this is why this same verse refers to a past judgment for *the unsaved alone*.)

Because the basis for all “judgment” in Scripture is *works*, and because *judgment* is centrally in view in Revelation chapters two and three (contextually, continuing from chapter one), Christ’s words in each of the seven epistles begins with the statement, “I know thy works.” With *judgment* centrally in view — not judgment relative to their eternal salvation (an impossibility) but judgment relative to that which lies out ahead, relative to the Messianic Era — *these epistles could begin no other way*.

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, SALVATION OF THE SOUL, Appendix I, “Faith and Works.”)

Repent...Heed the Lord’s Command

God’s Son, described in Revelation chapter one, Whose eyes were as “a flame of fire,” knew exactly what had been and was presently occurring in each of the seven Churches. The Son, with exactly the same full knowledge (omniscience) possessed by the Father — for He was, is, and always will be the Father manifested in the flesh — knew all there was to know about everyone and everything in each of the seven Churches. And after He states to each, “I know thy works,” He makes their works known, dealing with those in each Church on the basis of their works.

Exactly the same thing will occur yet future relative to that which this section of the book deals with. All Christians will stand before Christ in judgment, exactly as the matter is revealed in chapter one. They will stand before the One Whose eyes are as “a flame of fire,” eyes which can and apparently will penetrate into the very soul of each individual (*cf.* Luke 22:61, 62).

In fact, the material in Revelation chapter one could be made even more specific, for that stated in this chapter concerning the Church in Christ’s presence is not just a statement concerning how things will be in that future day. Rather, *this is the actual scene* surrounding the future appearance of all Christians in Christ’s

presence, before His judgment seat.

John was moved from the present time into a future time, in the Lord's Day. And in this future time, in the Lord's Day, he was allowed to see different things occurring before they actually occurred. But that can be turned around, saying, the things which John was allowed to see, yet to occur, will have to occur for the simple reason that they have already occurred. And one can no more change these things set in the future (which have already occurred) than he can change things set in the past (which, as well, have already occurred).

(Note: As previously discussed in Chapter I of this book [pp. 4-7], time is *relative*, not a constant. God can *change time, stop time, and move a man into either past or future time.*

As previously seen, God moved Ezekiel back in time and John forward in time [Ezek. 8; Rev. 1]. Ezekiel, having been moved back in time, saw things occur which had already occurred; and John, having been moved forward in time, saw things occur which are yet to occur. Then God caused time to stand still during Joshua's day [Josh. 10:12-14] and reversed time during Hezekiah's day [II Kings 20:8-11; Isa. 38:7, 8].

And the very fact that the things which John saw have already occurred, alone, guarantees that they will yet occur at a future time. *One simply cannot change history.*

Then there is something particularly relative to the subject matter at hand. John saw all Christians in Christ's presence at this future time, being judged. In short, John saw you and me there. *We have already been there*, which, alone, guarantees our presence there at a yet future time. Again, *history cannot be changed.*)

The first thing which John saw in this respect was Christians appearing before Christ in judgment. In other words, that seen in the latter part of chapter one is not just something similar to or like that which will occur. Rather, ***THIS IS THAT WHICH WILL OCCUR!***

And John was shown that which will occur — recording that which will occur, to be made available to *all Christians* during the opening years of the present dispensation (directed to “seven Churches,” showing *completeness*) — in order that *all Christians*

throughout the dispensation might have *an eye-witness account of that which they will one day experience, leaving them even further without excuse at the judgment seat.*

This introductory material then allows the seven epistles to seven Churches in Asia, which immediately follow, to each be structured after a manner which continues the thought of *judgment* from chapter one. And not only is this structure seen in each of these seven epistles, but at least two other things can be seen in these epistles as well, which reflect on events during present time, preceding events surrounding the judgment seat:

1) The order in which these epistles appear depicts a history of the Church throughout the dispensation (from Ephesus, which left its “first love,” to Laodicea, described as “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”).

