

Patmos Letters

Prof. Johan S. Malan

*And ye shall know the truth, and the
truth shall make you free (Jn. 8:32)*

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Preface

Patmos Letters is a collection of messages to churches and individual believers at the beginning of the third millennium after Christ. It is a reconfirmation of the timeless truths of the Bible. The salvation and sanctification which the Lord Jesus graciously offers to us are still the same as 2000 years ago. His promises are unchangeable. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away" (Lk. 21:33).

These fundamental truths are based upon the inerrant and divinely inspired Word of God. They should be fearlessly proclaimed and boldly defended against the contemporary ideologies of humanism, agnosticism and interfaith teachings. All true believers are called upon to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude v.3). When the doctrine of Christ is denied or distorted (2 John v.9), the false church of the end-time will rapidly expand and make giant strides in deceiving the masses and preparing them to accept the universal christ of all faiths – the Antichrist.

A substantial part of the Bible is the "sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19). The fulfilment of prophecies on important events such as the restoration of Israel, the struggle for the control of Jerusalem, as well as the rising of an antichristian new world order, are undeniable signs that the second coming of Christ is imminent.

It is now the time to very honestly and thoroughly evaluate yourself spiritually: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5). The church dispensation, which is the time when God's grace is offered to the whole world through Jesus Christ, is racing towards its end. Where will you spend eternity?

Johan Malan
Middelburg, RSA

1. Who is Jesus?

The only name

Amid all the false religions originating from the kingdom of darkness, the counterfeit Jesuses emerging from distortions of Christianity, the deadness of many apostate churches, and the deceiving spirits that lead millions of nominal Christians astray, the Lord Jesus Christ still stands out as the only shining light of a morally and spiritually dark world. He is the only real and lasting solution to an increasingly depraved human race that lies in the sway of Satan. Only in Jesus Christ and His unique gospel of salvation is true life to be found for all who are spiritually dead and slaves to sin:

- He is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn. 14:6) to all who find themselves on the broad way that leads to destruction, and who cannot escape the alluring deceptions of Satan who blinds their mind and spirit. To all who come to Him He offers deliverance and life abundant.
- He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. You do not need to continue struggling with the bondage of your sins and iniquities, and to make futile efforts to rid yourself of the increasing bondage to sin which ultimately leads to death and hell.
- He is the eternal and immovable Rock of the Ages upon whom we can build our lives. The decadent nations of the world are challenged to come to Christ and base their constitutions, social systems and moral norms on Judeo-Christian law in these troubled times.

It is of vital importance to know the Lord Jesus Christ *personally* – not only as Lord and Saviour, but also as the true Friend who will never forsake you, the Shepherd who will lead and guide you, the Bridegroom who will come again to take you to heaven, the world’s coming King and also the many other roles in which He is revealed in the Bible. After the life-changing day in which you confess your sins and invite Him into your heart, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour (2 Pet. 3:18).

The apostle Paul was firmly determined to gain more knowledge of and an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, and dedicated himself to realising this objective. He said: “I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being [conformed to] His death” (Phil. 3:8,10). That should be the great motivating power in our lives:

...till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:13-14 NKJV).

The Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself in all His fullness through His personal and descriptive names recorded in the Bible. If we already know Him as Lord, Saviour and Lamb of God, a study of the meanings of His other wonderful names will lead us into to a deeper knowledge and greater appreciation of the Man of Calvary. To behold the glory of the One who has a Name above all names will enrich your spiritual life and motivate you to love Him with all your heart.

The Trinity

In the Old Testament there are two primary names used for God: Yahweh and Elohim. Each has a special significance. Elohim is the first name to be used, and is mentioned well over two thousand times. Though the name Yahweh (the eternal I Am) is paramount, there is a special significance about the name Elohim that God does not wish us to miss. In his book, *Your Quest for God* (p. 45-46), Dr. Richard Bennett explains the meaning of this name as follows:

In the English language we talk in the plural if we wish to speak of more than one. And we use the singular if we refer to just one. But the Hebrew language can be even more precise, for it uses the dual when referring to two and then the plural when referring to more than two. The distinction between dual and plural (between 'two' and 'three or more') is very significant in the first name in the Bible that is used for God. 'Elohim' is in the plural. However, in another clear statement about God the Bible also says: "The Lord our God *is* one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). So in the very first verse in the Bible, which is God's revelation of Himself to man, we are introduced to a three-in-one and a one-in-three concept of God. "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This tri-unity has sometimes been called the Trinity.

The term 'one' which is used in Deuteronomy 6:4 to describe the Lord (Yahweh) our God (Elohim), is *echad* in Hebrew, which refers to a composite unity as opposed to an absolute unity. In Ezek. 37:15-22, God uses the word *echad* in referring to the unification of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah to become one nation; i.e. a composite unity.

That 'Elohim' is a composite unity referring both to *one* in the singular sense and *more than two* in the plural sense is shown by the personal pronouns used for God, who said regarding the creation of humans: "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, after **Our** likeness... So God created man in **His own** image, in the image of God created **He** him; male and female created **He** them" (Gen. 1:26-27). The Triune God can indeed say: "Let **Us** make man," and then, "...male and female created **He** them" (emphasis

added).

Before His incarnation as Son of God, the Word ever was, still is and ever will be the eternal, self-existent God. The apostle John refers to Him as the *Logos*, or the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made by Him..." (Jn. 1:1,3). Paul says: "For by Him were all things created... And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist... For it pleased *the Father* that in Him should all fullness dwell" (Col. 1:16,17,19).

A clear statement about the Triune God is made by the apostle John in his first Epistle: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 Jn. 5:7).

Names of the Lord Jesus

The names of the Lord Jesus Christ can be divided into four categories, i.e. His personal name, His names as God, His official name and official titles, and finally His descriptive names which emphasise His various attributes or works:

Personal name

The name *Jesus* (*The Lord [Yahweh] is Salvation*; Heb. *Yeshua*) was given by the Lord Himself to Jesus. An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said:

Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins (Mt. 1:20-21).

To meet the divine qualification to be the Saviour of Israel and of the whole world, Jesus had to be the perfect God-man. He had to become man and be born of a human generation (the royal lineage of David) to be *the Son of man*. That would qualify Him to be a substitute for human beings and atone for their sins. For this very reason, Jesus could not be begotten by any man so as not to inherit the depraved nature of fallen humanity ("*there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" – Ps. 14:3). Jesus was begotten by God the Father through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit so that He, as man, could also be *the Son of God*. That is why He was born from a virgin:

The virgin's name was Mary... And the angel answered and said to her, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God* (Lk. 1:27,35 NKJV).

Although the Almighty Creator, the Word so graciously humbled Himself to come into the world He had made, taking upon Himself the lowly

form of a human being as Jesus, both Son of God and Son of man, and subjected Himself to the will of God the Father (Mt. 26:39) to be our Saviour.

His name as God

In the Old Testament the LORD God (Yahweh Elohim, the three-in-one and one-in-three Triune God) declared Himself to be the eternal, self-existent "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14). In John 8:58 Jesus declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM." He is the self-existent God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit! The apostle John confirms this statement: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... all things were made by Him... in Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not... And the Word [became] flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:1,3-5,14). He laid aside all His glory and power as God the Creator, and, out of love for sinful humanity, humbled Himself to become a Man, so as to be able to atone for our sins by dying for us on Calvary's cross!

Though He accepted all the limitations of being Man, there are glimpses of His divine glory, as confirmed when the apostle Paul says of Him, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible... He is before all things..." (Col. 1:15-17). The Triune God has spoken to us in the Person of the Son "Who being the brightness of *His* glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:1-3). His deity also shone through when He, as Man, said, "I and *My* Father are one" (Jn. 10:30) and, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9). When he saw the risen Christ, doubting Thomas was completely convinced and reverently declared, "My Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28).

Indeed, Jesus, the Word, though Man, is both Lord (*Kurios* – Acts 10:36) and God (*Theos* – Rom. 9:5). It is important to address Him by these titles when we pray to Him or speak to others about Him. Before His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit it was usual to address Jesus only as Master (*Didaskalos*, *Kathegetes*, *Rabbi*, or *Epistates*). Only His disciples were aware that He was the promised Messiah (*Mashiach* or *Christ*) and the Son of God (Mt. 16:13-17). After His glorification, His full Godhead was revealed and then He was not only addressed as Master, but as Lord and God.

Peter refers to Jesus as both "Lord" and "Christ" (1 Pet. 1:3), while Paul refers to Him as "Lord" (Eph. 1:15) and also as "the great God and

our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:13). John says that “Jesus Christ... is the true God, and eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:20).

Even unbelievers speak of Jesus as a prophet, but we should always connect this personal name to His deity (i.e. Lord Jesus), or to His official name (Jesus Christ), or to both names (Lord Jesus Christ). In view of the widespread denial of His virgin birth and His deity we should always worship the Lord Jesus and proclaim Him as Lord and God.

As unbelievers often take the name of Christ in vain and even Christians use that name on its own when referring to Him in a rather formal and impersonal way, we should always join it to His personal name. Those who use the name of Christ on its own give the impression that they may not know Him personally, so do not use His personal name.

We should remember that there is “none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” but the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). Call on the name of Jesus while always honouring Him as Lord and God.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11 NKJV).

We have a further revelation of His greatness than the disciples had when He was here. They were amazed at His power and authority, but did not realise His true greatness and glory. On the sea they exclaimed, “What [kind] of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mk. 4:41).

The Holy Spirit gives believers more insight into the unsearchable riches of the greatness, omnipotence and the saving grace of their Saviour, “that ye... may be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:17-19). There is no need to remain in ignorance of the greatness of Christ and His love for us.

His official name

The Lord Jesus is also *The Anointed One* (Heb. *Mashiach*, Gr., *Christos*, Eng. *Messiah* or *Christ*). According to a messianic prophecy, He was to be anointed for His unique mission to save humanity and the world: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD [*Adonai Yahweh*] *is* upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings” (Is. 61:1; cf. Lk. 4:16-21).

Christ is an inclusive official title that combines eight titles, roles, or offices for which the Lord Jesus was anointed and sent forth (Gr. *apostello* – sent forth) into the world.

Official titles of Jesus Christ

The eight offices for which Christ was anointed, and the titles associated with them, are as follows:

1. Lamb of God

The most important reason why Jesus Christ was anointed and sent into the world, was to redeem fallen humanity from their sins. To be able to do this He had to come in the likeness of men so that He could offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins by shedding His blood and physically dying on the cross. He had to become the sacrificial Lamb of God:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me... Then I said, Behold, I come – in the volume of the Book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God... By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:4-5,7,10 NKJV).

The spiritual law that “without shedding of blood [there] is no remission” (Heb. 9:22; cf. Lev. 17:11) was impressed on Israel 1500 years before the coming of the Messiah. Thousands of sacrificial animals were offered according to the Old Testament laws in order that the Levitical priests could offer them to atone for the sins of the people.

All these sacrifices were only types or shadows which looked forward to the coming sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the fullness of time. It was John the Baptist who announced the coming of that divine Lamb: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29).

His perfect, once-for-all sacrifice gave efficacy to and superseded inadequate, repetitive Old Testament types: “[*Christ*] needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins and then for the people’s: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself” (Heb. 7:27).

Isaiah prepared the people of Israel long before the time for the great sacrifice of the Messiah as the ultimate Lamb of God:

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed... He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He [was led] as a lamb to the slaughter (Is. 53:5,7).

Do you give due recognition to the atonement for sins that the Lamb made through the shedding of His blood and the giving of His life on the cross? Have you accepted it in faith and was your life completely changed? Consider the deep significance that this sacrifice *should* have to you. At the institution of the Holy Communion the signs of the bread and the wine were meant to be a poignant reminder of the broken body and shed blood of the Lamb (Lk. 22:19-20). We need to ask ourselves whether

we vividly call to mind the Lord Jesus and the great sacrifice which He made on our behalf. No contemplation of Him is adequate without appreciating the profound significance of His shed blood:

Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in His blood... that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:25-26).

□ **Our salvation and rebirth is based on the blood:**

- ◆ We are *justified by His blood*, and saved from wrath through Him (Rom. 5:9).
- ◆ In Him we have *redemption through His blood*, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7).
- ◆ We are *redeemed with the precious blood of Christ*, as of a lamb without blemish or spot (1 Pet. 1:18-19).
- ◆ Jesus Christ *washed us from our sins in His own blood* (Rev. 1:5).
- ◆ We are beneficiaries of a *new testament (or covenant) in the blood of Christ* (1 Cor. 11:25).

□ **Our continued cleansing is also based on the blood:**

- ◆ If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin* (1 Jn. 1:7).
- ◆ *The blood of Christ purges our consciences from dead works* to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

It is evident that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God who gave His life for a dying world, forms the basis for all His offices. Because He paid the ransom for our sins, He confirmed the promises of His prophetic ministry that He would save and lead His people, and ultimately also reign with them. It enables Him to serve as High Priest, Mediator between God and man, Shepherd, Head of His redeemed church, and King over His inheritance. He is also qualified to be Judge of His own servants appointed by Him, and on judgement day will judge all who have rejected or neglected His atoning sacrifice on the cross.

In the book of Revelation it is as 'the Lamb' that He is named 26 times as the One who will, during the great tribulation, judge the world which has rebelled against Him. The kings and their subjects will flee to the mountains, hide in the caverns, and call on the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:16-17). On the other hand, there will be many who were faithful to the Lamb and who will, in deep gratitude, exclaim:

Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and

people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

Many people trust in a 'popular gospel,' not firmly based upon the blood atonement of the Lamb. They have various substitutes which are false foundations, e.g. a covenant theology based upon baptismal regeneration (salvation through baptism), moral reform (salvation by purity), or works holiness (salvation by good works). We must abandon any self-justification by works and honour the Lamb for the perfect sacrifice He offered on the cross as the only atonement for sins, and also for the continuous cleansing and sanctifying power of His precious blood.

2. Prophet

A *prophet* is a person whom God inspires to declare His word, His will and His judgements. Jesus Christ was no ordinary prophet, but the One of whom Moses prophesied, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you" (Acts 3:22). He did this in His sermon on the mount, His parables, the Olivet discourse and in all His ministry. He revealed truths that were unknown before: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 13:35). "People were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as *One* having authority" (Mt. 7:28-29). Officers sent to arrest Him did not, declaring, "No man ever spoke like this man!" (Jn. 7:46; NKJV).

In Deut. 18:20-22 God gave strict rules to prophets who were only to speak *His* word to the people – nothing was to be added or taken away, nor was His word to be distorted or incomplete. This is why all biblical prophecies are 100% reliable and the true words of God. A false prophet and his prophecies were to be rejected: "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak... that prophet shall die."

