

Church at Ephesus

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During the Feast of Unleavened Bread we have the first connection between the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, and that is the Wave Sheaf Offering Day. I've already done the sermon on the Wave-Sheaf Offering Day, and let's look at something which I think there's a parallel with. You know that when you count to Pentecost that you are to count seven complete weeks and come to the 50th day. There's a parallel of this concerning *the harvest*.

Let's begin by going to Matt. 13 because the harvest could not begin in Jerusalem, or around Jerusalem, until first the Wave Sheaf Offering was cut. Alfred Eddersheim wrote a book about the times and practices in Jerusalem in the time of Christ. It showed that they had a special ceremony that they would do on the regular Sabbath during Unleavened Bread. They would have a team of officials—priests and Levites and so forth—and they would walk out to a special place on the Mount of Olives where they had a special patch of barley. This barley was to be used for the Wave Sheaf Offering, the very first one. What they would do is have a man ready with a sickle, and he was to cut. but first there was someone who would ask, 'Has the sun gone down?' He would ask it three times, and they would time it in such a way that after the third time they would cut that first sheaf.

This first sheaf, as we know from Lev. 23 is the primary sheaf, or the one that pictures Christ, meaning that He was the first one resurrected from the dead. The timing of it was exactly when He ended His three days and three nights in the tomb. He was the First of the firstfruits, and He is the 'Firstborn among many brethren.' We are the *Church of the Firstborn*.

We won't go through all the parables, but it shows in Matthew 13:23 the good seed: "But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold and another thirtyfold."

Then the other parable is the one of the tares, v 36: "And after dismissing the multitude, Jesus went into the house. Then His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' And He answered and said to them, 'The One Who sows the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one'" (vs 36-38).

As we will see all the way through all the Churches of God, when we come to Rev. 2 and 3, there is this confrontation continuously between those who are of the children of the kingdom, have the Spirit of God, and those who are of the children of Satan the devil, the children of the wicked one.

Verse 39: "Now, the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is *the end of the age...*" This shows that it is going to be a harvest, and the *harvest feast* that we have that relates to this is the Feast of the Firstfruits, the harvest that is at the end of the 50 days—7 weeks plus 1 day.

"...and the reapers are the angels.... [Jesus said that we would be brought up, resurrected, and the angels would take us up] ...Therefore, as the tares are gathered and consumed in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all the offenders and those who are practicing lawlessness; and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (vs. 39-42).

Let's see a parallel. Why are there only seven churches in Rev. 2 & 3? Now it's interesting, Paul wrote to seven churches. You have the epistles to the seven churches that he wrote. And there's one that's overlapping: *Ephesus*. There is a mention in Colossians of Laodicea but we don't have the letter from Laodicea. Another thing that is interesting, too, is that all of these churches are Gentile churches; nothing whatsoever to do with any of the Jewish churches, this is nothing of Jerusalem. Furthermore, it says nothing of Rome, says nothing of Corinth, or the other churches over in Greece. All of these churches are connected by a mail route, as we know by different commentaries in history concerning it.

But what I want to show you is that we have the seven churches in Rev. 2 & 3, and I believe this represents the *harvest of God* down through time right to the end. *The seven churches represent the Church harvest*.

When we come to Rev. 7 we have another harvest, the 144,000 and the great innumerable multitude! This harvest is God's *special* harvest that He sends the angels to seal with the Holy Spirit. This is quite different than what the Church does through baptism. This harvest in Rev. 7, I believe, represents the *50th day harvest* and that is *God's harvest* alone. So, you have the seven churches plus the harvest of Rev. 7, which then you could liken unto the eighth church if you want to put it that way. Eight is the number of new beginning and this is a new

beginning for all these people that are called, beginning with the children of Israel and the great innumerable multitude.

That's the overview with how it connects with Pentecost. We know that the Church began on Pentecost with the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Revelation means *the revealing*.

Revelation 1:1: "*The* revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, to show to His servants the things that *are* ordained to come to pass shortly; and He made *it* known, having sent *it* by His angel to His servant John; who gave witness *to* the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and all the things he saw. Blessed *is* the one who reads, and those who hear... [to understand] ...the words of this prophecy and who keep the things *that are* written therein; for the time *is* at hand" (vs 1-3).

We can get an awful lot out of here. First of all, we have the Word of God again, "...written therein..."—bearing the record. This ties in with:

John 1:1: "In *the* beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There's the connection with that.

Revelation 1:2: "...and of the testimony of Christ..." is everything that He taught us of the Father.

- there is a blessing that comes from hearing it
- there's a blessing that comes from reading it
- there's a blessing for keeping those things that are written therein.

I think, as we go through here, we will see not only do the people of God keep the commandments of God, but also, especially in the seven churches, they always fought the children of the 'wicked one.'

So, this harvest in Mat. 13 with the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one, that battle is constantly going on and then manifests itself toward the end of the book of Revelation with the man of sin, the son of perdition, and the whole world going after *the beast* and the *false prophet*.

Verse 4: "John to the seven churches that *are* in Asia: Grace and peace *be* to you from Him Who *is*, and Who *was*, and Who *is* to come..." There are a lot of people who think that has to do with the trinity, but it doesn't because the One Who *is* is Christ. He was the One Who was dead, rose again, and is to come.