2) Dealing with these seven existing Churches in the manner seen not only allowed the Lord to deal directly with all the Churches during the time in which John lived but also to provide vital information for all the Churches which would exist throughout subsequent time during the complete dispensation. And, as both the text and context clearly show, this would be with a view to *future judgment and the Messianic Era.*

Everything about these epistles — their structure, that stated about each, the order in which they were given, the reason for the call to repent, the reason for the exhortation and commands — points out ahead to *the judgment seat* and then to *the Messianic Era* beyond. The deterioration seen within the existing Churches and also seen in the order of their arrangement in chapters two and three necessitates *the call to repentance, the exhortations, and the commands.* Then, this call for repentance, the exhortations, and the commands look ahead to *the judgment seat;* and all of the overcomer’s promises are *Messianic* within their scope of fulfillment.

Everything at the end of Scripture remains *in complete keeping* with that seen at the beginning of Scripture — *a seventh day*

of rest following six days of restorative work. And there is *nothing* within these seven epistles which moves beyond that point within the scope of their fulfillment (*i.e.*, there is *nothing* in these epistles which moves beyond the seventh day, the Messianic Era).

There is *nothing* in these epistles about eternal life, the ages beyond the Messianic Era, etc. *All of the material* in these epistles is about events occurring during time within that foreshadowed by *work* during the six days in Genesis chapter one, progressing to that foreshadowed by *rest* during the seventh day in Genesis chapter two, not about things which will occur during the eternal ages beyond this time.

(For a correct and proper interpretation throughout Scripture in the preceding respect, one must remain within the time-frame set forth in the first thirty-four verses in Scripture, in Gen. 1:1-2:3 [six and seven days foreshadowing six and seven thousand years]. A septenary structure is set forth in these opening verses, establishing at the very outset a foundation upon which all subsequent Scripture rests.

[For information on the septenary structure of Scripture, refer to the author's books, THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE (Chapters I-IV) and HAD YE BELIEVED MOSES (Appendix II, "John and Moses")].

There are a few places in Scripture which deal with events outside the scope of the septenary structure in Gen. 1:1-2:3 [*i.e.*, events both preceding Man's Day and events following the Messianic Era]. But when Scripture does move outside the septenary structure set forth at the beginning [*e.g.*, Ezek. 28:14-19; Rev. 21, 22], it is always quite evident that this is being done. And this has apparently been done at times so that man can better tie the whole of the matter together, understanding why things existed as they did preceding Man's Day on the one hand, and understanding the goal toward which everything moves following the Messianic Era on the other hand, when the Son delivers the kingdom up to His Father [I Cor. 15:24-28].)

To Him That Overcometh

The manner in which most interpret the seven overcomer's promises, one to each of the seven Churches in chapters two and

three, centers around these promises relating to one's eternal salvation. Most erroneously interpret these promises as either:

- 1) A call to unsaved individuals within the seven Churches to be saved and realize these different promises.
- 2) As statements to saved individuals in these Churches, showing that they will realize these different promises simply on the basis of the fact that they have been saved.

And I John 5:1-5 are verses usually referenced in an effort to substantiate the second part of the preceding.

This line of erroneous teaching emanates mainly from man's failure to see anything in Scripture except salvation by grace, *i.e.*, saved-unsaved issues. Practically everything is made to relate to this one subject. And this type teaching, brought over into the seven epistles in Revelation chapters two and three, results in not only the Church often being viewed from an incorrect perspective (usually seeing the Church comprised of both saved and unsaved individuals) but it also leaves little room for the overcomer's promises to be viewed from a correct perspective.

However, contrariwise, within the New Testament usage of the word "Church," as it is used relating to *the one new man* "in Christ," there is no such thing as a Church comprised of both saved and unsaved individuals. A person is either within or without the Church, depending on his saved or unsaved state. He is either a Jew, a Gentile (both without the Church), or a Christian (within the Church [I Cor. 10:32]).

Nor can unsaved individuals be thought of as *professors* instead of *possessors* and find themselves within the Church after the manner in which the word "Church" is used in the New Testament. Scripture knows nothing about *professors* as opposed to *possessors*. Scripture knows only *possessors* (the saved) and *non-possessors* (the unsaved).

The overcomer's promises, in the preceding respect, would, thus, relate to *Christians alone*. Further, these promises are worded after a fashion which clearly reveals that Christians can go in either of two directions relative to the promises. They can either *overcome* and realize the promises or they can *be overcome* [by the

world, the flesh, and/or the Devil] and fail to realize the promises.