Jesus, of whom it was said, "A great Prophet is risen up among us" (Lk. 7:16), spoke only the Father's words:

For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak (Jn. 12:49-50; see also Jn. 17:8).

3. High Priest and Mediator

In the Old Testament, the High Priest was the mediator who stood between the people and God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, he entered the Holy of holies to make atonement for Israel's sins. No other priest was allowed to enter the sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant was.

Jesus Christ is the High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:1-6, 9:15). To hold this office He had to identify with humanity by becoming man Himself, thus subject to temptation, so able to feel for and help the tempted:

Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to [help] those who are tempted (Heb. 2:17-18; see also Heb. 4:15-16).

Jesus was not a Priest of the Levitical order, since the Levitical priests were mortal men succeeded by others. Also, they were sinful, and first had to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could offer them for others and the nation. Jesus has a perfect, unchangeable priesthood!

(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this *Man*, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us, *who* is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore (Heb. 7:21-28).

If you know this Mediator, Advocate and High Priest who can sympathise with your infirmities, having already atoned for your sins, and who ever lives to make intercession for you – do you realise your responsibility to follow in His footsteps, to live a holy life, consecrated to God, and come to the throne of grace to find help in time of need? Do you enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way He has opened for us through the veil to the mercy seat? (Heb. 10:19-22). Are you a regular visitor here?

We are a royal priesthood who are called to proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9). A priest must convey God's word to the people (preach), and also intercede at the throne of grace on behalf of them (pray). He must be holy and not sin, nor grieve the Holy Spirit. If he does, he must repent immediately and be restored at the throne of grace:

These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for

our sins (1 Jn. 2:1-2).

4. Shepherd

As the Shepherd of His flock, Jesus Christ is totally committed to their well-being, since He has redeemed them at such a great cost: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (Jn. 10:11). He gives them this firm assurance: "I am the door of the sheep... by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (Jn. 10:7,9).

It is to be appreciated that if He sacrificed His life for the sheep, He will also provide in their every need. That includes protection against their arch-enemy, the devil, who is a thief and a murderer:

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

The Shepherd leads His sheep by showing them the way, and they follow Him (Jn. 10:4). If they stay near the Shepherd and obey His voice, they will be safe, but if they are wayward and go astray, the devil will attack and scatter them (Jn. 10:12). If they are separated from Him they must return to Him and He will restore them: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but have now returned to the Shepherd and [Overseer] of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25).

The Shepherd remains faithful and will always meet His obligations towards His flock:

The LORD *is* my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou *art* with me (Ps. 23:1-4).

We live in an evil world that lies in the sway of the devil (1 Jn. 5:19). Temptations, Satan's attacks and deadly perils often come our way. The Shepherd allows trials that are necessary to test our faith. In them we must cling firmly to Jesus Christ, "that great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13: 20). Psalm 23 ends by assuring us of our Shepherd's presence with us when death is near. Goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We must never allow any bitterness in our hearts if things do not work out as we had hoped. The Lord's ways are higher than our ways and we can be assured that He will make all things, even afflictions and disappointments, work together for good to those who love and trust Him and faithfully dedicate their lives to Him (Rom. 8:28).

The Shepherd also cares for us by raising up able under-shepherds to lead, teach and guard the flock:

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints (Eph. 4:11-12).

The pastors, assisted by the church elders, are shepherds of the local church. They do not only teach the Word of God and preach the Gospel, but have pastoral duties to encourage and motivate the flock, to guide in all important decisions, to counsel any with spiritual or practical problems, pray with the sick and bereaved, shepherd wayward Christians and warn against moral and spiritual dangers:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

5. Servant

As the Son of man, Jesus is the Servant of God who came to earth to do the great work of salvation. His coming as Servant was foretold in several Old Testament prophecies:

And now, saith the LORD that formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant, to bring Jacob again to Him... It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth (Is. 49:5-6).

Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant? (Is. 50:10).

By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities (Is. 53:11).

A servant should display humility and submission in the service of his master. God's Servant, Jesus, showed us the perfect example! He also strongly warned His disciples against self-exalting pride:

Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your [servant]: and whosoever of you will be [great among you], shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be [served], but to [serve], and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:42-45).

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God... made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And... as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-8).

6. Head of the church

The office of Jesus as Head of the church was a mystery that was only revealed after the church was established. The bond between Him and the church is likened to a marriage relationship:

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body... This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church (Eph. 5:23,32).

Ephesians 5:25-27 states that Christ gave Himself for the church to sanctify and cleanse it, to present her to Himself holy and without blemish. He is the church's heavenly Bridegroom and "when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" and, having this hope, must purify ourselves "even as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:2,3) so that when He presents her to Himself she will not have spot or wrinkle to mar her pristine beauty.

The concept of *holiness* also means *to be set apart for the service of the Lord*. In this context we are seen as members of the body of Christ. We all fulfil different but complementary duties in achieving the mission and functions of Christ's church on earth:

For as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another (Rom. 12:4-5; see Rom. 12:6-8 and 1 Cor. 12:12-31 for an exposition of the functions of members).

Perform your task and calling only in the power and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). You must also realise that the authority for your spiritual calling is in Christ who is the Head. In Him you are in a position of victory:

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ... raised Him from the dead, and set *Him* at His own right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* the Head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:17-23).

7. King

The Lord Jesus has all power in heaven and on earth, and worthily holds the office of King. God has given humanity a free will, but not the right to use it to disobey Him! In this dispensation, the nations have rebelled against His authority. God gave humanity the ability to choose between good and evil. In practice, the wrong choices predominate since most people, like sheep, have gone astray, and love darkness more than light because their deeds are evil (Jn. 3:19). Satan has blinded their minds (2 Cor. 4:4) and deceived them into walking in darkness. In result "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 Jn. 5:19 NKJV).

We live in an evil world and Christians are often hated, oppressed and rejected because of their faith (Jn. 15:18-19; 16:33; Lk. 6:22-23,26). We are strangers and pilgrims in a world that largely rejects the true God

(Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11) but are to shine as lights in the world in the midst of a wicked and adulterous generation (Phil. 2:15; Mt. 16:4).

We are members of a kingdom that is not of this world. The Lord Jesus is our King and we experience His peace in our hearts. But our lives in this world are characterised by conflict against the adverse and hostile forces of darkness (Mt. 10:34). Satan and his kingdom are actively targeting Christians in an effort to harm the kingdom of heaven.

The situation will dramatically change when Jesus Christ comes to reveal His kingdom on earth and to reign as King:

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

From the viewpoint of His position as King, three very important events will occur at the Second Coming of Christ:

1. The enemies of God will be destroyed during the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21).
2. The throne of David will be restored in Jerusalem, from which the Lord Jesus will rule (Acts 15:16-17).
3. The worldwide millennial reign of Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords will be instituted, with Jerusalem as capital (Mic. 4: 1-3; Jer. 3:17; Rev. 20:1-3,6).

We have to accept and serve Jesus Christ *now* as the rejected King if we wish to be accounted worthy to reign with Him in the millennium. We should demonstrate to the world that we serve a King who can really change the lives of those who come to Him for salvation and eternal life.

Our citizenship is in heaven from where we expect the coming of Jesus Christ as King of kings very soon. He will destroy the power of the principalities and rulers of the darkness of the present world and set up His millennial kingdom on earth. The Sun of Righteousness will rise over a troubled world and completely dispel every vestige of darkness and unrighteousness (Mal. 4:2).

8. Judge

The Lord Jesus is the righteous Judge and we can rely on Him to fulfil His office justly when, after the rapture but before His millennial reign, He judges believers at His judgement seat, the *Bema* (Rom. 14:10). Their works and lives will be assessed and rewards given to all who served Him faithfully and lived holy lives (1 Cor. 3:10-15). The apostle Paul said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may

receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12).

Christians are not saved by works, but by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). However, after we are saved by grace, the Lord has need of us in extending His kingdom on earth. But He does not only call us and command us to do this work, but also gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be His witnesses effectively (Acts 1:8).

It is regarding this aspect of our lives that we must give account to Him. Any works that are not truly the fruit of the Spirit but done unspiritually in our own strength will result in our appearing empty-handed before the Lord, though we will be saved “yet... as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15). Others will receive the various crowns the Lord will award them, but there will be no excuse for servants who hid their talents (Mt. 25:24-25). Even if truly born again, their negligence will result in them standing empty-handed at the judgement seat.

The next occasion when Christ sits as a Judge is to judge the nations of the world at His Second Coming (the Appearing) when He comes “with ten thousands of His saints (Jude v.14-15) who “will reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:31-32).

After the millennium He will judge the nations and all unbelievers of all time, who will appear at the awesome great white throne on the final judgement day (Rev. 20:11-15):

God... hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by *that* Man whom He hath ordained; *wherefore* He hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that He hath raised Him from the dead (Acts 17:30,31).

God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

You cannot escape having to bow the knee to Jesus: He is either your Saviour who gives you eternal life or will be your Judge who condemns you for sin and unbelief.

Descriptive names of Jesus Christ

There are also a number of descriptive names of the Lord Jesus in the Bible. In these names, emphasis is placed on specific aspects of His Person and work. In this way we can know more about Him and understand

Him better, so able to love Him more. The following is not a comprehensive list of descriptive names, only some of the most common ones:

Light of the world

One of the most telling symbols of the kingdom of heaven is that of light. God Himself dwells in unapproachable light whom no man has seen (1 Tim. 6:16). In His perfect holiness He is exalted and far removed from the sinful lives of mortal humans on earth. Jesus came as the Light from on high to shine on those who live in darkness (Lk. 1:78-79). He said:

I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (Jn. 8:12).

The fact that so many people still walk in darkness can only be attributed to their unregenerate hearts that draw them away from Him who is the light of the world:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they [were done] in God (Jn. 3:19-21).

Bread and water of life

The true bread and water of life that alone can satisfy the deep spiritual needs of humanity come from heaven:

For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst (Jn. 6:33-35).

We are not only dependant on Jesus for new birth, but also for spiritual nourishment to sustain the new life. He is *Himself* our fresh manna from heaven daily, to build us up in our most holy faith. We 'feed' on Him through His word – which is why He so memorably said, "the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life" (Jn. 6:63). He still invites all who are spiritually needy to come to Him:

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his [heart] shall flow rivers of living water (Jn. 7:37-38).

Rock and foundation

Jesus is the Rock of Ages (cf. Is. 26:4 margin) that was cleft for us. His body was pierced when He died (Jn. 19:34) and from His death great blessings flow to us. Horeb's rock was a prophetic type of Christ and His death. God said to Moses:

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink (Ex. 17:6).

When the soldier pierced the Saviour's side there came out blood and water (Jn. 19:34). This was symbolic of His blood cleansing us from the guilt *and* power of our sins and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit later. These blessings were typified by the water flowing from Horeb's cleft rock (see 1 Cor. 10:1-4; Jn. 7:37-39). We can all drink of His great mercies, His forgiving love, and His renewing grace.

Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life (Ps. 36:8-9).

Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages, is a firm foundation to build our lives on. If you build your life upon Him as the Rock, you will be safe for time and eternity!

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11 NKJV).

A wise man builds his house on the Rock (Mt. 7:24-25). The Lord Jesus is his rock and fortress. Since he trusted Him for salvation, he is established on the Rock of Ages:

The LORD *is* my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust... *and* my high tower (Ps. 18:1-2).

The way, the truth and the life

Some claim there are many ways to God, but Jesus is the only way to God, since no one can come to God the Father but by Him (Jn. 14:6). He is not only the Way, but said, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (Jn. 10:9). There is no other way to heaven but through Jesus, the door! Also there is no other name given to us whereby we must be saved, except that of Jesus Christ! (Acts 4:12).

He is also the Truth, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who glorifies Christ, brings us to His word which is truth, reveals things to come and guides us into all truth! (Jn. 16:7-14). Further, Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life (Jn. 11:25-26). Only by Him can someone who is dead spiritually in sins and iniquities be made alive in Him:

Reckon... yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:11).

Sinners are subject to the punishment of death for their sins, which means eternity in hell. Because Christ received the punishment for our sins, by virtue of His sacrifice for sin we can have a free pardon and the gift of eternal life:

The wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed (Is. 53:5).

He died that we may live. Because He rose from the dead on the third day, trusting Him as Saviour, we have the gift of eternal life and can rise from spiritual death to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life for lost, sinful, spiritually dead humanity!

The living vine

I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).

The vine is used as a symbol of the most sacred things: the juice of its fruit being a type of Christ’s blood, and its main stem and branches being the perfect figure of the mystery of godliness – Christ’s union with His people.

The expression “in Me” refers to our justification and union with Him when we are grafted into the vine. The expression, “I in you,” refers to our deeper union with Christ, in our sanctification, when He becomes our entire life.

Another truth conveyed here is communion with Christ: “Abide in Me and I in you” (v. 4). We must maintain close fellowship with Him – we must not play ‘fast and loose’ but practice a moment-by-moment dependence upon Him. Paul says: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). Abiding in Him depends upon our obedience: “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love... *that* your joy might be full” (Jn. 15: 10,11).

Sanctification

But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30) ...ye are washed... sanctified... [and] justified (1 Cor. 6:11).

Jesus Christ is not only our wisdom, righteousness, justification and redemption, but also our sanctification. He sets the standards for holy living and enables us, by the Holy Spirit, to make continuous progress to higher levels of sanctification. He promises we shall live as overcomers if we are obedient to Him. The golden rule is, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

Wisdom

We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called... Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

Reverence for God and the Lord Jesus is the beginning of wisdom. Your mind is enlightened to understand God’s love in the provision of

salvation for sinners. Christ is the true Solomon, the wisdom of God. To reject Christ is to despise wisdom, and those who do so are utterly foolish:

The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7).

Through Christ Jesus, God gives us the spirit of wisdom and enlightens our understanding so that we may fully appreciate the riches of His glorious inheritance in His people (Eph. 1:17-18). We must therefore seek to increase in wisdom as we “grow in grace and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18), “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

The bright and morning star

In the last chapter of the Bible Jesus says of Himself: “I am the root and offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16). As the *Root* of David, His deity is emphasised – He is David’s Lord! As the *Offspring* of David His humanity is emphasised – He is the *Son* of David (Lk. 20:41-44). He is the promised Messiah, who was born of the house and lineage of David, of the tribe of Judah; the Seed of Abraham, from which all nations would be blessed (Gen 22:18).