"...and from the seven spirits that are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead..." (v 5). Whenever it talks about *begotten* (*KJV*) concerning

Christ, it is He is the *only begotten* of the Father 'monogenes.' And *the firstborn* is 'prototokos'—a birth. That's what all of this is about: *how to receive eternal life* through Jesus Christ.

Now let's understand something about the Church. Let's look at some basic things. Christ is the Head of the Church. We've gone through that so many times, but we're going to do it again because His message to all of the churches is His message as the Head of the Church. After He asked the disciples who men say He was, and they said some of them say He's John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

Matthew 16:15: "He said to them, 'But you, whom do you declare Me to be?' Then Simon Peter answered *and* said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered *and* said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona... [son of Jona] ...for flesh and blood did not reveal *it* to you, but My Father, Who *is* in heaven (vs 15-17). Who does the calling?"

John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him..." The Father is the One Who draws. The Father is the One Who reveals.

How is it that one day in your life you wanted to know about God and where the Church of God was? How did that happen? *Something happened in your mind; something changed!* And that something that changed was the Father dealing with you with His Spirit, otherwise, you'd still be out in the world doing what the world is doing.

Today there are so many things out there in the world that it's really quite a profound thing to understand how God intervenes and deals in people's lives. There was a young man who he said that from a child he went to a Sunday-keeping church. When he began to understand when he was a little older he would sit there in the Sunday-keeping church and say, 'I wonder why we're not keeping the Sabbath.' Even in that Sunday-keeping church God was beginning to deal with him.

One of the brethren in Dayton, Ohio, gave him the first four sermons on *The Holy Sabbath*, and he knew precisely that was it. God had been dealing with him all this time and finally the knowledge of the Sabbath was revealed not because the person gave him the sermons—that was only the vehicle to make it happen—it was God the Father Who did it; just like with Peter, 'I say also unto you that you are Peter...'—which means 'petros'—a little stone. This is the great lie that the pope repeats over and over again every time he gives a Mass. '...you are Peter...' meaning himself, the pope, and he sits in

Peter's throne and chair. *Not so!* 'Petros' means a *little stone*. The Aramaic word for Peter is Cephas.

John 1:42: "First, he found his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is, being interpreted, "the Christ"). And he led him to Jesus. And when He saw him, Jesus said, 'You are Simon, the son of Jona. You shall be called Cephas' (which is, *being* interpreted, "a stone")" (vs 42-43). It really means a *small stone*.

If you've ever done any building you are not going to build on a small stone. When they built their mammoth buildings, and we'll see it talks about Christ as the chief cornerstone in just a bit, that was a cornerstone not a capstone. A cornerstone because it's a foundational stone, and that stone has to be perfect; perfectly square, perfectly flat, because every other stone in building that building will come from this cornerstone.

Matthew 16:18: "And I say also to you, that you are Peter... [small stone] ...but upon this Rock ['petra']..." The Greek changes there from 'petros' to 'petra'—a *large massive cliff*, or that cornerstone that the builders rejected.

"...I will build My Church... [He's building the Church on Himself—He will build it.] ...and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it" (v 18).

Now let's see where this follows through, Christ being the Chief Cornerstone. There's a parable that Jesus brought out to the Scribes and Pharisees showing about the stone and the builders. Christ referring to Himself, and He knew all of these prophecies. He knew that He was going to be the 'stone.'

Matthew 21:42: "Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures...'" Isn't that interesting? Almost all the religious leaders during Jesus' time didn't read the Scriptures. Most of them today don't read the Scriptures. They have traditions, they have their own things.

"...*"The Stone that the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner. This was from the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes"*? Because of this, I say to you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you... [who should have been the builders] ...and it shall be given to a nation *that* produces the fruits of it.... [all those who are called; they are a Holy nation] ...And the one who falls on this Stone shall be broken... [through repentance] ...but on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (vs 42-44).

That's something we need to understand. Though God is a God of love and mercy and peace, if we reject Christ—the shortest summary of the

book of Hebrews is, you either accept Christ or it's the Lake of Fire—that's it. Here we have another comparison of it: "...it will grind him to powder." Did that not happen with Jerusalem? *Yes!*

Verse 45: "Now, after hearing His parables, the chief priests and the Pharisees knew that He was speaking about them.... [since they were political] ...And they sought to arrest Him, but they were afraid of the multitudes, because they held Him as a prophet" (vs 45-46).

1-Peter 2:6 is quoted over and over again. It shows the same thing: "For this reason it says in the Scripture, 'Behold, I place in Zion *the* Cornerstone, chosen *and* precious; and the one who believes in Him shall never be put to shame.' The preciousness *is* to you, therefore, who believe; but to those who disobey, *the* Stone that the builders rejected has become *the* Head of *the* corner, and a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense; *especially* to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, unto which *unbelief* they also were appointed. But you *are* a chosen stock, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation..." (vs 6-9). That's why Jesus said it will be taken and given to a nation which will bring forth the fruits.

"...a people for a possession *of God*, that you might proclaim His *excellent* virtues, Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (v 9).