(The word "Church" is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, a compound word which means "called out" [*ek*, meaning "out"; and *klesis*, meaning "to call"]. The word is used 115 times in the N.T., and in all except five instances it is used of Christians. It is used of the nation of Israel or those in Israel three times [Matt. 18:17; Acts 7:38], and it is used of a gathering of mainly unsaved Gentiles twice [some Jews present (Acts 19:32, 39)]. And in the five instances where the word is not used of Christians it could be better translated "assembly," understanding that "the assembly" was a *called out group* [Israel *called out* of the nations (Acts 7:38), or individuals *called out* of this nation (Matt. 18:17), or individuals *called out* from a Gentile nation (Acts 19:32, 39)].

The Hebrew text of the O.T. uses a corresponding word, *qahal*, which the Septuagint [Greek version of the O.T.] usually translates by using *ekklesia*. *Qahal* is found 112 times in the O.T., almost an equal number of times that the corresponding word, *ekklesia*, is found in the N.T. *Qahal* is usually translated in the English text as "assembly" [Deut. 9:10; 18:16] or "congregation" [Deut. 23:1-3; I Kings 8:14], and sometimes as "company" [I Sam. 19:20]. The word is used mainly of Israel or those in Israel, though a few times it is used of groups from among Gentile nations [Gen. 35:11; Ezek. 23:46, 47; 26:7; 38:4, 7, 13, 15].

Thus, when the Greek text of the New Testament uses the word *ekklesia*, where Christians are involved [110 of the 115 times that the word appears], it is dealing with *the saved alone* [the saved of the present dispensation, those comprising *the one new man* "in Christ"]. The word "Church" [*ekklesia*] is never used in the N.T. referring to an assembly of both Christians and Jews [including saved Jews comprising the nation during the time of the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel (from 33 AD to about 62 AD)] or to an assembly of both Christians and Gentiles. Rather, the word is always used *only* as a reference to those forming *the one new man* "in Christ," which is neither Jew nor Gentile [Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 3:10, 11].

In this respect, the Church [the *ekklesia*] of the N.T., having to do with Christians alone, is one thing; and the usage of a corresponding word in the O.T. [*qahal* (usually translated *ekklesia* in the Septuagint)], and the usage of *ekklesia* having to do with Israel or those in Israel three times in the N.T., is another thing entirely. The word Church in the N.T., when referring to the saved who are taken from among both the

Jews and the Gentiles during the present dispensation [110 of the 115 times the word is used], began on the day of Pentecost in 33 AD and will be removed at the end of the dispensation.

And any type teaching to the contrary is no more or no less than man's flawed ideology brought over into his understanding of Scripture, seeking to interpret, through natural means, that which is spiritually discerned. Scripture though is to be interpreted *solely* from the spiritual side of matters, *never* from the natural. Scripture is to be interpreted *in the light of Scripture, comparing that which is spiritual with that which is spiritual* [I Cor. 2:10-13], with man's thoughts and ideas on the matter of *no moment whatsoever.*)

As previously stated, I John 5:1-5 is often erroneously referenced by those seeking to show that the thought of *overcoming* in Revelation chapters two and three relates to eternal salvation. And the thought of *a bringing forth from above*, used three times in these verses, is the key to show how the verses should *correctly* be understood.

The expression, "born of God" or "begotten of him," referring to *a bringing forth from above*, is used ten times in I John (2:29; 3:9 [twice]; 4:7; 5:1 [three times], 4, 18 [twice]). The expression also appears in three other New Testament books — four times in John's gospel (1:13; 3:3, 5, 7), once in James (1:18), and two times in I Peter (1:3, 23). And *every time* the expression is used in John, James, I Peter, and I John, both textually and contextually, *the saved*, not the unsaved, are in view.

(Refer to the author's book, BROUGHT FORTH FROM ABOVE, for a comprehensive treatment of this subject in all three N.T. books.)