The morning star is a prophetic symbol of hope, the herald of a new day that will dawn over this dark world. In Jesus we have a bright future hope! We can look beyond the anxiety, hardships and sin of the present world to a new world in which righteousness reigns. Do you have this vision of a future hope? If it is dark all around, Jesus, the Morning Star, assures you that He, as the Sun of Righteousness, will shortly rise on “the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18):

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star [*the morning star*] arise in your hearts (2 Pet. 1:19).

Bridegroom

The spiritual union between Jesus Christ and His blood-bought saints is so intimate that He likens it to a marriage relationship. He calls Himself the Bridegroom and the true church His bride. At the rapture He will be literally united with His betrothed bride, never to be separated from her.

Will you be one of the members of the bridal church who will be arrayed in fine linen, which is “the righteousness of the saints” (Rev. 19:7-8)? If so, you should persevere with a life of holiness and dedication to the Lord, and guard against backsliding into spiritual adultery. Paul said to the Christians in Corinth:

I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent [deceived] Eve through his [craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted

from the simplicity that is in Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2-3; see also 1 Thes. 5:23).

Paul said, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard... the things ...God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9). It is hard for us to imagine the glory and magnificence of the scene when the Bridegroom presents the bride to Himself:

Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee forever... Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. All Thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad.

Kings' daughters *were* among Thy honourable women: upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir... So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He *is* thy Lord; and worship thou Him... The King's daughter *is* all glorious within: her clothing *is* [woven with] gold. She shall be brought unto the King in [robes of many colours]; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto Thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace (Ps. 45:2-15).

Conqueror

At the cross, Christ conquered Satan, death and hell! He *spiritually* disarmed the powers behind this world, triumphing over them (Col. 2:15) and will soon do so *literally!* (Rom. 16: 20). He is the Conqueror who frees from Satan's power and makes us “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37). “If the Son... shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:36).

Are you still in bondage to Satan through sins, addictions, the occult, etc? You need to accept Christ, the only Saviour who can forgive your sins, cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:8-9) and set you free to live a new life of victory over Satan and sin as you “put on the armour of light” (Rom. 13:12-14) and reject any kind of bondage:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1).

Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14).

Thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57).

You can indeed be more than a conqueror in Christ!

Join all the glorious names!

In this booklet we have considered some of the most important names and titles of the Lord Jesus, but by no means all – one book lists well over 200 of them! Most of the names we have considered relate to His incarnation as Man but, as His deity is so much under attack these days, it may be helpful to list some of the names which relate to His eternal

existence as God, though it will not be possible to consider their significance fully here. Scripture names Him as:

The “I AM” (the unsearchable, timeless, self-existent One; Jn. 8:58; cf. Ex. 3:14-15) – so He is one of the glorious divine Persons of the Triune Godhead, the LORD God, Yahweh Elohim, and is *Himself* Yahweh (the ever-existing One). In Gen. 17:1 the same LORD (Yahweh) declared to Abraham, “I *am* the Almighty God” (El Shaddai), so the Word is Himself “the Almighty God.” He is also “the Lord” (Mt. 22:41-46, Kurios; cf. Ps. 110:1, Adon); “The Same” (the self-existent One who does not change, Heb. 1:12, 13:8, Ho Autos; Ps. 102:27, ‘attah hu’); “The Mighty God (Gibbor El – Is. 9:6); “The Word” (Jn. 1:1,14, Ho Logos; Rev. 19:13); The Creator (Jn. 1; Col. 1; Heb. 1); “The Originator of Life” (Acts 3:15, *Ton Archegon tes Zoes*); “Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and the End, The First and the Last” (Rev. 1:8, 22:13). Thomas, with his doubts completely dispelled when seeing the risen Christ, exclaimed in a sincere statement of faith: “My Lord and my God” (Jn. 20:28).

We are living in the end-times, shortly before the Second Coming of Christ, and Satan, who “deceiveth the whole world” (Rev. 12:9) and his minions are intensifying their attacks against the Christian faith, the Bible and, above all, against the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Satan’s efforts to destroy Him at the cross having been thwarted by His resurrection and ascension, he soon turned to perverting the truth of Christ’s glorious Person, throwing widespread doubt on His virgin birth and deity.

Some 700 years prior to the birth of Jesus, Isaiah prophesied, “a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14). This was confirmed by the angel who appeared to Joseph to announce the birth of Jesus, quoting this prophecy, adding that this name means “God with us” (Mt. 1:23). At a stroke this proves the deity and virgin birth of Jesus – two crucial doctrines which have been under ever-increasing attack during the past two centuries. Scripture also declares that He is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). In the words of one of Charles Wesley’s magnificent hymns:

Let earth and heaven combine, angels and men agree,
To praise in songs divine the incarnate Deity,
Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made Man;
He laid His glory by, He wrapped Him in our clay,
Unmarked by human eye, the latent Godhead lay;
Infant of days He here became,
And bore the mild Immanuel’s name.

Behold your God!

In Handel’s magnificent work, “The Messiah,” the choir sings those memorable words, “Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” (Is. 40:9).

Prophesying the coming of the Messiah, Isaiah says, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces... and it shall be said in that day, Lo, this *is* our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this *is* the LORD (YAHWEH); we have waited for Him, and He will save us... we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Is. 25:8-9). That is further confirmation, if any were needed, that the Messiah would *Himself* be God!

In the very literal J.N. Darby Version, Heb. 1:1-2 says, "God... has... spoken unto us in [the person of the] Son..." about which the margin note says, "Literally, 'in Son'... It is God Himself who speaks; not by another; not as the Father nor in the Person of the Father; not merely by the Holy Spirit... but as Himself a divine Person, and that Person the Son." Clearly, it is the Triune Godhead, the self-existent "I AM THAT I AM," Yahweh Elohim of the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14,15) who has spoken and that the "Spokes-Person" is Jesus Christ as *Himself* God! Heb. 1:3 says that He is "the brightness of His (God's) glory and the express image of His Person." In his "Notes, Explanatory and Practical on the New Testament, Vol. IX" (1848), Dr. Albert Barnes so memorably comments on the deity of Jesus:

On earth He was the brightness of the divine glory, and the express image of His Person. It was by Him, eminently, that God was made known to men – as it is by the beams of the sun that that is made known. He bore an exact resemblance to God. He healed diseases – like God. He raised the dead – like God. He wielded the power which God only can wield, and He manifested a character in all respects like that which we should suppose God would evince if He appeared in human flesh, and dwelt among men. And this is saying much. It is in fact saying that the account in the Gospels is real, and that the Christian religion is true. Uninspired men could never have drawn such a character as that of Jesus Christ, unless that character had actually existed.

The attempt has often been made to describe God, or to show how He would speak and act if He came down to earth... But Christ is GOD IN HUMAN NATURE. The form is that of man; the Spirit is that of God. He walks, and eats, and sleeps as a man; He thinks, and speaks and acts like God. He was born as a man – but the angels adored Him as God. As a man He ate; yet by a word He created food for thousands, as if He were God. Like a man He slept on a pillow while the vessel was tossed by the waves; like God He rose, and rebuked the winds and they were still. As a man He went, with affectionate interest, to the house of Martha and Mary. As a man He sympathised with them in their affliction, and wept at the grave of their brother; like God He spoke, and the dead came forth to the land of the living. As a man He travelled through the land of Judea. He was without a home. Yet everywhere the sick were laid at His feet, and health came from His touch, and strength from the words of His lips – as if He were God. As a man He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane; He bore His cross to Calvary; He was nailed to the tree; yet then the heavens grew dark, and the earth shook, and the dead arose – as if He were God. As a man He slept in

the cold tomb – like God He rose, and brought life and immortality to light. He lived on earth as a man – He ascended to heaven like God.

And in all the life of the Redeemer, in all the variety of trying situations in which He was placed, there was not a word or action which was inconsistent with the supposition that He was the incarnate God. There was no failure of any effort to heal the sick or to raise the dead; no look, no word, no deed that is not perfectly consistent with this supposition; but on the contrary, His life is full of events which can be explained on no other supposition than that He was the appropriate shining forth of the divine glory, and the exact resemblance of the essence of God. There are not two Gods – as there are not two suns when the sun shines. It is *the One* God, in a mysterious and incomprehensible manner shining into the world in the face of Jesus Christ. As the wax bears the perfect image of the seal – perfect not only in the outline, but in the filling up – in all the lines and features, and letters, so is it with the Redeemer. There is not one of the divine perfections which has not the counterpart in Him, and if the glory of the divine character is seen at all by men, it will be seen in and through Him.

The incomparable Christ

How can anyone fail to be moved and completely won over to faith in Him by such an eloquent testimony to the divine glory of the Person of Christ, who is indeed “God... manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16) and who bears such a galaxy of glorious names? In conclusion let us remind ourselves of that great hymn of Isaac Watts:

Join all the glorious names of wisdom, love and power,
That ever mortals knew, that angels ever bore;
All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.

We are either going to be forever with Him as Saviour, Lord, King, and God, or forever without Him in eternal darkness and anguish. He is the incomparable Christ, who said, “He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life” (Jn. 6:47). Only He is worthy of our trust. If the reader has not yet trusted Him, may he or she do so now! As Frances R. Havergal entreats:

Why will you do without Him? Is He not kind indeed? Did He not die to save you? Is He not all you need?

2. From Darkness to the Light

God's plan of salvation

There is a definite way that the Lord Jesus follows with unbelievers to save them, equip them for service and prepare them for eternal life in heaven. The willingness and full co-operation of each one of us, according to fixed biblical guidelines, is necessary if we wish to avert the tragedy of a false repentance. We can all share in the wonderful experience to be called by the Lord out of the darkness of sin into His marvellous light. I invite you to explore with me in the Word of God the unsearchable riches of the Lord's love and saving grace, and to accept it in faith.

1. CALLING

Humanity has a common problem of being sinful and facing the tragic consequences of separation from God and eternal punishment in hell unless we repent. The Bible says:

Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12 NKJV; cf. Rom. 3:9-12).

Sin *entered* the world by means of Adam's sin and subsequently *spread* to all humanity by penetrating the entire human race. The reason death spread to all people is that "all sinned." The penalty for sin is both spiritual and physical death: "The wages of sin *is* death" (Rom. 6:23 cf. 7:13). All human beings inherited Adam's sinful nature after the Fall, by being born into the world as sinners (Ps. 51:5). Paul says that we are "dead in trespasses and sins" and need to be spiritually restored and quickened by God (Eph. 2:1).

God Himself shows us the first step on the way of the conversion of sinners. He calls us to repentance and also provides the means for our salvation.

God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

Since the price for all our transgressions has been paid, people everywhere are invited to come to the Lord Jesus to receive forgiveness for their sins:

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Mt. 11:28).

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as

scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Is. 1:18).

The reason Jesus Christ came into the world was to offer new life to lost humanity. His main mission was to call sinners to repentance:

I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mt. 9:13).

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10).

It is important to recognise the specific call of the Lord Jesus to you *personally*, as this will determine how you will respond. It is crucial that you should realise the full extent of your problem, namely that you are heading for disaster without the Lord Jesus. There is no room for complacency or self-justification in your state of spiritual darkness, as “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10).

You must face up to the all-embracing nature of sin, and of how serious it is in God’s sight – especially your own sins which separate you from Him (Is. 59:2). There must not be any doubt in your mind that God has imposed the death penalty for sin (Ezek. 18:4,31-32; Rom. 6:23); consequently all unsaved people are heading for eternal condemnation. If they are not saved, the following sentence will be passed on them from the great white throne:

Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41).

When God the Father calls us through His Son, Jesus Christ, He not only identifies our problem of sin and condemnation, but also offers the solution. The good news is that God loves us and has provided for the forgiveness of our sins through the atoning death of Jesus on the cross:

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 4:10).

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18).

...we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him [Christ] *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

The calling of God to the unsaved must be so clear that they fully realise the implications, and count the cost of becoming Christians. Jesus made Nicodemus to understand that theological knowledge and a good life was not enough to inherit the kingdom of God – he *had* to be born again. The condition for receiving forgiveness and eternal life is the confession and forsaking of all known sins.

The Lord Jesus told the rich young man that he first had to break with his sin of materialism (Lk. 18:22). To this young man, who was otherwise very religious, it was hard to part from his besetting sin and he left sorrow-

fully. Many people find it hard to repent because they do not really *want* to part from their sins. To them, Jesus says:

Strive to enter in at the [narrow] gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able (Lk. 13:24).

While it is a wonderful experience to come to faith in Christ, but to enter the “narrow gate” is not easy, as we must leave behind much sinful ‘baggage.’ Remember that the gift of eternal life is something that we cannot merit or buy. The counting of the cost relates to our willingness to put off the filthy garment of our old life before we can be clothed with Christ’s robe of righteousness (Eph. 4:22-24).

Sinners who receive God’s call to repent, have been spiritually awakened to realise their lostness – that they have no hope and no future without God (Eph. 2:12). Their conscience has been aroused to recognise their sinfulness, but also God’s solution to their problem. Awakened sinners are not yet saved, but they heard the knock on the door of their heart conveying the following message to them:

Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light (Eph. 5:14).

Spiritually awakened persons can react in two ways to the conviction of sin:

- o They can yield to the pleading of the Holy Spirit who convicts them of sin, righteousness and judgement (Jn. 16:8), confess their sins and accept Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for their sins. They will then be forgiven and thereby escape the judgements of God.
- o They can also, to their own eternal ruin, resist the call of God to be saved by turning to Him: “To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:7-8). If we keep on hardening our hearts, the voice of the Holy Spirit will gradually be silenced and more difficult to respond to. Do not allow your heart to be hardened to the extent that you turn your back on God and shut Him and His word, the Bible, out of your life.

2. SORROW

The unbelievers under conviction of sin realise they need to get right with God. They are deep under the conviction of their sin and lost state. They feel accused and condemned because of what they have done. Their remorse and sense of guilt drive them to Christ – the One who paid the price by dying such a cruel death for the salvation of sinners.

Have you experienced the intense sorrow that leads to true repentance? “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10). The sorrow or remorse that the Bible speaks about is to have a repentant heart which will lead to a true conversion:

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts 3:19).

A paraphrase of the above text would be:

Repent ye therefore [*feel guilt and genuine sorrow about your sins*] and be converted [*turn about*] that your sins may be blotted out.

Sorrow because of sin is the result of the Holy Spirit's work of convicting us of sin. It drives us to the Lord and works a true repentance to the living God. Sorrow is a deep spiritual realisation of our total unworthiness before the Lord. We should realise that we are hell-deserving sinners who have offended a holy God and have no right to be pardoned. In this hopeless state we can only cast ourselves on the mercy of God.