All right let's look at some more Scriptures showing that Christ is the Rock. This will help bring it altogether concerning the harvest, concerning Christ being the Head, what He's doing, concerning the seven churches.

Here it says that Christ is that Rock, 1-Corinthians 10:1: "Now, I do not wish you to be ignorant *of this*, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And *they* all ate the same spiritual meat. And *they* all drank *of* the same spiritual drink..." (vs 1-4). Because it was miraculous food, which was sent—being the manna—and it was miraculous water, which they drank because it came out of the stone.

"...for they drank from *the* spiritual Rock that followed *them*. And that Rock was Christ" (v 4).

Let's see about the foundation. Then we will see that the Church, which Jesus said He would build, would be built upon Himself Who's the Chief Cornerstone, and then also on the apostles.

1-Corinthians 3:11: "For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds upon this foundation..." (vs 11-12).

What I want you to understand is that we will see that the problems within the seven churches can relate directly to the quality of their spiritual life as defined here by, “gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, *or* stubble” (v 12)—because of the problems and doctrines which will come against them, and their behavior and reaction to it.

Verse 13: “The work of each one shall be manifested; for the day of *trial* will declare *it*, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one’s is. If the work that anyone has built endures, he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he* himself shall be saved, yet, as through fire. Don’t you understand that you are God’s temple...” (vs 13-16)—because God desires

- to live *in* us
- to dwell *in* us
- to build the very character of Christ *in* us

“...and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him because the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are” (vs 16-17).

We will see that is the individual temple, but collectively we are being made into the temple of God overall.

Ephesians 2:18: “For through Him we both have *direct* access by one Spirit to the Father. So then, you are no longer aliens and foreigners; but *you are* fellow citizens with the saints, and *are* of the household of God. You are being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being *the* chief Cornerstone in Whom **all the building**, being conjointly fitted together, is increasing into a Holy temple in *the* Lord; in Whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in *the* Spirit” (vs 18-22).

This gives us some background concerning the Church that Christ would build. He is the Head of it; no man is the head of it. He is the One Who is going to deal with His Church, deal with His people. Everything we are going through now—that we see happening in the Churches of God—is all part of it.

Let’s see it all put together where there are the individuals and then the whole body of Christ of individuals together:

Ephesians 4:15: “But holding the Truth in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, *even* Christ from Whom all the body, fitly framed and compacted together by *that which* every joint supplies, according to *its* inner working in *the* measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto *the* edifying of itself in

love” (vs 15-16). That gives you a good statement of what it is that the Church is to do!

Let’s see what we are to do. Not only does this tell us to go to the world and preach to the world, but this tells us something else that we need to do also.

Matthew 28:19: “Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” When you teach them *all things* then you have what we have right now, that when you begin to teach them there’s more to learn, and we have *all* the Bible now.

”...And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age.’ Amen” (v 20).

Let’s see how this teaching started. First of all, the teaching started with Christ teaching the disciples. He taught them as much as He could, and He brought them up to a certain point, as He said before His crucifixion, and then He gave them a promise that they would be able to understand through the power of the Holy Spirit.

He also promised that the Holy Spirit would bring all things into remembrance that He taught them. Let’s see how He does it once He ascends into heaven. First of all you have Christ’s direct teaching. Next you have the teachings through the Holy Spirit and those things are written down for us.

John 16:7: “But I am telling you the truth. It is profitable for you that I go away because if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. However, if I go, I will send it to you. And when that one has come, it will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment: Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me” (vs 7-8). This is quite a profound statement. If you don’t believe on Christ *it is sin!* Another way of looking at it is:

- if you don’t believe on *Christ* you remain *in your sin*
- you believe in Christ and *you have your sins forgiven*

So, either way *the Holy Spirit is going to convict!*

Verse 9: “Concerning righteousness... [the true righteousness that comes from God; the imputed righteousness that we receive] ...because I am going to the Father and you no longer will see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. I have yet many things to tell you, but you are not able to bear them now” (vs 9-12).

So then, there would be a revelation of Truth, because the book of Revelation is called a revelation, that's the final revelation. Here are th

Stages of revelation that God gave to His apostles:

1. The Calling
2. Direct Teaching through the Holy Spirit

Verse 13: "However, when that one has come, *even* the Spirit of the Truth, it will lead you into all truth because it shall not speak from itself, but whatever it shall hear, it shall speak. And it shall disclose to you the things to come." The Holy Spirit is going to be doing:

3. Christ Opening Their Understanding

He told them, 'I have many things to say to you, which you cannot now bear.' But after He was resurrected, and of course, John 16 was just prior to the crucifixion there, but in Luke 24 now we find Jesus teaching them things, some things that they could not bear.

Luke 24:44: "And He said to them, 'These *are* the words that I spoke to you when I was yet with you, that all *the* things which were written concerning Me in the Law of Moses and *in the* Prophets and *in the* Psalms must be fulfilled.' **Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures**" (vs 44-45).