I John 5:1-5 is actually a companion passage to John 20:30, 31. These two verses in John's gospel have to do solely with Israel during the time of the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel, providing the reason for the eight signs in John's gospel. And I John 5:1-5 (apparently written at or about the same time as John's gospel) would seemingly have to do with Israel during this time as well. But, unlike John 20:30, 31, it would also have to do with Christians throughout the dispensation since the epistle was written centrally to Christians and signs are not in view in the passage

(*ref.* the author's book, SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL).

In this respect, I John 5:1-5 has to do with instructions concerning how Christians can overcome *the world* — “*by faith*” (v. 4), with instructions given elsewhere concerning how Christians can overcome *the flesh by mortification* (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5) and *the Devil by resistance* (James 4:7; I Peter 5:9). And, as in all of the other passages pertaining to being *brought forth from above*, the unsaved are not in view at all in any of these passages having to do with overcoming.

(For a more comprehensive discussion of the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three, refer to the author's book, JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST [Revised Edition], Chapters V-XI.

All sixteen chapters of this book contain supplementary material for Revelation chapters one through four, with a particular emphasis on the seven Churches in chapters two and three. In this respect, material on these seven Churches, covering seven chapters in the book, is dealt with within a context which covers nine other related chapters.)

4

Crowns Cast Before God's Throne

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

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold...

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne... (Rev. 4:1-4, 10).

Immediately following events seen in chapters two and three, attention is again called to that previously seen in chapter one — John being removed from Man's Day and placed in the Lord's Day (*cf.* 1:10; 4:1, 2a). Scripture, in its structure, has a way of repeating things at times in order to provide a base for supplying additional details on a subject. And repeating that seen in chapter one at this later time in the book, in chapter four (following events seen in chs. 1b-3), would have to do with Scripture

providing additional details relating to *the Church following events surrounding the judgment seat*.

In chapter one — immediately after John had been removed from Man's Day and placed in the Lord's Day, along with being moved forward in time — he was shown *the complete Church in Christ's presence, with Christ presented in His future judicial role, not in His present high priestly role*. And, since this is clearly *a judicial scene following the rapture*, that which is dealt with in these verses can only refer to *one thing*. These verses in chapter one can only refer to:

1) *The complete Church, all Christians throughout the dispensation (shown by the number of the Churches [seven, showing the completeness of that which is in view]), being removed from the earth at the end of the dispensation (shown by John's removal).*

2) *The complete Church appearing in Christ's presence to be judged (shown by Christ appearing as Judge, with the seven candlesticks [the seven Churches] appearing in His presence).*

Then, simply continuing from chapter one, the central subject of the subsequent two chapters has been established. This central subject, continuing into chapters two and three, clearly has to do with Christians before the judgment seat. But the manner in which the Churches are set forth in these two chapters — beginning with *Ephesus* which had left its "first love" (2:4) and ending with *Laodicea* which is described as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (3:17) — it is also evident that a history of the Church throughout the dispensation is shown in these chapters as well.

And, with these things in mind, the Spirit of God leading John to begin chapter four at the same point as seen in chapter one would not only provide a base for additional revelation surrounding Christians following the judgment seat but it would also provide a means for setting forth the same thing clearly taught a number of other places in Scripture — *the removal of the complete Church at the end of the dispensation*.

That is, viewing chapters two and three from *a historical*

perspective (depicting a history of the Church throughout the dispensation), chapter four, beginning at the same point as seen in chapter one, shows *the removal of the complete Church at the end of the dispensation*. And this is something which can be seen in a clearer respect in chapter four than it can in chapter one because, *from a historical perspective*, the complete dispensation is seen immediately preceding, in chapters two and three. Then, the removal of the Church at this point in time would also show the removal of the Church before the beginning of the Tribulation (seen beginning in chapter six). And this, as well, would be in complete accord with that seen elsewhere in Scripture.

The Heavenly Scene

Immediately after attention has been called to the same event seen in Rev. 1:10 (in Rev. 4:1, 2a), John, rather than seeing a judicial scene (as in ch. 1), now sees a rainbow encircled throne, with God seated on the throne (vv. 2b, 3). And surrounding this throne, John sees twenty-four other thrones and twenty-four crowned "elders" seated on these thrones (v. 4).