When Peter denied Jesus, he went outside and wept bitterly (Mt. 26:75). That was true sorrow. He did not pity himself, but he had a terrible feeling of remorse because of the grief that he caused to the Lord Jesus. Unbelievers must realise that through their sins they have offended God by sinning against Him. This is godly sorrow and it leads to a true confession with the heart, which is a biblical condition for forgiveness.

How can people truly confess their sins before they have given the Holy Spirit the opportunity to convict them of the abominable consequences of sin? This conviction grows in our heart when we thoughtfully read the Bible, a Christian book, or when we listen to a good sermon. When the Lord Jesus calls us, He shows us exactly where we stand with Him. The sorrow that will then come over us according to His will, puts us on the way that leads to true repentance and spiritual renewal by the Holy Spirit.

There is no place for hidden pride and self-justification when we approach God to save our souls, as that would counter the disposition of sorrow and brokenness of heart: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jas. 4:6). We must get to the end of ourselves and admit that we have made a failure of our lives. Only then will we unconditionally put our trust in the Lord Jesus to save us. We do not deserve anything.

3. REPENTANCE OR CONVERSION

When repentant sinners realise they need to get right with God, they must abandon their former sinful lifestyles, confess their sins to Him and ask His forgiveness. They must be very earnest, not casual, in asking God to forgive their sins, but meet His conditions for forgiveness by fully and honestly confessing *all* known sin:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:8-9).

How does the Bible define sin? "Whosoever committeth sin transgres-

seth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is lawlessness, which is the non-observance of the *principle* of the law, and therefore refers to the absence of the control of God over the soul.

The basic principle of God’s law is love, which is a benevolent, divine love (*agape*) reaching out to others and only seeking their well-being in all spheres of life. Without God’s love in our hearts, sin is inevitable:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8-10).

The Lord Jesus is waiting on us to confess our sins (in the plural, which means *all* of them) and to turn our backs on them. We must abandon our sins and firmly resolve not to do such things again:

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth **and forsaketh them** shall have mercy (Prov. 28:13; emphasis added).

Repentant sinners, as well as backslidden Christians who have again become entangled by sin and unrighteousness, must be fully prepared to abandon their old lives by confessing and forsaking all their sins. The prodigal son in the parable made a definite decision to forsake his sins when he said: “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee” (Lk. 15:18).

King David said: “I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Thy sight... wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. 51:3-4,7).

It must be evident that before you can be set free from a bad conscience which condemns you for your sins, it is essential to get right with God about them. A hurried, superficial, insincere confession of sins will not do. You will need to do more than merely say: “Forgive all my sins,” and assume that God will be convinced you really mean it. Take time to confess your sins one by one as the Holy Spirit convicts you of them. Only this will satisfy God’s condition that confession must come from the heart, not only from the mind (Rom. 10:9-10).

Another very important condition in the confession of sins and the receiving of Jesus as your Saviour, is that it should be done in faith. Sinners who have not yet responded to the calling of God, are dead in sins and do not yet have faith since they are still unbelievers with hardened hearts. The gospel message awakens them to their sinful, lost condition. Then “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Titus 2:11) comes into their hearts, enabling them to put their trust in Jesus to save them. Like the penitent tax-gatherer, they can then exclaim: “God be

merciful to me a sinner” (Lk. 18:13).

Paul explains how we can receive faith – by reading God’s Word which leads us to true repentance:

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

When unbelievers read or listen to good evangelical messages on repentance, the Holy Spirit gives faith in their hearts to believe the message and to react to it. However, there are those people who maintain that they simply cannot believe. The solution to this problem is not to argue it away theologically, or to convince people that they must only accept the facts with their mind. They need further exposure to the Word of God, because the principle remains that *faith comes by the Word of God*. So by reading long sections from the New Testament and listening to good biblical sermons, in due course faith will come to them as they receive God’s living Word into their hearts. The Lord Jesus memorably said:

...the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life (Jn. 6:63).

When faith in Jesus as Saviour comes to awakened and convicted sinners they can be assured that God will receive them with open arms, as in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-24) and that God is “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26):

Without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

Since “God commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8) we can be assured that God’s door of grace is open to us and we can walk through it in repentance and faith! Jesus said, “...him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (Jn. 6: 37). If we confess our sins, God “is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9). To *believe* in Jesus (Jn. 3:16; Acts 16:31) involves more than believing that He came into the world to die for our salvation. We must have a basic knowledge about His deity, God’s plan of salvation, our responsibilities, and also about the promise of sanctification. We must believe:

- ✠ that He is the true God and eternal life, and the only Saviour of the world (1 Jn. 5:20; Lk. 19:10);
- ✠ that we have to repent with the confession of our sins to obtain His forgiveness (Mt. 9:13; Acts 17:30);
- ✠ that He is able to make us new creatures, that the old things can pass away and that everything can be made new (2 Cor. 5:17);
- ✠ that the Lord Jesus purchases us with His blood when He saves us, and that we henceforth belong to Him to be used by Him (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19);

- ✚ that through the rebirth we make a new beginning in life which implies a process of growing up to spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:13-14; Heb. 5:12-6:1); and
- ✚ that we must be filled with the Holy Spirit, study the Bible, and commit ourselves to a life of service to be witnesses for the Lord (Acts 1:8; Eph. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:18, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 4:2).

4. JUSTIFICATION

There are two aspects of the salvation of sinners, i.e. the forgiveness and blotting out of their sins (*justification*) and the receiving of a new life (*new birth*). These two aspects are closely linked because fallen humanity is spiritually dead as a result of sin and being alienated from God. They need to be both justified *and* made alive.

Justification demands the satisfaction of God's law which decrees the death penalty for sinners (Rom. 6:23). All sinners need somebody else to die in their place (a substitutionary death). Only someone who is sinless could substitute for fallen humanity, since sinners can only die (and be eternally lost) for their own sins – not for other's sins.

The *only* basis on which sin can be forgiven is the substitutionary death on the cross of Jesus, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). By this supreme act of love He accepted the penalty for our sins, so that we might have a free pardon, on condition that we repent, confess our sins and believe in Him:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins (Rom. 3:23-25).

He *was* wounded for our transgressions, He *was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* on Him; and with His stripes we are healed (Is. 53:5).

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7).

Every sinner on earth has an almost endless list of sins which condemn him. His numerous transgressions of God's law of love must be blotted out before he can be reconciled to God. The question is whether *you* have taken the list of *your* sins seriously by systematically working through them, confessing and forsaking each one of them, and accepting God's forgiveness in faith? He will forgive your sins and make you spiritually alive:

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross (Col. 2:13-14).

5. REBIRTH

The clear biblical exhortation to be born again is of the utmost significance in the salvation of sinners. By this concept God clearly teaches us:

- ◆ that because of sin and alienation from God, we are spiritually dead and need Him to make us alive; and
- ◆ that our 'old Adam' nature is a fallen, sinful nature which God says cannot be improved or changed, so we *must* be born again to become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17).

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3).

The believer's new life "in Christ" is likened spiritually to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By His death for us we are forgiven and God sees us as spiritually "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), but as "alive unto God" through Him and able to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4,11).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3).

God does not only forgive our sins – He also gives us a new life, and a new nature. We must know the Lord Jesus as Saviour *and* as the resurrection and the life. God imparts the new life to all believers through the Holy Spirit:

...according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour (Tit. 3:5-6).

The water baptism of believers symbolically points to the above experience, and is also a statement of faith in the Lord Jesus. Note the following example: "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts. 8:36-37 NKJV).

6. SANCTIFICATION

Born-again members of the true church of Jesus Christ are exhorted to deny themselves, walk in the Spirit and bear "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). We are called to a life of sober-mindedness and true holiness. The first principle of sanctification and discipleship is clearly given by the Lord Jesus Himself:

And He said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Lk. 9:23).

According to Luke 14:27-33, the cross of self-denial is related to

counting the cost of discipleship. A definite choice must be made whether you want to please the desires of the flesh (your old nature), or whether you are prepared to renounce the world and serve the Lord with your whole heart and everything you have. You cannot pursue the riches and fame in this world *and* at the same time truly follow and please the Lord Jesus. Can you testify with Paul that you are “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20) and, through His cross, regard yourself as dead to the world and its deceptive, passing “pleasures of sin”? (Heb. 11:25; Rom. 6:2).

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

If we deny the sinful tendencies of the old nature God will reward us with a life of victory and true happiness:

That ye put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:22-24).

We must take up the cross of self-denial *daily*. Only by so doing can we be sanctified overcomers in the Christian life and able to comply with the following exhortations:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

But as He which hath called you is holy; so be ye holy in all manner of [conduct]; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification... For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. He therefore that [rejects *this* does not reject] man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit (1 Thes. 4:3,7-8).

Through sanctification and the faithful dedication to Him which results from it, The Lord can change us into pure and effective instruments, fit for His service. He enables us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, able to stand against Satan’s attacks (Eph. 6:10-11), to cope with the demands of discipleship, to remain true to divine principles in the face of opposition and temptation, and to stay on ‘the narrow way’ until the Lord Jesus comes (Heb. 12:1-2).

Neglecting to comply with the command to be holy reduces many Christians to the deplorably low spiritual and moral state evident in the Corinthian church:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with [solid food]: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3; *carnal is fleshly*, like the *old nature*).

Many church congregations in the world today are plagued by the

problem of unspiritual, unfruitful, powerless, quarrelsome, worldly-minded, entertainment-oriented members whose service is limited to social concerns – let alone the problem of members who are merely nominal believers having only a form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). Even worse are the adverse reactions of some members of decadent and backslidden congregations who openly express themselves against the biblical doctrine of holiness.

During revival periods when evangelists such as John Wesley proclaimed the gospel of salvation, new birth and sanctification with zeal, there was a great spiritual awakening. Many repented of sin, were truly saved and born again, becoming Christ's witnesses, and taking the gospel to the mission-fields of the world.

The power of the Holy Spirit is also at our disposal in these end-times, to enable us to do great things for the Lord. It depends whether we *want* to serve the Lord. It all depends on our determination to serve Him with all our heart. Will He find us engaged in the great commission when He returns soon to take His saints to their heavenly home? Or will He find us in the company of slothful, compromising, unspiritual, even unregenerate, church members who are spiritually asleep? (Mt. 25:1-13).

The Lord Jesus wants followers who are truly committed to Him and to His work upon earth, not those who claim to believe on Him but give Him only lip-service. We must be witnesses to His saving grace and lead holy lives marked by prayer and service to Him. Those who give Him only cold mental assent, without heart commitment, will find they have been self-deceived:

Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven (Mt. 7:21).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit it is possible to do the will of the Father and live a life of godliness. If you do not delight in doing His will on earth, how will you ever be happy in heaven where only His will is done?

The work we do for the Lord is not done in an effort *to be saved*, but *because we are saved*. Jesus said, "As *My Father* hath sent *Me*, even so send I you" (Jn. 20:21). He sends those who are able and willing to all parts of the world to take the 'good news' of the gospel to all people. The Holy Spirit gives power to fulfil this vitally important task to those who are willing. Are you ready and available?

7. GLORIFICATION

The final step to full salvation is glorification. This takes place at the first resurrection when all true Christians will receive glorified, immortal, resurrection bodies:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and

the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Full details of our glorified condition in heaven have not yet been revealed to us, but we do know that when Jesus appears we will be like Him. He is the Bridegroom of His church and the King of kings, and we will share His glory:

For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21).

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

In anticipation of our glorification we must now be prepared for the coming life in heaven by being pure and holy. Our present spiritual state determines our future position. Apart from being born again, we must live Spirit-filled lives of dedication to the Lord. We will receive rewards at the judgement seat of Christ for our labour in the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10). The following crowns are mentioned in the Bible:

- The incorruptible crown for a holy life (1 Cor. 9:24-25).
- The crown of rejoicing for soul-winners (1 Thes. 2:19)
- The crown of glory for faithful shepherds (1 Pet. 5:2-4).
- The crown of life for Christian martyrs (Rev. 2:10).
- The crown of righteousness for those who loved the appearing of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8).

Will you stand empty-handed on that day, saved as by fire (1 Cor. 3:15), or will you be declared a faithful servant? Will you be worthy of the Lord saying words similar to the following about you on that occasion?:

His Lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord (Mt. 25:21).

It is clear that the Lord Jesus came not only to save us from hell, but to make us His disciples. He wants not only to be your Saviour but also your Friend, Shepherd, Leader, Lord, King and heavenly Bridegroom. "You are a chosen generation... that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). You are called and committed to serving Christ after your salvation by sharing in evangelism, both at home and abroad, to be an effective member of His church, and a co-labourer with God and Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 3:9).

During this life we are also being prepared for our future role to reign as kings with the Lord Jesus in His coming kingdom. The glorified church will sing to the Lamb: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by

Thy blood out of every... people... and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10). In anticipation of that role, we must now prevail over sin in our own lives. We must also engage in the battle against Satan in this present evil world and achieve victories in the Name of Jesus. We must not be content only to be saved, but to be fully committed to His cause, to follow and serve Him for as long as He chooses to leave us here.

The worldly-mindedness and spiritual shallowness of many modern churches falls far short of the Lord’s standard of conduct and holiness. Most Christians are satisfied with their poor spiritual state and fail to live up to “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). The reason for this state of affairs is that many of them are not truly born again, while some who are, do not live victorious lives as overcomers empowered by the Holy Spirit (Rev. 3:11-12,21).

I want to challenge you to evaluate your spiritual life very critically in the light of God’s Word. Examine your spiritual foundation to determine whether you are truly in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). In the next section we discuss a number of false foundations upon which many people build their lives, deceiving themselves that they are Christians. You cannot afford to have doubts about your real spiritual state as your eternal destiny depends on it.

If you do have the witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart that you are a child of God, you should also evaluate your life to see whether it meets the standards and expectations of the Lord. Do you bear fruit that befits repentance and do you use your God-given talents in the service of the Lord, or are you hiding your talents while lapsing into a life of worldliness and spiritual inactivity?

False foundations

There are various false foundations that the enemy of our souls and his accomplices offer to people when they wish to become Christians. His first objective is to deter them from deciding to believe on the Lord Jesus so as to be truly born again. If he does not succeed with *Plan A*, he does not abandon his efforts but tries *Plan B*, which includes cunningly devised schemes to sidetrack converts with worldliness and ignorance of biblical truths, which deprive them from becoming mature, Spirit-filled Christians. The following are some of the false foundations upon which many people try to build their lives, thereby adhering to an unbiblical and humanly conceived form of Christianity which is devoid of real spiritual life:

No clear calling

As a result of poor preaching and books with shallow messages, many people do not receive a clear calling to get right with the Lord. Preachers lull their audiences into a spiritual sleep and leave them with the impress-

sion that they are Christians by being members of a church and assenting to its statement of belief. They are not motivated to desire a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, but are content with an outward form of godliness.