It was the Holy Spirit that gave all the inspiration for the New Testament, that God used to show what He was going to do. Now, the next major revelation that comes:

4. Calling of Cornelius—the Gentiles (Acts 10)

God gave this through a vision, the calling of Cornelius and his household. This was a major revelation. I'll just give a short interpretation:

Acts 10:28: "And he [Peter] said to them, 'You know that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to associate with or come near to anyone of another race....'" With this revelation, God was showing how He was going to break down the barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles. This statement, "...it is unlawful..." has to do with the law of Judaism. It does not have to do with the commandment of God.

"...But God has shown me *that* no man should be called common or unclean" (v 28).

After Peter spoke the Gospel to them, v 44: "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came upon all those who were listening to the message. And the believers from the circumcision were astonished, as many as had come

with Peter, that upon the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out" (vs 44-45).

The Jews, and especially those of the circumcision party, figured that they were the chosen ones of God and the Gentiles were forever going to be second-class citizens even though they were converted.

Verse 46: "For they heard them speak in *other* languages and magnify God." Meaning these who went probably knew Greek, and they probably knew Aramaic and Hebrew. Maybe there were some that were there traveling with them that knew other languages. When you come to these bands of Italian soldiers and how they're speaking in Hebrew or Greek, what are you going to believe, especially if they are magnifying God when they did not have God before. And now they are uncircumcised.

Then Peter answered, v 47: "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have also received the Holy Spirit as we *did*?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they besought him to remain *for* a number of days" (vs 47-48). So, this was the fourth major revelation: That God was going to deal with the Gentiles, grant them repentance, and purify their hearts.

5. Initial Revelation from Paul

Now then the fifth major revelation that takes place has to do with Paul. Paul was the one who was going to carry on then the preaching to the Gentiles. Let's read about Paul here in his own writing

Galatians 1:13. "For you heard of my former conduct when I was in Judaism..." Judaism was not the Law of Moses, by the way. It's much like 'religions' today. they claim the Bible but they don't follow it.

"...how I was excessively persecuting the Church of God and was destroying it; and I was advancing in Judaism *far* beyond many of *my* contemporaries in my *own* nation, being more abundantly zealous for *the* traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, Who selected me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by His grace, to reveal His own Son in me, in order that I might preach Him as the Gospel among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus" (vs 13-17).

He was there approximately three or three and a half years because he says, v 18: "Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to become

acquainted with Peter, and I remained with him fifteen days. But I did not see *any* of the other apostles, except James the brother of the Lord. (Now the things that I am writing to you, behold, before God, I am not lying.)” (vs 18-20). So that was the fifth revelation.

Let’s see how that was given. God taught him; taught him everything he needed to do. Then he increased that revelation.

6. Revealed the Whole Purpose of Life to His apostles and prophets by *the Spirit*

We will see that there was this revelation given having to do with our destiny to becoming the very sons of God

Ephesians 3:1: “For this cause I, Paul, *am* the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the ministry of the grace of God that was given to me for you; how He made known to me by revelation the mystery (even as I wrote briefly before, so that when you read *this*, you will be able to comprehend my understanding in the mystery of Christ), which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now **been revealed to His Holy apostles and prophets by *the Spirit***; that the Gentiles might be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel, of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God, *which was* given to me through the inner working of His power” (vs 1-7).

So, this shows the added revelation. He goes on showing where it is there that we are going to have the fullness of God, which is all in all. His initial revelation he spoke of right here in Eph. 3. Paul talks of it twice. Then when he’s writing this letter to the rest of the apostles the whole purpose of life.

All of this is through Christ, either directly personally in teaching them, or teaching them through the Holy Spirit, or—in the case of revealing to Peter—through a dream. And then the **revelation of how that of the full fellowship of the mystery of God** (Eph. 3).

7. The Book of Revelation

It is *being* revealed. What is so important in this is that this again establishes when this was written approximately 95_{A.D.}, that Christ is the Head of the Church. That He is going to be dealing in His Church and in the world, from then until His return. Then it goes on and reveals in Rev. 20 and 21 the Millennium, New Jerusalem, and on into eternity after that. This is quite a profound thing. It’s what

the Father gave to Christ to give to His servants and He gave it to John.

Let’s read a little bit here, and then we’ll put a little history with this as we go along. I’m not going to bring in too much history because I could get so bogged down in history that we would never get through this.

Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth....”—whether they are righteous or wicked.

Remember the account of Nebuchadnezzar. God gave the lesson that He puts upon the governments of men the basest of men, and that’s important. We will see that there is still the struggle between those who are Christ’s and those who are Satan’s. This battle is something we are always in. You can’t avoid it. It’d be nice to go someplace and not have to fight it. But Satan’s the ‘prince of the power of the air.’

“...To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us **kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen**” (vs 5-6).

Right here we have defined the whole Gospel through Christ, through His blood, through His resurrection; the whole purpose in life: to be “...**kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen**” (v 6).

(go to the next track)

Verse 7: “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him...” This tells us that there’s no such thing as a secret rapture. “...every eye shall see Him...” Of course, this is what people have wanted. They have wanted Christ to return in many different ways, and many different forms but He’s not going to. He’s going to come the way that He said. This is a prophecy.

“...and those who pierced Him...” (v 7).

- Who pierced Him? *The Roman soldier did!*
- Is that Roman soldier dead? *Yes!*
- When will he see Christ? *The second resurrection!*

This is even projection clear forward into that.