(The significance of attention called to a rainbow encircling God's throne at this point in the book can be seen in the first mention of a rainbow in Scripture [Gen. 9:13-17]. The rainbow appeared in Genesis following the completion of God's judgment [the Flood], and the same thing is seen in Rev. 4:3 relative to the completion of the judgment of Christians in chs. 1b-3.)

At this point in the book, events pertaining to the dispensation in which the Spirit spent 2,000 years searching for a bride for God's Son are complete (*chs. 2, 3, viewed from a historical perspective*). As well, events surrounding the judgment seat are also complete (*chs. 1b-3, viewed from the manner in which chs. 2, 3 are introduced in ch. 1b*). And, because of the reason for the dispensation and the judgment seat, and because of the point toward which all Scripture moves, the logical place where one would expect activity to now be centered at this point in the book would be concerning *bringing about the realization of that stated in Heb. 2:5*:

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak."

And events having to do with bringing to pass that stated in this verse is exactly what can be found in Revelation chapters four and five.

In the latter part of Rev. 4:2, immediately following the repetition from chapter one concerning the removal of the Church (vv. 1, 2a), John begins to describe various things about God's throne, which he both sees and hears — "lightnings," "thunderings," and "voices" coming out of the throne, and "lamps of fire burning before the throne" (v. 5). And "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne" John sees four living creatures who "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come"; and these living creatures "give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever" (vv. 6-9).

Then the scene returns to the twenty-four elders, who arise from their thrones, fall down before God, worship Him, relinquish their crowns to the One Who originally placed them in regal positions, and express adoration to the One worthy "to receive glory and honor and power" (vv. 4, 10, 11).

If an apex is to be found in the Book of Revelation, aside from the actions of the mighty angel in chapter ten and events surrounding Christ's return in chapter nineteen, the action of these twenty-four elders would have to be considered. The action of these angels in Revelation chapter four is *significant beyond degree* in relation to the central message of this book.

Crowns, Regality, Government

"Crowns" have to do with *regality*, and *the government of the earth* is in view throughout the Book of Revelation. At this point in the book, the judgment of Christians, with a view to *regality*, will have just occurred; and, with a view to this same *regality*, Christ, following this, is seen as the One about to redeem the forfeited inheritance through taking the seven-sealed scroll from God's

right hand and breaking the seals (chs. 5ff).

Angels have ruled over the earth since time immemorial — since that time when God established the government of the earth in the beginning. Angels will still be exercising rulership over the earth at this point in the book, following the judgment of Christians. And angels will continue ruling *until* Christ and His co-heirs (forming His bride) take the kingdom, following Christ's return to the earth.

Accordingly, neither Christ nor Christians will receive the crowns which they are to wear during the Messianic Era *until after* Christ returns to the earth at the end of the Tribulation. The crown which Christ will wear during the Messianic Era is presently being worn by Satan, as he continues to exercise power over the earth. And the crowns which Christians will wear in that day are presently being worn by two segments of angels — the angels presently ruling with Satan, and the angels who refused to follow Satan when he sought to exalt his throne.

When Satan sought to exalt his throne — following his being placed over the earth, with a large contingent of angels ruling the earth with him — only one-third of these ruling angels followed Satan and fell with him, with the other two-thirds refusing to follow him (*cf.* Isa. 14:12-14; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:3, 4).

(Note the way Rev. 12:4a is worded: "And his [the dragon's, Satan's] tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven [referring to angels (*cf.* Job. 38:7; Rev. 1:20)] and did cast them to the earth..." This "third part," after millenniums of time and separation [separation of one-third from the other two-thirds], *is still recognized at this future time as only part of a larger group, only part of all the angels originally ruling with Satan.*)

And though the angels not following Satan didn't continue ruling with him, they *could not* immediately relinquish their appointed positions. Rather, they *had to* retain their positions for a time, remaining crowned.

A principle of Biblical government necessitates that an incumbent ruler retain his crown until the one replacing him is not only on the scene but ready to ascend the throne. *Only then* can

an incumbent ruler relinquish his crown.

(For example, note the account of Saul and David, forming a type of Satan and Christ.

Saul, though disqualified, retained his crown and continued to reign until David was not only present but ready to ascend the throne. Then, Saul's crown was taken, given to David; and David, along with certain faithful men, ascended the throne and reigned in the stead of Saul and those who had ruled with him [I, II Samuel].