Moralising

The idea is often instilled in church-goers that seeing they are such good people, they comply with the standard which is expected of Christians. Being flattered by this idea, they experience no conviction of sin nor the need for repentance and faith in Christ as Saviour. They resist any suggestion of this, so do not realise they are lost. They boast in their morally irreproachable lives and concentrate on doing good works by which they hope to gain society's *and* God's approval. Tragically, these 'good' people are on their way to hell unless they repent.

Baptismal regeneration

Many thousands build their lives on the false foundation of so-called baptismal regeneration, thinking that infant baptism gives them eternal security. They cling to the deceptive idea that baptism and confirmation ceremonies in a church ensure their salvation. After these rituals, they are told that they have entered into an eternal covenant with God. They assume that through baptism they have been born again and are on their way to heaven. The Bible says that religiousness which is not preceded by repentance and faith in Christ's finished work of redemption will not save us from God's judgement and hell:

For to us was the gospel preached, as well as to them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it* (Heb. 4:2).

Changed concepts

The religion of many consists only of changed concepts. Much preaching is "with the enticing words of man's wisdom," and not "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). As a result the minds of hearers are filled with cold, theological arguments, without anything to move their souls in response to the Lord Jesus. The hearers may confess Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him (Mt. 15:8). Their hearts have not been changed, but only their mental concepts, which confuse them into thinking they are Christians guided by the Holy Spirit, while that may not be the case. Self-righteousness is of no avail:

Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Lk. 16:15).

Such people have never experienced godly sorrow leading to repentance for their sins (2 Cor. 7:10). They cannot clearly testify of being saved and born again as there has been only a superficial change.

Emotional repentance

Many people are moved by a gospel message only emotionally. They make a decision for Christ, not in repentant faith, but moved by emotion. As emotions come and go, such decisions often do not last long:

But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and [immediately] with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, [immediately he stumbles] (Mt. 13:20-21).

Note that the person referred to received the Word of God with *joy* – an emotion not to be confused with true *faith*. A superficial, emotional response is not true, deep repentance for our sins, nor faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour and the only way of salvation – it may be a false repentance. Some can even point to a date on which they ‘received the Lord’ joyfully, but without repentance and faith in Christ they were not truly saved for eternity.

Cheap grace

Many preachers offer grace cheaply, as a gift that can be received by anyone without conditions. Although it is a free gift from God, grace is not cheap because it cost Christ so much to obtain it for us, so is available only on certain conditions. True repentance and confession of sin alone make this grace available to us, not just giving lip service to the doctrine of salvation and thinking it is available to you by casually saying you are willing to become a Christian. This will not ensure the witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart that you are a child of God (Rom. 8:16).

Accept the Lord Jesus in the biblical way by allowing the Holy Spirit to bring you under deep conviction of sin and faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ to obtain true forgiveness and salvation. Then you will be on the right road to a lasting transformation of your life.

Only believe

Another version of the cheap grace teaching is that you need only to believe – heaven is assured, so there is nothing else to do! Works, including repentance of sin, are frowned upon. Such false teachers quote the following:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

While that is true, we cannot be saved by grace through faith *without* first deeply and genuinely repenting of all known sins, confessing them to God, giving up sinning, and counting on His mercy. If we have been saved by grace we must promptly start to live a life of service to God with good works – *not* to obtain salvation, for we already have it – but to please God by obeying His Word. Following the verse quoted above, the next verse

emphasises the good works which should *follow* salvation:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

The Christian life requires our whole-hearted co-operation with God in working out His plan for our lives *and* for the world – we become His co-labourers (1 Cor. 3:9). This calls for a disciplined act of our will, while relying on the abundant strength and grace of God:

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Cor. 15:10).

Saving grace is followed by grace to fulfil our ministry. A new life under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit is offered to believers who comply with the conditions for drawing on God's abundant grace. We should be a people of God who are "zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14).

Inapt words of comfort

Awakened sinners who are under the conviction of sin, often seek advice from Christians about their deep feelings of guilt. It is very unwise to tell such persons that they are not as bad as they think. Family members often do that to help ease their guilt. This can defeat the Holy Spirit's work in convicting sinners so that they can be saved. They must be helped to realise that all sin is so bad that it deserves eternal punishment in hell. The good news of the gospel is that God provided the ideal solution, i.e. that the Lord Jesus was punished on the cross for sins, and believing this we can have a free pardon and the gift of eternal life. He came to destroy the works of the devil and to save us from all our sins as well as the punishment for sins.

Self-pity

People often feel self-pity if things have gone seriously wrong in their lives, assuming they were not to blame. No good can come from such feelings, as "the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Sorrow that comes from the conviction of sin is the Holy Spirit's work to lead you to repentance and trust in Christ's work of redemption at the cross. Self-pity leads you to make excuses and seek sympathy for your problems. This leads down the road to disaster and not to repentance and victory over your sins. Ask yourself if you could be the main cause of your problems, read the Bible and experience the true conviction of the Holy Spirit who will lead you to call upon God for His mercy, forgiveness and help. Your burdens will be lifted at Calvary.

Physical manifestations of God's power

A serious deception which has recently emerged in some churches is the

idea that, by the Holy Spirit's activities, God reveals Himself in power in the *physical* realm as well as in the *spiritual* realm. This has led to a theology of dramatic physical manifestations. God is expected to reveal Himself in signs and wonders. If He does not do so, then it is concluded that He longer works powerfully among His people.

Many convince themselves that they are Christians because they have had some dramatic experience, not because of being convicted of their sins and repenting for them. Some have fallen down, had fits of laughter, a vision or been healed, so believe God has touched and saved them because of such experiences.

Millions are deceived in this way, feeding their emotion-based 'faith' on exhilarating worship services with rhythmic music, appeasing their consciences and uplifting their spirits for a few days, before needing another 'fix' of emotionally stimulating experiences. They should read their Bibles and soberly realise that when they stand before the Lord's throne it will be no use saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not... in Thy name done many wonderful works?" for He will say to them, "I never knew you, depart from Me" (Mt. 7:22-23). Then it will be too late to repent and obtain the true life which alone can transform us into disciples of the Lord Jesus.

'All Christians are Spirit-filled'

There are also false foundations for a life of holiness. A very common assumption is that since all Christians are born again by the Holy Spirit, they are also filled with the Spirit. It is claimed that as the Holy Spirit is a Person who cannot be diminished or increased, we need no further infillings of the Holy Spirit as we "grow in grace" (2 Pet. 3:18).

This statement is contrary to the Bible's teaching and deprives many Christians of a Spirit-filled, victorious life. The fact is that our old nature must be denied and crucified before the full authority of the Holy Spirit will be established in our lives. The fleshly Christians of 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 were certainly not Spirit-filled Christians and were greatly in need of the experience of sanctification. All believers need to be aware that the Holy Spirit dwells in them and they should be led by Him: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

The non-offensive gospel

Many of the false foundations discussed above converge in the modern church-growth movement. Preachers are motivated by a humanistic spirit of positive thinking and success, which induces them to present the gospel of the Lord Jesus as non-offensive and pleasing to the world as possible. This is done to draw large crowds of popular followers of Jesus Christ. In this positivistic approach to the gospel no mention is made of 'negative' things such as unsaved people being sinners, God's judgement upon sin, false prophets, the Antichrist, etc. Such preachers also shy

away from the cross and the blood of Christ as that is associated with God's judgement upon sin.

A soulless gospel, in which many good things are said about the Lord Jesus, while offering His blessings to all people but without mentioning the destructive consequences of sin and the dark prospects of sinners within the context of God's wrath upon them, cannot be of any real advantage. Furthermore, it does not lead to a sound appreciation of the nature of Christ's death on the cross to atone for our sins. It also lacks practical value as a directive in life, as all negative subjects such as spiritual deception are deliberately avoided and ignored. In this way, the true gospel message is played down and eventually silenced. Through preaching of this nature, including 40-day programmes of dedication, people are deprived of their spiritual armour which they need to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-12).

How to grow in grace

The Christian life should be a pilgrimage of sanctification while we are walking the light of God's presence, having fellowship with the Lord Jesus and being continually cleansed by His blood from every sin (1 Jn. 1:7):

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18).

...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us (Heb. 12:1).

There follows, to the end of the booklet, a summary of a guide to growth in grace by the well-known revivalist preacher, Charles Finney, from his *Lectures on Revival*:

But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).

Grace is favour. In the Bible the word *grace* often signifies a free gift. The grace of God is thus the *favour* of God, His free gift to us.

The command to grow in grace does not enjoin us to gradually give up sin. Strangely enough, some people think it means that. But nowhere does the Bible command us to leave sin bit by bit. Rather, every word requires us to break with it instantly and completely. We are to grow in God's favour, in His estimation of us and satisfaction with us and in worthiness of His favour.

Conditions of spiritual growth

The following are some of the basic conditions that must be met if we are to grow in grace:

□ **We must already be *in* grace**

Just as growth or increase in anything implies a beginning, growth in God's favour implies that we have found favour in His sight. We are already indebted for grace received; as one of God's favoured ones we are already *in grace*.

□ **Our sins have been abandoned and forgiven**

Growth in grace presupposes that we have already repented of sin, that in practice we have abandoned all known sin. Being approved by God implies that we are pardoned and favoured by Him for the sake of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. His favour assumes that we have renounced rebellion against God; we can never stand in favour with God while we knowingly indulge in sin against Him.

□ **Continuous growth**

Once grace has started, there is room for everlasting growth. As we know God more, we will be capable of loving Him more, displaying broader and deeper confidence in Him. God reveals Himself to us through Christ Jesus, and in Him we discover the true personality of an infinite God. The text therefore says, "Grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The more we love, the more we believe; the more we know God – if we conform to this knowledge – the more God will be pleased with us; and as we stand higher in His favour, the more He will bless and use us.

□ **Entirely committed to God**

To grow in grace we must increase in knowledge of what it means to be entirely given to God. True conversion involves consecrating ourselves and all we have to Him. New believers are not aware of everything involved in consecration's highest forms. Fully surrendering everything we are, have, desire, and love, as quickly as these objects come to mind, is a condition of growth in God's favour. As you receive new light your consecration must enlarge by each day and each hour, or you will stop growing. Whenever you hold back, not leaving all on the altar of consecration, at that moment you cease growing. Let this sink deep into your heart.

□ **Conformity to the Holy Spirit's teaching**

A further condition of growth is constant conformity to the Holy Spirit's teachings. We are to deepen our Christian practice by seeking spiritual light through the Holy Spirit's illumination. You will not gain any effective spiritual insight except through the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit. You must constantly, earnestly pray for His teaching, and guard against resisting and grieving Him. You must also continue in the attitude of a disciple of Christ. He will not teach you by His Holy Spirit unless you renounce self, live continually given to Him and follow His instructions in the Bible.

□ **Unwavering faith in God**

More and more *implicit* faith in God leads to growth. We need a confidence in God's character so profound that we trust Him in the dark as well as in the light, as deeply when we understand His ways and requirements as when we do not. Implicit faith is unwavering, unquestioning faith, a state of mind that rests in God, His promises, His faithfulness and love – no matter how trying and apparently unreasonable His commands or guiding circumstances may be.

□ **Complete sanctification**

A more thoroughly sanctified soul – the seat of our desires, affections, emotions, feelings, appetites and passions – is another condition of growth in God's favour. In its depraved condition, the human nature as a whole is hideous. Even though the will is surrendered to God, the soul may still be unsightly to those who can see its desire, passion and lust. And it is through our soul that temptation attacks us. The will battles these appetites to keep them subjected to God's will, and if the human will maintains its integrity and clings to God's will, sin does not occur. Nevertheless, these rebellious leanings hinder the will in serving God: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). As the soul becomes more and more subdued and in harmony with the will's devotion to God, we are free to give God unhampered service. So the more thorough the sanctification of the soul the more thoroughly we will be in God's favour.

□ **Filled with the Holy Spirit**

Growing in God depends on an increasing presence of the Holy Spirit. Every step in the Christian's life must be taken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that in *all* things we will be led by God's Spirit. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Remember that to grow in grace you must grow in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

□ **A more intimate knowledge of Christ**

A deeper personal, experiential knowledge of Christ and how He works and relates to us must come before growth in grace. The Bible introduces Christ as a living Person. What is said of Him should lead us to seek intimacy with Him, for through a personal relationship with Christ, God makes us like Him. Know Him in His fullness, by faith personally appropriating Christ in each area of relationship. Clothe yourself with Christ, taking Him as your own, for He is your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; your Prophet, to teach you; your King, to

govern you; your High Priest, to atone for you; your Mediator, your Advocate, your strength, your Saviour, your hiding-place, your high tower, your Captain and Leader, your shield, your defence, your reward. Know Him personally in each of these areas, appropriating Him by faith. This is an indispensable condition of growth in His favour.

False signs of growth in grace

A number of things can mislead us into thinking growth is taking place when it is not. These are false signs of spiritual progress:

- ◆ Growth in knowledge is not conclusive evidence of growth in grace. Knowledge is indispensable to walking in God's favour, being one of the conditions of growth in grace. But knowledge itself is not grace. A person can explode in knowledge, yet have no grace at all. Knowledge must lead to a deeper dedication to God and be transformed into a spiritual asset.
- ◆ Growth in gifts is not proof that an individual is living nearer to God. One who professes Christ can pray more fluently, preach more eloquently, exhort more powerfully without being any more holy. It is common for people who have no favour from God to excel in outward religious practices.
- ◆ Just because a person thinks he is growing spiritually does not mean he is. A person can be impressed with his spiritual progress when others clearly see his spiritual decline. Someone who is rotting spiritually seldom knows it. This is natural. The conscience of someone in spiritual decline will become increasingly calloused as he resists the light. He thinks he is on his way up precisely because he has less sense of sin, and while his conscience sleeps on he may continue in fatal delusion.

Proofs of growing in grace

There are also several proofs that we are growing in God's favour and making progress in our spiritual lives:

- ◆ If you are conscious that you exercise more childlike and complete confidence in God, this proves that you are growing in grace. As your life, attitude, and spirit manifests this ever-expanding faith, you demonstrate to everybody that you are increasing in the favour of God.
- ◆ If you are weaned from the world and its temptations, you have grown in grace. A soul crucified to the world signals spiritual progress.
- ◆ Fewer feelings of reluctance when called to exercise self-denial reveals growth in grace. It shows that the feelings are less despotic, that the will is gaining mastery of them and that the soul is blending into harmony with the will's intent and the mind's dictates.