- Who also killed Him? *The Jews did!*
- Who also? *Everybody!*

So, in a sense *everyone* pierced Him, because of their sins, and shall see Him.

“...and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him.... [they won’t want Him] ...Even so, Amen. ‘I am **Alpha** and **Omega**...’” (vs 7-8)—which is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and the last letter of the Greek alphabet.

“...*the Beginning and the Ending*,’ says the Lord, ‘Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty.’” (v 8). This is how we know that it applies not to a trinity, but this applies to Christ the Lord, Who *is now* existing in heaven, Who *was in flesh* on the earth, Who *is to come* in the power and glory of God the Father the Almighty. This sets the stage. This is the most profound revelation of the seven that we’ve covered here.

Verse 9: “I, John, who *am* also your brother and joint partaker in the tribulation and in the kingdom and endurance of Jesus Christ, was on the island that *is* called Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Day of the Lord... [the day of His return; it doesn’t mean Sunday] ...and I heard a loud voice like a trumpet behind me, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last’...” (vs 9-11)—the Beginning and the Ending; He’s the One totally in charge of God’s plan.

“...and, ‘What you see, write in a book...’” (v 11). That’s profound because all the apostles wrote. They knew what they were doing when they were writing. They knew that it was going to become Scripture.

“...and send *it* to the churches that *are* in Asia...” (v 11). Why not send it to all the churches? He did, but specifically, because if you send it to all the churches and list off how many churches there were then you’d have a long listing of it plus then you would be describing each one. We will see that God chose these seven churches—that fits into the whole pattern and plan that God has—which ties into the time and leading up to Pentecost. Then He lists all of them.

Verse 12: “And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.” What you think of when you think of this is candelabras that were to be in the tabernacle. But these are lampstands.

Verse 13: “And in *the* midst of the seven lampstands...” In the middle; kind of like that they are in a circle, and in the middle is Christ, meaning He is always in His Church. We will also see that He always knows what is going on.

“...*One* like *the* Son of man, clothed in a *garment* reaching to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden breastplate. And His head and hair *were* like white wool, white as snow; and His

eyes *were* like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like fine brass, as if *they* glowed in a furnace; and His voice *was* like *the* sound of many waters. And in His right hand He had seven stars...” (vs 13-16). It’s interesting, the seven stars are the seven churches. Right hand is the sign of work—isn’t it? So, Christ uses the seven churches to do His work.

“...and a sharp two-edged sword went out of His mouth, and His countenance *was* as the sun shining in its *full* power” (v 16).

Let’s look at John concerning this because John would know that this is Christ. John saw Christ in a glorified form already before Christ had ascended into heaven, and that is on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17). Let’s notice how similar the description is with what we just read (Rev. 1).

Matthew 17:1: “And after six days, Jesus took with *Him* Peter and James and his brother John, and brought them up into a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and **His face shined as the sun**, and His garments became white as the light” (vs 1-2). That’s the only description that we have here, but notice how similar it is to what John in Rev. 1. So, he knew that this was the Christ.

Now we’re going to see one other thing concerning this, and that is what was going to happen to John:

John 21:20: “But when Peter turned, he saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had sat at the supper and *leaned* on His chest, and had said, ‘Lord, who is it that is betraying You?’ Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, what *shall happen* to this one?’” (vs 20-21). What about this man? You told me about me, what about him? Still political till the end.

Verse 22: “Jesus said to him, ‘If I desire that he remain alive until I come, what *is it* to you? You follow Me.’ Then this saying went out among the brethren, that that disciple would not die. However, Jesus did not say to him that he would not die; but, ‘If I desire that he remain alive until I come, what *is it* to you?’” (vs 20-23). He did remain to see the return of Christ in vision.

As they went along the various apostles were killed and martyred, but John was still alive. You can just imagine since this saying went abroad, ‘Well it’s going to be true. John is still alive.’ And you know we heard that to, only it wasn’t John it was HWA. We heard that he won’t die till Christ returns. Well, it’s been years since he died and Christ hasn’t returned. But in John’s case he wrote about the return of Christ, so when John is there on

the isle of Patmos and he sees this vision, he knows exactly Who it is, without a doubt.

Let's see there's a lot in Rev. 1 that sets the stage for everything else that is to happen. John understood that it was Christ.

Revelation 1:17: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead; but He laid His right hand upon me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, even the One Who is living; for I was dead, and behold, I am alive into the ages of eternity. Amen. And I have the keys of the grave and of death.... [not the pope] ...^[#1]**Write the things that you saw...**'" (vs 17-19)—up to this point. So there are three things that he's going to do:

"...and ^[#2] **the things that are...** [which has to do with the seven churches that existed then] ...and ^[#3] **the things that shall take place hereafter**" (v 19. So, you have all three things there.

Verse 20: "The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, *is this*: the seven stars are *the* angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands that you saw are *the* seven churches."