And it will be exactly the same in the antitype. Satan, though disqualified, will retain his crown and continue to reign until Christ is not only present but ready to ascend the throne. Then, Satan's crown will be taken, given to Christ; and Christ, along with certain faithful individuals, will ascend the throne and reign in the stead of Satan and those who had ruled with him, both before and after his fall [Rev. 19:11-20:6].)

This same established principle must prevail relative to both the angels refusing to follow Satan in his attempt to exalt his throne and those who did follow him. This entire contingent of angels (both fallen and unfallen) must retain their crowns until those who are to replace them, those who are to wear these crowns, are not only on the scene but ready to ascend the throne.

These relinquished crowns though will be worn *only after* Christ returns to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, overthrows Satan and his angels, and forcibly takes their crowns. *Only then* will Christ be in possession of *all the crowns* which He and His bride are destined to wear as they ascend the throne and rule the earth.

This entire scenario of events, as it pertains to the government of the earth, is introduced in Revelation chapter four. It is introduced immediately following events surrounding the judgment seat when, for the first time in the history of the earth, those who are to ascend the throne with God's Son will have been called out of the larger body of Christians and revealed. Those shown worthy to take the crowns worn by Satan and his angels up to this point in time will now be on the scene, ready to ascend the throne. And for the first time in the history of the earth, angels can now relinquish their crowns.

This is *the first order of activity* seen in the Book of Revelation occurring immediately following issues and determinations at the judgment seat. And so it should be, for, according to Rom. 8:19-23, the entire creation (as it pertains to the earth, both the material creation and redeemed man) presently groans and travails, awaiting “the manifestation of the sons of God” (a new order of sons — taken from among *redeemed man*, not angels).

Revelation chapter four is the point in the book where this manifestation of a new order of sons has its beginning. It begins here by the relinquishment of crowns (for those comprising this new order of sons will have been revealed), making possible a later full manifestation of regal activity by man at the time of Christ's return.

Thus, with the introduction of crowns cast before God's throne in Rev. 4:10, 11, *only one group of individuals* could possibly be in view (if one remains within context and keeps in mind the earth's government in both history and prophecy). These twenty-four elders can only represent *angelic rulers* (cf. Heb. 2:5). *Angels alone* will possess crowns in relation to the government of the earth at this time (as they do during the present time).

(Some Bible students, on the basis of the pronouns used in Rev. 5:9, 10 — “us” and “we” [KJV] — have understood the twenty-four elders to represent redeemed men, not angels. However, the majority of the better Greek manuscripts render the pronouns in v. 10 as “them” and “they” [ref. ASV, NASB, NIV, Wuest, Weymouth], giving rise to the thought that the pronoun “us” in v. 9 is probably a scribal insertion, being spurious [ref. Alford, Lenski].

But the matter is really not left to manuscript evidence alone. That the pronouns “them” and “they” are correct is evident from the context. Note that the song in vv. 9, 10 is apparently sung not only by the “twenty-four elders” but also by the “four beasts [‘living creatures’]” as well. Then, other angels join them in vv. 11ff, with all of the angels together voicing additional, related statements.

Aside from the preceding, it would make absolutely no sense whatsoever to understand these twenty-four elders as referring to a segment of redeemed mankind. Man couldn't possibly be crowned at the time of events in Rev. 4, 5, else he would be crowned before Christ is crowned [note that Christ is to wear the crown which Satan presently

wears, which Satan will still be wearing at this time]. Also, man is to wear the crown he receives, not relinquish it before God's throne as seen being done by the twenty-four elders.

Also, the Greek word translated "elders" in Revelation chapter four is *presbuteroi*, the same word used for "elders" in the Church in the New Testament epistles. The word refers to *older ones* [relative to that being dealt with]. In the Church, the reference is to *older ones in the faith*; in Revelation chapter four, the reference is to *older ones in the governmental structure of the earth* [evident since they are crowned, seated on thrones, with the government of the earth being the only government which could possibly be in view].