- ◆ Less temptation to sins of omission is another sign of growth. Less temptation to shy away from the cross, from unpleasant responsibilities, from prayer, Scripture reading, private and family devotions, displays growth.
- ◆ Deepening intensity and steadiness of zeal for God's causes reveals growth in God's favour. Sometimes a Christian's zeal cools, and at other times it warms; sometimes it is committed, at other times it is fickle and fleeting. As Christians grow in devotion, their zeal becomes deep, intense and steady.
- ◆ Withering self-consciousness and respect for self in every action of life reveals growth in God's favour. Some people are so self-conscious about everything they say and do that it hinders their Christian life. New Christians, for example, sometimes cannot speak, pray or do anything in public without being either proud or ashamed of having performed in front of others. As they lose sight of self and consistently work for God's glory with spiritual confidence, they grow in His favour.
- ◆ Deadness to flattery or condemnation signals growth in grace. Paul counted it a small thing to be judged by others. He sought only to find God's approval.
- ◆ A growing graciousness in accepting the whole will of God reveals spiritual growth. Some rebel against His will or His ordering of events. But those Christians growing in grace embrace His entire revealed will with greater and greater love for it.
- ◆ Calmness in hardship evidences growth. It shows that the soul is firmly anchored in Christ, being thus able to withstand the storms of life.
- ◆ Tranquillity in the face of sudden, crushing disasters and losses. The more tranquil the soul when storms of circumstances suddenly overwhelm it, sweeping away its loved ones and destroying its earthly hopes, the greater its proof of being favoured by God.
- ◆ Patience under provocation and less temptation to worry.
- ◆ When you find that you not only tolerate but accept God's will when it calls you to suffer, when you can endure patiently and joyfully, this shows you are growing in God.
- ◆ An increasing deadness to all the things that the world offers and to all its threats.
- ◆ Less temptation to focus on troubles or talk about them to others shows that we think less and less of self and accept our trials with more and more submission to God.
- ◆ Dwelling less on other's faults and their shortcomings by becoming focussed on Christian solutions to problems.

- ◆ Speech that is gentle rather than sarcastic, uncharitable or severe. A growing delicacy and tenderness in speaking of other's real or supposed faults.
- ◆ An increasing reluctance to think of or treat anyone as an enemy, and an increasing ease in treating them kindly, praying for them heartily and working to do them good.
- ◆ An ability to forgive rather than hold grudges, and a lack of desire to retaliate for injuries.
- ◆ Conformity to God and growth in His grace is clearly displayed by a growing jealousy for God's honour, and for the church's purity in a corrupt world.

Becoming strong in faith

We can grow in grace by fulfilling the conditions of spiritual growth noted in the discussion above. Remember that every step of spiritual growth must be made by faith, not by works. Some good Christians have made truly amazing mistakes on this subject. Many teach that the way to be sanctified is to work for it, calling sanctification by faith an absurdity and describing growth in grace as the formation of habits of obedience to God.

This is quite surprising. The fact is that every step of progress in the Christian life is taken by a fresh and fuller appropriation of Christ by faith, a deeper filling of the Holy Spirit. As our weaknesses, infirmities, and recurring sins are revealed to us by the circumstances we face, our only help is found in Christ. We grow only as we step by step appropriate Him more fully, as we more fully "put Him on." We mature only as fast as we are emptied of self-dependence, as we renounce any expectation of forming holy habits through our own obedience, as we partake by faith of deeper and deeper fillings of the Holy Spirit, and as we more thoroughly put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nothing is more erroneous and dangerous than the common idea that we grow up spiritually by forming holy habits. We appropriate Christ by acts of faith alone, and we are sanctified by faith as truly as we are justified by faith.

I say it with sorrow: The teaching of many pastors is a stumbling block to the church. Under their instruction converts are never established in grace, and they never become useful or live lives honourable to Christ. Such teachers do not know how to grow themselves. In order to instruct converts and keep the church moving on in holiness, the pastor himself must move forward. He must be a truly vital, growing Christian.

Many churches in many places weep for lack of living devotion and growth in their pastors. Their ministers are intellectual, literary, philosophical, and theological in their teaching, but are sadly deficient in unction, having little power with either God or people. They instruct the intellect but

not the heart because they preach an intellectual rather than a spiritual gospel.

It is obvious why so many people backslide. The reason for this is the lack of timely and proper instruction on sanctification and discipleship. But to be timely and proper, instruction must be anointed by the Holy Spirit so that people may be endowed with power from on high (Lk. 24:49).

The end of the journey

The destination of the Christian's pilgrimage from darkness to the light is our eternal home in heaven – in the new Jerusalem where the Lord Jesus is preparing a place for us (John 14:2-3). During the difficult days of our earthly lives, when we are strangers in an evil world, faith in God and the assurance of our wonderful future gives us strength to resist temptations and to persevere in holiness to the end.

The hope on Christ's coming and our glorification is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, connecting us with God at His throne of grace (Heb. 6:19). The Lord Jesus Himself is our anchor. We know that our future is secure in His hands and that He will guide us along the way.

Unfortunately, there are those who become discouraged and grow cold in their love (Matt. 24:12). In Ephesus, most of the believers have forsaken their first love but remained devout members of the congregation. It is not acceptable at all to the Lord Jesus that His church on earth should degenerate into an organisation with only a form of godliness, in which He is only nominally worshipped but, in effect, has been pushed aside by office-bearers, ecclesiastical structures and human organisation. He clearly expresses His dissatisfaction with this state of affairs and says that if they persist with their backsliding He will remove their lampstand from them:

Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent (Rev. 2:4-5).

Discard the filthy rags of human righteousness (Isa. 64:6), kneel down at the cross and confess every sinful deed and attitude that separates you from the Lord Jesus. Renew your commitment of faith and surrender yourself unconditionally to the Saviour – the One who loves you with an everlasting love.

The continued cleansing by the blood of the Lamb and the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit will enable you to go from strength to strength on the way of the Lord. If we become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10) we will never be counted among the carnal, weak and backslidden believers. While growing up to the stature of the fullness of Christ we will develop senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Eph. 4:13; Heb. 5:14). Then we will make quick progress on the way of

the Lord while dedicating ourselves to doing works that have eternal value.

3. Spiritual Deception

A solemn warning

Since the start of the Christian era, many churches have shown a fatal inability to distinguish between the truth of God's inspired Word and misrepresentations of it:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-8).

The congregation in Corinth suffered from the same lack of discernment and spiritual insight:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent [deceived] Eve through his [craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth **another Jesus**, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive **another spirit**, which ye have not received, or **another gospel**, which ye have not accepted, [you put up with it well]... For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no [wonder]; for Satan... [transforms himself] into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-14; emphasis added).

From these quotations it is evident that there are three main ways in which the truth of Scripture can be falsified by Satan to deceive Christians and lead them astray. These perversions involve crucial issues at the very core of our faith and are intended to deceive people into accepting **another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel.**

Satan's strategy to attack, misrepresent and pervert the Christian faith has continued unabated throughout the church dispensation. It is crucially important that the particular forms of deception current in these last days should be rejected and exposed by all who profess to be Christians.

Another Jesus

The following are the most common ways in which the Person, work and image of the Lord Jesus are distorted so as to present a counterfeit Jesus who is powerless to save lost sinners from the righteous judgement of a holy God:

Jesus the human teacher

In sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and in other religions such as

Islam, the deity of Jesus is denied. Most portray Him as a merely human prophet or unusually gifted teacher, while explicitly denying that He is the Son of God.

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father (1 Jn. 2:22-23).

Tragically, the antichristian denial of Christ's deity is now common in many professedly Christian churches. Theologians also have an increasing tendency to deny His miraculous conception and virgin birth, thus attempting to reduce Him to an ordinary, fallible human being. A powerful movement promotes the deceptive idea that the **historical Jesus** (i.e. the so-called **real Jesus**) is to be clearly distinguished from the **mythic Jesus** (or **cultic Jesus**) which, they allege, the Church's tradition has transformed Him into.

A shocking fact about this current campaign against the true, biblical Jesus is that many leading theologians in university theology faculties actively support it by questioning biblical statements that He is the true Messiah of Israel and the Son of God. In the effort to reconcile the above two incompatible images of Him and to discover the 'real' historical Jesus, the biblical Jesus is stripped of His deity.

Leading this campaign among academics is the *Jesus Seminar*, established in USA in 1985. Many theologians elsewhere are following suit. The University of South Africa's Institute for Theology and Religion published *Images of Jesus* in 1997, in which they seriously distort His biblical image.

If Jesus was not truly "God with us" (Mt. 1:23) and sinless He could not have offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of Adam's fallen race. In the first Adam we are all spiritually dead, as we inherit his sinful nature. A dying race needs a second *Adam*, a perfect God-Man, to re-create us in His image by imputing His righteousness and imparting His eternal life to us (1 Cor. 15:22,45; Rom. 5:14-21). Jesus is the God-Man – Himself God, Son of God and Son of Man. To deny His deity by depicting Him as merely a prophet is to rob the world of its only hope of a Divine Saviour.

Jesus the example

Preaching today in many formal and spiritually dead churches often presents the life of Jesus merely as an ideal example we should follow. In such moralistic sermons, no reference is made to His substitutionary death and shed blood which alone can cleanse from sin. Instead of the need for new birth, Christian virtues are taught, *without* the risen Christ who alone can empower us to "walk in the newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). People are only taught to be good citizens, love their neighbours and live

morally good lives.

The result of this kind of preaching is that Jesus does not become real to them as they only have a vague mental perception of Him. By mental effort they try to follow His example, but He is not a living, spiritual reality to them, because they have not yet become “new creatures” in Him (2 Cor. 5:17) through faith in His finished work. Though they speak of Jesus, they do not know Him personally and since they have been given a false ‘image’ of Him, their efforts to follow His example are misguided and flawed.

Jesus the giver of gifts

Many people are attracted to Jesus because they feel they can derive various benefits from Him. He should heal them, bless them, prosper them and provide for all their material needs. They see Him as the One who restores to human beings the exalted position humanity had before the Fall! They wish to regain dominion over creation, to wield miraculous powers and even to become ‘gods’ in their own right.

Such people also end up serving ‘another Jesus’. They do not identify with the crucified Christ, and reject persecution, disease and suffering as being the consequences of weak faith. Using visualisation and positive thinking techniques they create their own reality, so becoming masters of their own destiny. By relying on various innate strengths in their own psyche, they fail to put their trust in the crucified Christ to sustain them by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had a large following when He healed the sick and performed many other signs and wonders. However, the majority of His opportunist and sensation-seeking followers deserted Him when He emphasised union with His body that was to be broken, and His blood that was to be shed for sinners, as the only basis for true fellowship with Him. To many of the opportunists this was a hard saying: “From that *time* many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him” (Jn. 6:66; see also v. 53-65).

Many people imagine their own popular Jesus whom they are following. They are offended if somebody points out to them the spiritual risks of building their faith on a Jesus who is confined to signs and wonders, rather than the Crucified One who died that we might be forgiven and made “alive unto God” (Rom. 6:11).

Jesus the political liberator

A Jesus who is a freedom fighter and who champions the oppressed is often proclaimed in the Third World. He came to set political captives free and to uplift them on the socio-economic level of existence. This Jesus is only concerned with their secular affairs. He did not come to liberate them from sin, but from governments which impede political, social and econ-

omic progress. He blesses them in the struggle against their oppressors without denouncing their amoral behaviour or stressing the need to engage in a spiritual struggle against the real oppressor of their souls, Satan.

Jesus the sinner

The Jesus depicted in many Hollywood films is a fallen sinner like other human beings controlled by their fleshly passions. This blasphemous depiction of Jesus is the theme of films such as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The last temptation of Christ*, and *Jesus of Montreal*. In the last-mentioned film the counterfeit 'Jesus' is outrageously depicted as staying with other young people in a Montreal flat, where they live licentiously and over-indulge in liquor.

There are no limits to the evil imaginations of depraved, satanically inspired people who distort the image of Jesus. He is even depicted as a homosexual by some. On a painting exhibited in Archbishop Tutu's Cape Town cathedral, Jesus was portrayed as an Aids victim full of sores. All such wicked misrepresentations of Jesus are part of Satan's age-old smear campaign against Him. During His life on earth, He was branded as a sinner, blasphemer, glutton, drinker and friend of extortioners and immoral people:

Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of [tax-collectors] and sinners (Mt. 11:19; see also Jn. 9:16,24).

The true Jesus whom we worship, is without sin. He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26; see also 4:15). Do not profane or mock the holy Name of God, or of Jesus His beloved Son: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

The cosmic Jesus

The intensified campaign to misrepresent the Person, character, work and Name of Jesus is aimed at preparing the world for Satan's great end-time counterfeit Christ, the Antichrist. Jesus Himself warned that the world will be deceived by this impostor and others who would impersonate Him:

Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will deceive many (Mt. 24: 4-5 NKJV).

The New Age Movement presents a Jesus who is the personification of the messianic expectations of *all* the religions of the world. To the Christians he is **the Christ**, to the Jews **the Messiah**, to the Hindus **Krishna**, to the Muslims the **Imam Mahdi**, and to the Buddhists **Maitreya Buddha**. He is, therefore, the cosmic Christ, or universal Christ, of all faiths who will head up a spiritual hierarchy that unites, synthesises and thus supersedes all the religions on earth.

In the concluding chapter of the book *Images of Jesus*, a theologian of

the University of South Africa, Mr. G.A. van den Heever, makes a strong plea for a multi-religious consideration of the position and role of Jesus. In this chapter, *Jesus in the world religions*, he says: "If it is true that the 'construction' of Jesus in early Christianity is similar to that of Buddha, Zoroaster and Krishna, then one needs to give an answer to the question of what possible gain there could be in a comparative venture such as this... It should encourage Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus towards a healthier, more tolerant interchange on the cultural and religious front. However much we like to believe in our own uniqueness, we drink from the same wells."

Satan promotes false images of Jesus to discredit Him in order to prepare the way for his false Christ, the Antichrist, "that man of sin... the son of perdition... that Wicked... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (2 Thes. 2:3,8-10).

In his book *Searching for the Real Jesus* (1996) Dr. Douglas Groot-huis clearly refutes the agnostic speculation and serious distortion of Jesus by modern theologians:

Jesus is not an ambiguous inkblot upon which we project our pet theories, hopes, or fears. He is a living reality who can be mastered by no one, since He is the Master of the universe. He challenges every counterfeit with His genuineness, every distortion with His veracity... The cross remains a fact of history, and the gospel continues to be the only means of setting people free (Jn. 8:31-32).