Angel in the Greek is 'angelos,' which can also mean *messenger*. This is where some people will interpret it and say 'to the messenger of the seven churches.' I think it is more probable to the ones who are the leaders of the seven churches, being men, because how can you have an angel doing the things like Thyatira? In other words, if it meant just angels who are righteous angels of God:

- Do they become Laodicean?
- Do they become nearly dead?
- Do they get in and know the depths of Satan?
- *No!*
- Do they set up a hierarchy against the brethren?
- *No!*

So, this has to do with the human leader, the messenger, and it would be whomever that particular person is. But one note of caution: *No one should go into the Bible to try and find themselves except one place.* 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' Too many people make mistakes: 'I'm going to go and see if I'm Elijah, or Elisha, or you know, I'm one of the angels, the messenger to the seven churches.' *No!* We don't do that! Whatever is, *is*. But all that is just a bunch of self-exaltation, and we won't do that.

Let's understand something about these churches here; let's understand what it's telling us:

Verse 19: "Write..." That's something all the apostles knew they were to do. They were to write. Paul knew it! Peter knew it! John knew it! Christ commanded them, because Christ does not want His Church to be without His Word. Since He is no longer on the earth then He sent His Word to be on the earth.

It's very, very important to understand, as I will mention again about the *NIV Bible*—as brought out by these books: *If the Foundations Be Destroyed* by Chick Salliby, and *The New Age Bible Versions* by Gail Riplinger—how much the Bible has been subverted and corrupted. So, it's very important that we have the right text.

Verse 19: "Write the things that you saw, and the things that are... [this tells us this is a layout for the whole book of Rev.] ...and the things that shall take place hereafter." This helps us understand how we can answer: Were the seven churches there literal churches existing side-by-side at the same time? *Yes!* And they were on a direct mail route, one following the other.

This is the mail route beginning at Ephesus where the Apostle John ended his ministry. He was exiled for a time on the Isle of Patmos, as we saw earlier in the first chapter. Ephesus was the great center for the Church of God, and that was where the main text of the Greek New Testament that we have was preserved right at that area of Asia. "...and the things that shall take place hereafter."

This is a continuous prophetic revelation of events to take place until, or unto, the setting up of New Jerusalem, all the way to the end. This is very important for us to understand. Yes, there were seven churches then. Does this picture a prophecy of the phases or eras of God's Church through history? *Yes!* We will see that, although I won't go to it in great detail because I just want to do an overview.

Could this be seven churches existing at the end-time just like there were seven churches at the beginning, because Christ says, 'I am the Beginning and the Ending'? *It's very possible!* And it's very possible that that could be because we have the example throughout Revelation.

Note sermon series: Daniel/Revelation, which shows that you have seven, and then out of the seventh one, like with the trumpets, comes the seven seals then the seventh seal is opened and there are seven trumpet plagues. Then the seventh trumpet sounds and then after that, out of that comes the seven last plagues.

So, you have seven out of which comes seven, out of which comes seven. It's entirely possible that that could be with the churches at the end-time, that you could have as God looks at the

Church on the earth, which is entirely different than how we view it. There may be seven categories of those Christians who fit the seven churches. But nevertheless, what we are dealing with here is all the problems that the Church will confront. I'll bring in a little history, but I'm going to bring out mainly their problems so that we can see today, since we are at the end-time, how we need to learn the lessons of the seven churches.

It's also very interesting that Paul wrote epistles to seven churches, one of which was Ephesus. So, we have a connection with Paul and John beginning with Ephesus. The other connection with Paul and John was Laodicea. We don't have the letter that Paul wrote to Laodicea, but we have a reference of it in Col. 4 where Paul said, 'When this epistle is read in Colossi, you send it to Laodicea and have them read it over there and you get their epistle and you read it over here.' It's interesting how all of these then tie together.

Revelation 2:1: "To the angel..." Greek 'angelos,' and can also mean messenger. John the Baptist was a messenger, an 'angelos.' He was not an angel as an angel is an angel. But when you stop and think about it, when it talks about the angels here, how can an angel lose its first love and then have it's candlestick removed? This has to mean to whoever the physical leaders are, as in whoever the messenger is.

"...of the Ephesian church, write: 'These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand...'" (v 1). The seven stars are the seven churches.

The right hand is symbolic of work, so Christ is showing that He is working through the seven churches. That's important to understand because Christ is always the Head. We are going to see all the problems and difficulties related to the seven churches:

- the seven right there at that time
- the seven down through history
- if there be seven at the end

—all relate to Christ doing *His* work through *His* Church. We need to understand that. Therefore, no man is to take upon himself to do a work for God. God will do the work through whom He chooses.

"...Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands" (v 1).

- the 7 golden candlesticks are the 7 churches
- the 7 stars are the angels or the messengers

So, whoever is doing the teaching and preaching, God is:

- doing a work through them
- doing a work through the Church

Verse 2: "I know your works..." First thing we need to learn, *there are works*. There has to be.

"I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars; and *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary; nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love" (vs 2-4).

It shows they were really working. Talks about all the work that they were doing. "Nevertheless have *this* against you, that you have left your first love."

- What is it to leave your first love?
- What constitutes that?

Verse 5 is a warning, and of the seven churches five of them are given *warnings to repent*. Two of them are not. The two that are not are Smyrna and Philadelphia. But all the rest are commanded to repent.

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent. But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the tree of life that is in *the* midst of the paradise of God" (vs 5-7).