The preceding alone would prevent the twenty-four elders from being viewed as men, necessitating that they be viewed as *angels*. *Man, at this point in the book, has yet to even come into such a position; angels, on the other hand, have held positions of this nature since time immemorial.*

And at this point in the book, through the action of the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God's throne, the way will be opened for God to transfer the sceptre from the hands of angels into the hands of man.

In this respect, these crowns cast before God's throne can only have to do with *the government of the earth*. And, at this point in the book, crowns can be worn by *angels alone*. *The Son* will not yet have taken the kingdom, though the Father is about to take the sceptre from Satan's hand and place it in His Son's hand (*cf.* Dan. 7:13, 14; Luke 19:12, 15; Rev. 11:15; 19:11ff).

These crowns are relinquished *to God* (cast before God's throne) — with a view to man ruling in the kingdom — so that God can appoint those who had previously been shown qualified through decisions and determinations at the judgment seat [chs. 1b-3] to positions of power and authority with His Son; and those whom the Father appoints will wear these crowns in His Son's kingdom.

These crowns are cast before God's throne (*cf.* 4:1-4; 5:1-7) because *the Father alone* is the One Who places and/or removes rulers in His kingdom (Dan. 4:17-37; 5:18-21). *He alone* is the One Who placed those represented by the twenty-four elders in the positions which they occupied; and *He alone* is the One Who will remove those represented by these elders from the positions

in which He originally placed them and assign other individuals to positions in the kingdom, in their stead (Matt. 20:20-23).

The transfer of the government of the earth, from the hands of angels into the hands of man, in reality, is what the first nineteen chapters of the Book of Revelation are about; and, as well, this is what the whole of Scripture preceding these nineteen chapters is also about. In this respect, these twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God's throne forms *a key event which one must grasp* if he would properly understand the Book of Revelation and Scripture as a whole.

Christ and His wife, in that coming day, will rule the earth in the stead of Satan and his angels. And, in the process of ruling in this manner, they will wear *all the crowns* worn by Satan and his angels prior to his fall — both angels who did not follow Satan and those who did follow him.

Action of the Elders

Thus, that which is depicted through the action of the twenty-four elders in Rev. 4:10, 11 is, contextually, self-explanatory. This has to do with the government of the earth, it occurs at a time following events surrounding the judgment seat but preceding Christ breaking the seals of the seven-sealed scroll, and it occurs at a time when Satan's reign is about to be brought to a close.

After events in Revelation chapters one through three have come to pass, *for the first time in man's history*, the person (the bride) who is to rule with the One to replace Satan (Christ) will have been made known and shown forth. *And events in the fourth chapter reflect that fact.*

Only *one thing* could possibly be in view at this point in the book, for the bride will not only have been made known but will be in a position for events surrounding the transfer of power to begin. The twenty-four elders *casting their crowns before God's throne* can only depict the angels who did not go along with Satan in his rebellion *relinquishing their crowns*, with a view to those comprising the bride wearing these crowns during the Messianic Era.

But the crowns worn by Satan and those angels presently

ruling with him are another matter. These crowns will have to be taken from Satan and his angels *by force* when Christ returns to overthrow Gentile world power at the end of the Tribulation (a power exercised during Man's Day under Satan and his angels [Dan. 10:13-20]).

(The fact that angels represented by the twenty-four elders are not presently ruling with Satan can be shown not only by their present position — in God's presence, in heaven — but also by the Greek word which is used for the type crown which they are seen wearing.

There are two words in the Greek text for "crown" — *stephanos*, and *diadema*. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, with *regality* in view, one major distinction stands out concerning how these two words are used. *Diadema* refers to the type crown worn by a monarch, one presently exercising regal power. *Stephanos*, on the other hand, is used in an opposite sense. It is used to show someone crowned but not presently exercising regal power.

For example, the crown seen on Christ's head in Rev. 14:14, preceding His reign, is referred to by the word *stephanos* in the Greek text. A crown on Christ's head at this time could only anticipate His impending reign [a similar thought is set forth by the crown resting on Antichrist's head at the beginning of the Tribulation in Rev. 6:2, referred to through the use of the word *stephanos*]. Then, when Christ returns to the earth to take the kingdom, He will have many crowns upon His head; and the Greek text uses *diadema* rather than *stephanos* to refer to these crowns, for Christ will be returning as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" [Rev. 19:12, 16].