To enable one to identify all the distorted images of the counterfeit Jesus as false, the true Jesus must be known, served and worshipped with an undivided heart. Paul committed himself to gaining an intimate knowledge and relationship with Him: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3:8,10). Peter says that we should not fall from our own steadfastness but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:17-18).

Another Spirit

The motivating force behind the widespread presentation of ***another Jesus is another spirit***, which comes directly from the devil so as to bring people under the power of delusion. Because of this very real danger, we are warned not to naïvely believe every spirit that works through false preachers and so-called prophets, but to test the spirits:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world... he that knoweth God heareth us...

Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 Jn. 4:1,6).

The spirit of error is intent on deceiving people with sensational signs and wonders. It is the same spirit that will work through the Antichrist, “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes. 2:9-12).

The spirit of error is actively engaged in preparing the world for the coming of the cosmic Christ with his miracle-working powers. His second in command, the false prophet, will be able to wield equally astonishing powers:

And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of those miracles which he had power to do...* (Rev. 13:12-14).

As we approach this time of great deception, many false prophets are appearing on the scene to deceive people with their occult, supernatural powers. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul and Old Testament prophets solemnly warn us against the great danger of their deceptive activities:

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many... and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if *it were possible*, they shall deceive the very elect (Mt. 24:11,24).

I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).

Then the LORD said unto me, the prophets prophesy lies in my Name, and I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart (Jer. 14:14).

The New Age Movement and its associated false religions is at present focusing attention on the discovery and use of the miracle-working psychic powers of healing, self-healing and the promotion of supernatural manifestations. Even at many Christian meetings strange phenomena are now common, e.g. *falling (or slaying) in the spirit*. Various other phenomena, such as laughing in the spirit, prophesying in the spirit and dancing in the spirit, which result from this experience, are also attributed to the Holy Spirit. Many blindly accept these phenomena without

testing the spirits, despite the danger of spurious satanic imitation in such manifestations.

Most of the *Word of Faith* preachers create strong expectations of powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit. However, there is no scriptural basis for the signs that allegedly occur at their meetings. Apart from the signs already mentioned, one of the more recent phenomena is of gold-dust falling on the hands, arms or hair of those at the meetings, while some claimed that fillings in their teeth turned into gold! Another modern fad in this movement is the so-called “New Wine” meetings where people experience typical symptoms of drunkenness. This is accompanied by falling, dancing and laughing in the spirit, also pogo stick jumping and making a wide range of animal noises, such as barking like a dog, crowing like a rooster and roaring like a lion!

Are not the claims that such highly dubious phenomena and extraordinary behaviour are attributable to the activity of the Holy Spirit quite blasphemous, grossly insulting to Him and detrimental to the Christian witness to the world? It is not difficult to see how ideally this suits Satan’s purpose to discredit the Christian faith and deceive as many as he can. The express purpose of deceiving spirits is to destroy the faith of believers and to mislead, confuse, corrupt, overshadow and control them with the power of deception. Apostatising of this nature has become widespread in many Christian churches.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:1,2).

The Living Bible paraphrases these two verses as follows:

But the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some in the church will turn away from Christ and become eager followers of teachers with devil-inspired ideas. These teachers will tell lies with straight faces and do it so often that their consciences will not even bother them.

To be able to clearly distinguish between the *Holy Spirit* and *another spirit* that impersonates the Holy Spirit, the following comparison may be helpful:

THE HOLY SPIRIT	ANOTHER SPIRIT
The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself but reminds us of the words of Jesus and makes Him a reality in our lives.	The presence, power and gifts of this spirit become the dominating reality in life, while Jesus is subtly moved to the background.
He convicts you of your sin so that you may understand the real causes of your	He instils nice and relaxed feelings in you so that you forget all your problems and

problems.	sins.
He convinces you of God's righteousness as revealed through the perfect life and atonement of the Lord Jesus on the cross.	He convinces you through your supernatural gifts and experiences such as <i>falling and laughing in the spirit</i> that God is with you.
He convicts you in your spirit and reveals the condition of your heart and life to you in the way in which God sees it.	He uses people to instil ideas and suggestions in you that are supposedly from God, but are not in fact from Him.
He speaks to you through the Word of God which is spirit and life, and reveals eternal truths to you. The Bible, as the Word of God, becomes more precious to you as you grow in grace.	He uses so-called 'prophets' as human mediators to convey messages to you about what God wants you to do. He also majors on extra-biblical revelations from God through dreams and visions.
He is primarily working on the level of your spirit to quicken your spirit in a quiet way that you may awake spiritually to hear the calling of God and put your trust in Him for salvation.	He manifests his presence by way of sensual experiences such as ecstatic thrills, shivers in your body, a tingling in your skin, or a power that causes you to levitate or to be pushed down on the floor.
He leads you to the cross of Jesus where your burdens are lifted and where you are cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.	He removes guilt complexes on his own authority, without specific reference to the cross, and surrounds you with light and joy. You are ever dependent upon him.
If you act upon the Spirit's conviction of sin and on the basis of Christ's saving work, repent and get right with God, the Holy Spirit regenerates you into a new person who walks in newness of life.	By your supernatural experiences he makes you think you are born again, but he cannot regenerate your heart. He only manipulates your feelings and creates false impressions in your mind.
He keeps on convicting you of sin that you may be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, live a holy life, walk in the light of God's presence, and be very sensitive to sin and deception.	He does not convict of sin, and has no problems to live with lies, deceit, distorted versions of the truth, and moral laxity. He gives to people the false hope that they are saved and will go to heaven.
He is grieved by lukewarm, unfaithful believers who too easily yield to temptation and fall into various sins and lusts. He convicts you of sins so that you confess and forsake them, and recommit	He does not make an issue of your sins. He ignores them and instead makes you feel guilty about things that are not sins. If you are a true believer he will accuse you of being critical of other believers

yourself to the Lord.	and devoid of love.
He leads you to search your heart, confess and abandon all sin, and to trust God for a pure heart. Cleansing by the blood of the Lamb and being filled with the Holy Spirit is God's way to enable us to a life of victory.	He guides you through a process of inner healing to a spiritual reprogramming of your life in which the scars of the past, and even from before your birth, are put right by self-healing, positive confession and hypnotic regression.
He makes you conscious of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only One who can guide your life. The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ who makes Him a reality in your life.	He makes you conscious of himself and encourages you to rely on him as your guiding spirit. He guides and empowers you in life. He is a greater reality in your life than Jesus is.
When He fills people they become holy, humble and willing to serve God. They are available to Him for any service, including evangelising a lost world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They do not exalt themselves but live and give sacrificially in the cause of Christ and for His church.	He gives people an entirely new self-image, tending to pride, even arrogance. Their main purpose in life becomes a quest for new and more powerful spiritual gifts and attending exciting services where signs, healings, miracles and new revelations are experienced, also inviting others to such meetings.
The presence of the Holy Spirit can clearly be discerned where He is working and Jesus Christ is exalted. It occurs on a spiritual level and induces people to humble and submit themselves to the Lord. The peace and joy of the Lord fills their hearts.	An alien spirit produces a show of power to influence people and create the impression that they are in the presence of the Lord. Because people want to experience this power in their lives, they readily open themselves up to it. Without it they feel empty.
He teaches you to pray. He helps our infirmities and intercedes for us. He gives us enlightened eyes of the mind that we may understand the things of God, and be able to pray intelligently. He helps us to gird up the loins of our mind and to be alert, sober and vigilant.	He teaches people to meditate. They switch over to their 'right-brain' to have mystical experiences and to hear strange voices. They empty their minds and withdraw themselves from reality to descend to the deeper levels of their subconscious mind which is 'the world of the spirit'.
He controls the emotions and decisions of believers by enabling and empowering their regenerated heart and spirit. He works in their heart to produce His fruit of self-control, love, joy, peace, faith and	The emotions of people are manipulated by an alien spirit and they act like hypnotised captives. They may fall down, laugh, roar, bleat, howl or bark without knowing why they do so. The spirit of de-

goodness.	lusion gains authority over them.
He guides you by God's Word, the Bible, and through your conscience that warns you when you do something wrong. He gives you insight to know the will of God and the power to do it.	He commands you and demands certain actions through prophecies uttered by other people. Driven by fear of disobedience to the <i>prophet</i> of God, you ignore your conscience by obeying a false prophecy.
You are commanded to lead people to Christ where they can obtain mercy and the forgiveness of all their sins. It does not matter by which evil forces they are bound, Jesus is the Saviour of their souls and He is able to completely set them free from their bondage. Through the blood of the Lamb the hearts of sinners are cleansed and the power of the devil broken. They do not need human mediators to declare them sanctified by virtue of miracles.	You feel compelled to invite other people to meetings where events of false revival occur. There they can see exciting manifestations, experience healing, witness miracles, become drunk, laugh, dance, fall, prophesy and make animal noises in the 'spirit'. You become critical and hostile towards all who react negatively to the modern revival movement. You are unaware that you are being deceived due to your mind being blinded and your emotions and senses being manipulated.
The Spirit of the Lord Jesus is the One who guides you. You are faithful to Him and make yourself available to Him.	The leader of your worship group or church becomes a cult leader who prescribes your decisions and actions. You must obey him.
Spiritual gifts are given to you to increase your usefulness in the service of the Lord. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit you can be a witness for Jesus, also minister encouragement to other believers as a good steward of the manifold grace of God.	You receive gifts such as prophecy, healing, tongues, astral travel and clairvoyance. Spurious signs such as gold-dust appearing to fall on people, and other weird phenomena, may be the work of seducing spirits and consequently are false and occult in origin.
The Holy Spirit makes you a servant of Christ, a soldier of the cross and a stranger in a world that lies in the sway of the wicked one. The authority for your actions is vested in God's Word. When Jesus comes as King, you will reign with Him.	He tells you that you are a king already, who has dominion on earth and can claim and demand anything you like. You do not have to suffer poverty, disease, or other afflictions, and can change anything through positive confession. You are in command of your life.

The great concern of the Bible about the danger of deception is the lack of spiritual discernment among many members of Christian churches. Because of their ignorance they are naively undiscerning when danger-

ous, counterfeit practices are offered to them as something good that allegedly comes from God: “if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel... you put up with it well” (2 Cor. 11:4 NKJV). Such people have only themselves to blame for having been so lacking in discernment and too easily deceived.

Another gospel

For obvious reasons, the presentation of *another Jesus* under the motivation of *another spirit* can only be achieved within the theological framework of *another gospel*. Tragically, Satan has a large number of preachers at his disposal to deceive the masses into believing false teaching:

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Paul says: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Many of Satan’s ministers and deceitful workers propagate their false doctrines and fables from the pulpits of churches. They proclaim what Paul called *another gospel*, of which the following are examples:

Dead formalism

A gospel shorn of the full significance of the cross of Christ, His shed blood as the only means of cleansing from sin, the need for new birth and the indwelling Holy Spirit, is not a gospel at all. If these central truths of the gospel are not clearly spelt out and emphasised, it is *another gospel* and leads to dead formalism. Paul says of those who preach it, “let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8,9) and declares that they have only “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: **from such turn away**” (2 Tim. 3:5; emphasis added).

In churches of this kind only a false image of Jesus is presented and He is often accepted merely as the founder and figurehead of Christianity. Members are not urged to repent of sin, come to Him for forgiveness and receive Him as Saviour and Lord. So most remain spiritually dead with little or no evidence in their lives that they know Him personally. Their religion consists mainly of traditional sacraments, formal rituals, creeds, codes of conduct and good works.

This people honoureth Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me. [But] in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men... Making the Word of

God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered (Mk. 7:6-13).

Kingdom gospel

Kingdom theology does not follow the biblical teaching that we are pilgrims and strangers in a world that “lies *under the sway of the wicked one*” (1 Jn. 5:19), nor that as disciples of a despised, rejected Lord and soldiers of the cross we are to be ready to endure hardness and expect tribulation in this world. Advocates of the kingdom gospel are unwilling to wait for Christ to reign on earth as King of kings, but insist that we should reign as kings in the kingdom of God here and now. Reclaiming our lost dominion over creation, we must wield the Holy Spirit’s power to subdue Satan and his demons, make disciples and despise the weak faith that is overcome by afflictions such as poverty and disease.

There are a number of other theologies that are closely akin to the kingdom theology e.g.:

- † ***Prosperity gospel.*** According to this view God intends Christians to prosper not only spiritually but materially also and to live luxuriously with large houses and cars.
- † ***Reconstructionism.*** Advocates aim to achieve political power to reform the entire social, economic and political world order in accordance with Christian principles.
- † ***Signs and wonders.*** Christians should be able to perform astounding miracles, such as healing the sick and manifesting sensational demonstrations of the Holy Spirit’s power. In this way they prove their credentials as those who rule on behalf of the King of kings.

Will not those who promote these non-biblical theologies find they have been serving *another Jesus*? They are in great danger of being rejected by the real Jesus:

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will [declare] unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity (Mt. 7:22-23).

Liberation theology

The liberation theology gospel became very popular during the 20th century when Third World countries were trying to free themselves from the shackles of colonialism and to achieve social justice and economic prosperity. Violence was often justified from the Bible as one of the means God used to liberate His people from slavery and oppressive governments. They only identify with the violence associated with Israel’s exodus from Egypt, but not with God’s purpose to separate His people from the evil, sinful lifestyle of the Egyptians. As this gospel became more radical, it

developed into a theology of revolution. This kind of gospel never had any true spiritual content as its objective was not to liberate people from spiritual darkness, the power of sin and the oppression of the devil. Apart from the serious loss of life, even political emancipation still left unbelievers in spiritual darkness and heading for a Christless eternity.

The interfaith gospel

One of the false gospels that is rapidly expanding in today's world is the interfaith gospel of the synthesising of all religions. It is based on the concept of universalism, i.e. that all religions worship the same God and can therefore join hands in unity. The Ecumenical and Interfaith Movements are based on this idea and they are actively pursuing the objective of establishing global religious organisations to unify humanity at the spiritual level. They maintain that the achievement of a mystical brotherhood of members of all faiths holds the key to global reconciliation and peace.

As the religions of the world move ever closer to each other, it is obvious that ecumenical Christianity is having to make self-destructive compromises with other religions to achieve unity. Many theologians have adulterated the Christian faith to such an extent that biblical truths have been distorted beyond recognition. In emerging African theology, Christian practices are freely mixed with ancestor worship and witchcraft. Globally, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam have been accommodated within this false brotherhood.

The Bible calls the end-time union of the false religions "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5). She is recognised and carried by the Antichrist because of her usefulness to him. It is very obvious that the Interfaith Movement of false religions is preparing the world for the coming false Christ, the Antichrist, who will rule the world for seven years.