I. Church at Ephesus

Now let's begin right here with the messages to the churches. what we need to do with every one of these messages is this, there's an old saying in English: 'If the shoe fits, wear it.' If this describes your condition as a Christian then you better accept the admonition from Christ and repent. Not only can He remove the candlestick from the whole church if He needs to, but He can remove an individual who has the same attitude that way just as well. Let's focus in on two things:

^[#1]Verse 2: "I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and ^[#2]that you cannot bear those who are evil..." We don't have to put up with evil within our midst; we do not. We don't have to cow-tow to it. If we have the right structure, and if we have the right preaching, perhaps we can keep the infiltration of tares down to a very few, because Satan is going to always trying, he's always against the Church. "...you cannot bear those who are evil..." Evil has to do with going against the

commandments of God, giving license to sin and all that sort of thing.

“... and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars” (v 2).

- How do you test?
- How do you know concerning false prophets?

That’s one of the first things that Jesus said. Remember Jesus says to *beware of false prophets* (Matt. 7). One of the first things He preached: ‘Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves.’ He also told the disciples many times, ‘Beware—one of the signs of the end—that no one deceive you for many will come in My name saying I am the Christ and shall deceive many’ (Matt. 24). So, they were on guard; beware means to be *on guard*.

Let’s look at several of the things here and see where the first encounter of a false prophet takes place, and this is a key that helps us unlock all of the other false doctrines that come along, every one of them. We’re going to talk about a certain man called Simon Magus. He’s quite a guy. He was a ‘religious’ leader in Samaria. If you remember the history of the Samaritan temple, which we wrote about in *The Christian Passover* book, it’s very significant that he was there, and what kind of religion that was being foisted off on the people.

Acts 8:9: “But *there was* a certain man named Simon... [which is the same as Peter] ...who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery in the city...” Notice what he did. He used sorcery, which is witchcraft. These were the powers of Satan the devil.

“...and astounding the nation of Samaria... [deceived them, had control over them] ...proclaiming himself to be some great one. To him they had all given heed...” (vs 9-10). Just like the pope—right?

As a matter of fact, the ‘religion’ that Simon had was part of what was Gnosticism—satanism, witchcraft—all of that put together under the guise of ‘good.’

“...from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’.... [that is quite a title] ...Now, they were giving heed to him because *he* had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries” (vs. 10-11).

- What happens when something comes along that looks a little bit better? *You want to join yourself to it!*

- What if you have the lust for power?

Simon saw there was another power—of healing and casting out demons that Philip was doing—that he wanted.

- *Well, you go after it! And that’s what Simon did!*

Now if you want a very interesting study, get out *McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopedia* [of religion], and look up Simon Magus. In there you will see there is no question whatsoever that he was *the Simon* that went to Rome. ***The Apostle Peter never went to Rome!*** We have no record of it. As a matter of fact, he was undoubtedly martyred in Babylon because that’s where he was sent to preach to the circumcision. He was never an apostle to the Gentiles. He did, however, write one letter, the Epistle of 1-Peter from Babylon to those who were in Asia, and that was apparently after the Apostle Paul was martyred. Here’s the beginning foundation of the false religion, the false apostle who came to develop into the Catholic Church, and this is the whole system that the Churches of God have had to fight down through history.

Verse 12: “But when they believed Philip, who was preaching the Gospel—the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ—they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself also believed...” (vs 12-13).

It’s easy to believe, but notice the difference here. It is not ‘believe with all your heart’ It is easy to believe from the point of view to accept: I accept the fact. Yes, that will be a great idea.

“...and after being baptized...” (v 13). Think of the misplaced zeal of the near fatal mistake of what Philip did. If you would like a comparison of this, it would be like going to Rome and the pope comes out of the Vatican. He sees you doing miracles and says, ‘I believe; baptized me.’

That’s how serious the problem was. That’s why this is recorded here in Acts 8. This is the first encounter with a *false prophet* who wanted to take the name of Christ and attach it to everything that was pagan.

“...he steadfastly continued with Philip; and as he beheld *the* signs and great works of power *that were* being done, he was amazed”(vs 13). This was greater than he could do with his sorceries. This was greater than he could do with his demons.

Verse 14: “Now, when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.” Why

send Peter and John? *They had to go down there and make sure that everything was all right!*

Verse 15: “After coming down to *Samaria*, prayed for them, that they might receive *the Holy Spirit*; for as yet it had not fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid *their* hands on them, and they received *the Holy Spirit*” (vs. 15-17).

Apparently, at this particular juncture God inspired Philip somehow to not lay hands on for the receipt of the Holy Spirit, because Simon Magus was baptized. That’s the only explanation that I can have for it because this is the only occurrence where you find that hands were not laid on, and the Apostle Peter and John—both of them—came down there and did it. They must have recognized the seriousness of this problem.

Verse 18: “Now, when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give this authority to me also, so that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive *the Holy Spirit*’” (vs 18-19).

You see now that there’s no repentance, there’s no understanding of the Truth of God. It’s just a *lust* after the power, which then he would use if he could receive it, to control people. *God’s Spirit doesn’t work that way!* God’s Spirit does not control you; *it leads you!*

Verse 20: “But Peter said to him, ‘May your money be destroyed with you... [The equivalent today in English, ‘You go to hell.’] ...because you thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money.’”