The twenty-four elders in chapter four cast crowns referred to as *stephanos* before the throne, indicating that, though crowned, these elders were not exercising regal power at this time [though the fact that they were seated on thrones and crowned portends *regal power* at some point in time [*in past time, as shown by their present positions and subsequent actions*]]. And the many crowns which Christ will have on His head at the time of His return are undoubtedly these same crowns [Rev. 19:12]. But, anticipating that day when Christ reigns, the Book of Revelation uses the word *diadema* to refer to these crowns, for *Christ will be exercising regal power at this time*, with Satan about to be overthrown.

The crowns [diadems] on Christ's head in Rev. 19:12 though will not

be worn by Christ when He rules the earth, for He is to wear the crown presently worn by Satan [the incumbent ruler] in that day. Rather, these crowns are undoubtedly reserved for those forming the bride [whom the Father will previously have appointed to various positions of power and authority with His Son]; and the Son will give these crowns to His co-heirs following that time when the remainder of the crowns having to do with the earth's government are forcibly taken from Satan and his angels.)

Twenty-Four, Thirty-Six

The identity of *the twenty-four elders* is shown not only by *their actions* and *the place* in which this occurs in the book but also by *their number*. Comparing Revelation chapters four and twelve (4:4, 10, 11; 12:3, 4), it appears evident that the original government of the earth — originally established by God prior to Satan's fall — was representatively shown by *three sets of twelve, thirty-six crowned rulers*. "Three" is the number of *Divine perfection*, and "twelve" is the number of *governmental perfection*.

Those angels who did not follow Satan in his attempt to exalt his throne would be represented by the twenty-four elders — *two sets of twelve, showing two-thirds of the original contingent of angels ruling with Satan*. And the angels who did go along with Satan, presently ruling with him, would be represented by *a third set of twelve, showing the other one-third of the original contingent of angels ruling with Satan* (Rev. 12:3, 4).

In this respect, these three representative sets of twelve would show *Divine perfection in the earth's government*. And also in this respect, this same perfection in the structure of the earth's government has not existed *since Satan's attempt to exalt his throne*.

But, this structured perfection will one day *again* exist in the earth's government. When Christ and His wife ascend the throne, crowns worn by those represented by all three sets of twelve will be brought together again. *Then, Divine perfection will once again exist in the government of the one province in God's universe where imperfection has existed for millenniums* (cf. Col. 1:16-20).

(For additional and other type information on the twenty-four elders in Revelation chapter four, refer to the author's books, SO GREAT

SALVATION [Revised Edition], Chapter II, "Because of the Angels," or,
THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST [Revised Edition], Chapter XII,
"Crowned Rulers.")

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This book, IN THE LORD'S DAY, deals with:

- 1) *The time of the resurrection of the dead and translation of the living "in Christ" (commonly called "the rapture").*
- 2) *Judgment awaiting Christians at Christ's judgment seat following their removal from the earth.*
- 3) *Events related to this judgment, which precede and anticipate the coming Messianic Era.*

These are the things dealt with in the opening four chapters of the Book of Revelation. And viewing the book as a whole, these opening four chapters provide a sequence of events as they pertain to the rapture and judgment seat which *must occur at the conclusion of the present dispensation but before the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period on earth.*

The Book of Revelation is *the only book in Scripture* which provides a comprehensive, continuous coverage of this nature. The same truths concerning these events are taught elsewhere in Scripture, particularly in Old Testament typology. But the Book of Revelation is the only book in Scripture where these events are all seen together in a sequence which includes the subsequent Tribulation.

Not only *must* the rapture and events surrounding the judgment seat occur *preceding the Tribulation*, but these events must, according to Revelation chapters one through four, be *all-inclusive*. That is, *all Christians (all of the dead and the living "in Christ" throughout the entire 2,000-year dispensation) must be removed together, at the same time and place, to appear before Christ in judgment.* According to these chapters, there can be no such thing as a selective removal of Christians from the earth at the time of the rapture; nor can there be more than one time and place for events surrounding the judgment seat.

A separation of Christians on the basis of faithfulness will occur, but not at the time of the rapture. Rather, this separation will occur at the judgment seat alone.