Let’s understand something very important. All the gifts of God *cannot* be purchased:

- the Holy Spirit
- the gift of righteousness
- the gift of faith, the gift of love

You cannot purchase spiritual things by physical means. So, we learn a lesson here:

- do not merchandise the people of God
- do not think that money is going to bring you power
- do not think that power is going to bring you money

If we all don’t serve Christ, and serve Him from the heart, then we’ve just missed the whole thing—period!

Verse 21: “You have neither part nor lot in this matter...” This is talking about an apostleship. Simon Magus_[transcriber’s correction] wanted to be an

apostle, hence then in his ‘religious office’ was the first major false prophet that they encountered and tested and resisted and rejected. This is all a part of the beginning church in the era of Ephesus.

Acts 1:20 is talking about the field of blood that was purchased with the 30 pieces of silver that Judas had: “For it is written in *the* book of Psalms, ‘Let his habitation become desolate, and let there not be *anyone* dwelling in it’; and, ‘Let another take his overseership.’ Therefore, it is obligatory *that* from those men who have accompanied us during all *the* time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day in which He was taken up from us, one of these shall become a witness with us of His resurrection.’ Then they put forth two: Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus; and Matthias” (vs 20-23).

Now this was a special thing. Why? *Because Christ was the One Who ordained the 12 apostles!* This had to come directly from Christ. It couldn’t be something that a man would choose or they sit down and they voted about it.

Verse 24. “And they prayed, saying, ‘You, Lord, *the* Knower of the hearts of all, show which one of these two You have personally chosen to receive the part of this ministry...” (vs 24-25).

Acts 8:21: “You have neither part... [talking of the ministry] ...nor lot in this matter.” He was showing here clearly, because in order to select an apostle to replace Judas they cast lots. That’s the only instant in which it was done.

Acts 1:24: “And they prayed, saying, ‘You, Lord, *the* Knower of the hearts of all, show which one of these two You have personally chosen to receive the part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas *in* transgressing fell, to go to his own place.’ Then they cast their lots; and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (vs. 24-26). There we have it, *part or lot*, that’s what it means.

Acts 8:22: “Repent, therefore, of this your wickedness, and beseech God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you; for I perceive *that* you are in **the gall of bitterness** and **the bondage of unrighteousness**” (vs 22-23). “...gall of bitterness...” has to do with idolatry and an attitude coming from Satan the devil as well as ‘*the* bond of iniquity.’ Doesn’t that sound very similar to the mystery of iniquity, which we’ll talk about later when we come to the synagogue of Satan.

Verse 24: “But Simon answered *and* said, ‘You beseech the Lord on my behalf ...’ Isn’t that the same philosophy that Catholicism has to this day? *The priest will pray for you!* In other words, he

had the attitude that no one could pray directly to God on his own behalf. He would do so in relationship to others. He would do the atonement for them in his false religion. That was really something.

Simon says, "...‘You beseech the Lord on my behalf, so that none of *those* things which you have spoken may come upon me.’" (v 24). There may have been some other things that were said, which were not included in this summary. And I imagine it was a fierce denunciation.

Let’s see where there is another encounter with a false prophet. We are going to see when we get done with this, a lot of these false prophets and apostles were Jews. That’s hard to comprehend, because most people have the idea in mind that Jews all believed in God. *Not so!*

I’m going to make a very startling statement: ***Judaism is Gnostic paganism using the days of God and the Bible as cover for their religion!*** But it is not of God. Where did Jesus say that their father was from whence they got their religion? *From Satan the devil (Acts 8)!* Same thing as Simon Magus on the pagan side, the Gnostic side and the Gentile side.

We’re going to see in Acts 13 that we have a Jew who is also a Gnostic and have the pagan Judaism. So, you’ve got pagan heathenism on one side, pagan Judaism on the other side, and there are two encounters of the synagogue of Satan for the churches. We need to understand what we’re dealing with here.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 13:23, 36-42
- 2) Revelation 1:1-3
- 3) John 1:1
- 4) Revelation 1:2, 4-5
- 5) Matthew 16:15-17
- 6) John 6:44
- 7) John 1:42-43
- 8) Matthew 16:18
- 9) Matthew 21:42-46
- 10) 1 Peter 2:6-9
- 11) 1 Corinthians 10:1-4
- 12) 1 Corinthians 3:11-17
- 13) Ephesians 2:18-22
- 14) Ephesians 4:15-16
- 15) Matthew 28:19-20
- 16) John 16:7-13
- 17) Luke 24:44-45
- 18) Acts 10:28, 44-48

- 19) Galatians 1:13-20
- 20) Ephesians 3:1-7
- 21) Revelation 1:5-16
- 22) Matthew 17:1-2
- 23) John 21:20-23
- 24) Revelation 1:17-20, 19
- 25) Revelation 2:1-7, 2
- 26) Acts 8:9-21
- 27) Acts 1:20-25
- 28) Acts 8:21
- 29) Acts 1:24-26
- 30) Acts 8:22-24

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- Leviticus 23
- Revelation 3; 7
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