Until the Interfaith Movement and its 'gospel' has gained general acceptance throughout the world, the Antichrist, as universal messiah of all faiths cannot make his appearance. The closer we come to this point, the more imminent is the appearing of "that man of sin... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thes. 2:3,9). False prophets are preparing his way:

But...there shall be false teachers among you, who [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

In the rest of this booklet we will review the abandoning of basic Christian doctrines to accommodate the religious deception discussed thus far. The proliferation of false doctrine in the Ecumenical Movement is also considered. The remedy for this apostasy is a Holy Spirit-inspired

revival and reformation, a return to the true God, to His Word and to the purity of the biblical gospel of salvation through Christ alone.

The abandoning of Biblical doctrine

We live at a time of great apostatising from biblical truth. On one hand the charismatic movement claims to have dubious extra-biblical revelations, gifts and manifestations. On the other hand the decline in traditional Protestantism takes the form of the adoption of rationalistic and humanistic, intellectual concepts, leading to a progressive abandoning of the basic biblical foundations of the Christian faith.

The Bible indicates that moral, spiritual and doctrinal decline of extremely serious proportions will occur in the end-times and that some will abandon the faith, listening to doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1). The unproven theory of evolution is a direct assault on the biblical doctrine of creation and has destroyed the faith of many, while others have compromised by adopting 'theistic evolution', claiming God used evolution to create all things including humanity itself. Humanistic teaching and the social gospel have done serious damage. Thus has the apostasy gathered momentum. Clearly, only those who have professed the Christian faith can apostatise from it, not unbelievers whose minds the god of this world has blinded (2 Cor. 4:4).

Nominal Christianity is a fertile breeding-ground for all kinds of heresies, as its adherents often have little discernment. Jesus quoted Isaiah: "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from Me" (Mt. 15:8). They only have a form of godliness but deny its power (2 Tim. 3:5). They profess a Christian creed with their lips, but are not truly born again in heart and mind. They are easily deceived by Satan to accept doctrines of demons, such as the view that Jesus is not God; that the Bible is not the Word of God but only contains it; that God created by evolution; that there is no devil or hell; that one only needs to be baptised to enter the kingdom of God; that one is not a fulfilled Christian without supernatural gifts, that there is more than one way to God, and that people can be saved through mediators other than Christ.

With the assault against God's kingdom escalating in intensity and extent, it seemed reasonable to hope that a significant number of evangelical churches taking a firm stand on the truth of God's Word, would have remained. Tragically, that is not the case. In many of such churches subtle doctrinal error, ecumenical compromise, entertainment evangelism, pop-style music and even moral decline is increasingly common. Churches which become lukewarm and doctrinally unsound may force Christ to disassociate Himself from them. As to the church in Laodicea He may well say to them, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew

thee out of My mouth” (Rev. 3:16).

The Laodicean church typifies the lukewarm, compromising preachers and congregations of neo-evangelicalism. They are neither cold nor hot; they do not abandon Christianity entirely, but neither do they teach or live by biblical standards. Most are more comfortable with easy-going, watered-down doctrines and world-bordering practices, but these are totally unacceptable to the Lord Jesus. Sadly, there are many pastors who are willing to compromise to please lukewarm, worldly church members and hasten them down the road to apostasy with all kinds of unbiblical practices and teaching, including fables and myths (2 Tim. 4:3,4).

Since World War 2, and practically since the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948, there has been a disastrous theological decline within Protestantism. This is particularly true of many theological faculties and seminaries worldwide, to such an extent that it would not be going too far to speak of *decadent Protestantism*. However, it is better not to generalise, but evaluate each faculty, seminary and denomination individually in the light of the Word of God. We are exhorted to turn away from those who have merely “a form of godliness,” but deny “the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5). Though the reasons for spiritual decline may vary, the end result is the same and opens the way to further error as ecumenical bonds are formed between apostatisers. Their common enemy is the truth of God’s Word, the Bible, which will not tolerate the false teaching emanating from Satan, who is the father of lies, or his agents (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Liberal theologians and false prophets attack various denominations in an effort to overthrow the fundamental doctrines on which they were founded. The nature of these demonically-inspired attacks varies according to the weaknesses perceived as being most vulnerable to attack. The following are the five methods most commonly used in attacking the fundamental doctrines of the faith. As one bastion (a particular biblical doctrine) after another falls, churches become spiritually adulterated and their very foundations are weakened and eventually destroyed.

1. The spiritualising of biblical statements

The credibility of the Bible is seriously undermined by the practice of allegorising or spiritualising it in interpretation. This practice is also known as replacement theology and results from denying the literal meaning of many key statements in the Bible and arbitrarily replacing them with other meanings. Using this method, the Creation story is only a myth with a moral; the church is the new Israel; the 144 000 of 12 Israelite tribes sealed during the tribulation era are Christians saved throughout the church era; prophecies of the Antichrist as a real end-time person represent an impersonal influence or system operating during all centuries; the battle of Armageddon is seen as a spiritual conflict between Satan

with his hordes and the saints of all ages; Babylon refers to Rome or to the USA; and the 1 000-year millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20) with the 7-year tribulation period are equated to the nearly 2 000 years of the church era, etc.

The search for hidden, esoteric meanings on the Bible's statements leads away from their true meaning. We should read the Bible seeking the Holy Spirit's help in understanding it. A sound rule is: "When the plain sense of the Word makes common sense, then seek no other sense."

It is true that, apart from literal statements, there are also types and symbols used in the Bible, but these mostly have literal antitypes whose meanings are clear from the context, e.g. the Lamb is clearly Jesus Himself, the beast with seven heads refers to a literal person, the Antichrist, the dragon with seven heads to Satan, and the mother of harlots refers to the end-time alliance of false religions, etc.

It is evident that those who deny the literal meaning of parts of Scripture have only an incomplete message to proclaim from a partly misinterpreted Bible. Clearly they cannot preach inspiring messages on the events preceding the Second Coming of Christ since they do not believe in a restored Israel, the rapture, nor that He will come to judge the world and reign on earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

2. Rejection of justification by faith alone

In churches and denominations in which the true meaning of the Word of God has become obscured by faulty interpretation, the doctrine of salvation through faith alone is soon rejected and replaced by baptismal regeneration and good works. Millions have built their religious lives on this false foundation and cling to the idea that baptism, confirmation and good works will ensure their salvation and acceptance by God. They assume that they have been saved, have entered into an eternal covenant with God as Father and are on their way to heaven. The Bible indicates that unless we repent of sin and make a genuine commitment of faith to the Lord Jesus, religious observance of itself is of no avail.

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it* (Heb. 4:2).

It is to spiritually lukewarm and backslidden churches that the Lord Jesus extends an earnest call to repentance: "I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:4-5).

Should such churches fail to fully restore the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, the Lord Jesus will remove their lampstand. That does not mean they will no longer function as a church or denomi-

nation, but that He will withdraw His Spirit from them, so that they will be without spiritual light in their souls and will not be a light in the darkness to the world around them. The lamp and its stand symbolises the presence of the Lord shining on and out from them and its oil the Holy Spirit indwelling them individually and as a church. In a backslidden church the gospel light grows dim and may go out. This suits Satan ideally and his deceptions and works of darkness will thrive in such conditions. He will continue his nefarious activities, blinding the minds of all in the church so that they no longer understand, or stand for, even the basic gospel truths (2 Cor. 4:4).

The biblical doctrine of justification by faith *only* without works, through Christ's sacrifice for sin on the cross, repentance and faith in Him as Saviour and Lord (Acts 20:21) is the *only* basis on which God forgives sins. True believers are born again as new creatures in Christ and receive the gift of eternal life (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:23). Without new birth no one can see, nor enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3-7).

3. Rejection of the doctrine of sanctification

During the revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries there was great emphasis on sanctification (being set apart to God as holy) as a second work of grace after conversion. Paul said: "For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification... He... that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit" (1 Thes. 4:3,8). Believers who accept this teaching in faith have a new encounter with God, which may also be described as "being filled with the Holy Spirit". In this way, lukewarm, powerless, carnal (fleshly), worldly-minded Christians who neglect prayer are able, by a gradual process, to grow spiritually. They do not reach prayer perfection overnight but slowly become spiritually stronger to gain victory over temptation and fleshly desires, to devote themselves wholeheartedly to serving the Lord Jesus in His church and for the extension of His kingdom by evangelism.

If the doctrine of sanctification is rejected or neglected there will be little or no spiritual growth among believers. They are likely to remain spiritually immature infants in their Christian lives, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the [trickery] of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph 4:14). The only escape from this stunted condition will be to surrender their old unregenerate nature to be crucified and to ask the Lord Jesus to fill them with His Holy Spirit. Only if they are under sound preaching, urging the need for repentance, is there any hope of spiritual growth. It was due to his great concern about their spiritual stagnation that Paul wrote rather reproachfully to the Hebrew believers:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you

again the first principles of the oracles of God and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb 5:12-14 NKJV).

Believers who do not live holy lives tend to be worldly and prone to sinful thoughts and selfish, materialistic desires. They lack spiritual discernment and often fail to distinguish between truth and deception. They easily fall prey to various errors, such as charismatic theology with its emphasis on extra-biblical experiences, strange manifestations, signs and wonders, hypnotic, pop-style music and exhibitionism.

4. Rejection of the Bible as God's inspired Word

One of the most crucial foundational truths of Christianity is that the Bible is the divinely inspired, infallible Word of God. But this essential foundation of the faith is widely rejected by many lukewarm churches and denominations, also in humanistic theological seminaries where its doctrines, prophecies, promises and life-transforming effects are neither believed nor experienced. As a result the Bible has become an endangered Book in the very places where its integrity as the inspired Word of God should be defended!

After the 16th century Reformation, the view of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God was maintained by true believers of many denominations. However, in recent centuries the perception of many modern theologians and their followers have changed for the worse as demonstrated below:

- o In the past the Bible was revered as the authoritative Word of God and the literal method of interpretation was used. The 16th century reformers held this view, i.e. that the Bible is **The Word of God**, written by devout men of God under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:2-21; 2 Tim. 3:16). Thus God has revealed Himself in His written Word.
- o Later, theologians began to argue that the Bible merely **contains the Word of God** and the historical critical interpretation ('higher criticism') came into use. It is based on the view that the Bible consists merely of the religious views of fallible human beings whose writings often needed revision and adding to, so contain only their personal insights into the faith and history of their times.
- o Currently, many theologians regard the Bible as merely **Words about God** to be interpreted like any other literature. In the modern science of literature the emphasis has shifted from author to text, then to the reader. This results in regarding the Bible as merely a compilation of

stories and myths with a moral application. The stories can be deconstructed and re-interpreted in various ways.

5. Rejection of the deity of Jesus

The most basic and crucial of all Christian doctrines is that Jesus is God, the self-existent **I AM** (Jn. 8:58), the Almighty Creator who made all things (Jn. 1:1), but laid aside His glory as God (but *not* His deity), humbled Himself to become a human being, born by virgin birth of Mary as the sinless Son of God. He came to die as the Lamb of God, to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins as our Saviour, but rose from the dead, ascended to heaven to be the one Mediator and High Priest who intercedes for us with God the Father and will come again with power and great glory to rule as King of kings.

The self-existent deity of the triune Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is rejected by many modern, apostate theologians and clergy. The Jesus of the Bible is often depicted as a mere mortal, fallible man, thus stripping Him of His deity and sinlessness. This results from Satan's cunning efforts to rob Christ and Christianity of their uniqueness and reduce the latter to the level of a man-made religion, to become merely one of a "family of world religions."

The Ecumenical Movement

A major tool of Satan in infiltrating, adulterating and mixing truth and error by uniting Christian churches worldwide is the World Council of Churches (WCC). This was formed in 1948 in Amsterdam, Holland. Its credo is *One Church for One World*. From the start it was obvious that the WCC had much more than Christian unity in mind – its real aim was a global alliance of *all* religions! Its subsequent actions and decisions are proof of this, as the following will confirm:

- o In 1961 the WCC held its third session in New Delhi, India. The conference theme was *Jesus Christ, the light of the world*. This was not a reference to the biblical Christ, but to the cosmic Christ of all faiths. In terms of this concept Hindus and Buddhists are viewed as *anonymous Christians* on the basis of the general grace. It is alleged that God has reconciled all people on earth to Himself by Jesus Christ, whatever their religion. It would seem that, according to the WCC, many who do not even believe in the Judeo-Christian God, or Jesus or the cross, are nevertheless on their way to heaven! (See *Towards a one world religion?* by Dr. Peter Beyerhaus).
- o At its 1968 conference in Uppsala, Sweden, the vision of the WCC extended beyond the unification of the church since their ultimate goal was stated to be *a united humanity in a new international order*. People

from all races, cultures, and religions were to be merged into a new world order. To actively promote this idea the WCC instituted two programmes of action. The first one is the well known *Programme to Combat Racism* by which violence was theologically condoned and millions of dollars paid to liberation movements to assist them in bringing about the downfall of oppressive governments by military means. The second one is the *Program of Dialogue with People of other Living Faiths*. Since its institution in 1970 the term 'Christian' has been replaced by 'believer', and the members of the non-Christian religions thenceforth addressed as 'fellow believers', based on the premise that we all worship the same God. In 1973, the Bangkok conference of this programme was opened by the president of the World Buddhist Society. In her prayer she called on the gods of all religions to save mankind.

- 0 The 1975 Nairobi conference of the WCC expressed itself in favour of a more intimate unification of humanity. One of the closed sessions on spirituality was attended by Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal Christians, as well as Hindus, Buddhists and an atheist. Their agenda was obviously humanistic!
- 0 At the 1983 conference in Vancouver, Canada, explicit recognition was given to the traditional shamanist religion of the Red Indians. A totem pole was erected in honour of all their tribal spirits. In the conference it was recommended that the different religions should join hands to promote peace on earth. In accordance with this proposal an interfaith dialogue was conducted in Seoul in 1990 in preparation for the next general session of the WCC. Representatives of various religions participated.
- 0 The 1991 conference at Canberra in Australia resolved that an active process of reconciliation should be set in motion by the Christian religion. Justice and peace should be pursued in all walks of life. It was emphasised that this should be an interfaith action as it is beyond the capacity of a single religion to bring about peace in our troubled world. At this conference, recognition was again given to the traditional tribal religion of the host country. Witchdoctors of the Australian Aborigines made a ritual fire with wet gum-tree leaves, from which thick clouds of smoke arose. The 4000 representatives to the conference were requested to walk through the smoke in order to obtain the blessing of the ancestral spirits. Some of the representatives said that this was a very wonderful experience as the presence of the Holy Spirit could also be sensed in the smoke. This blasphemous statement which places God the Holy Spirit on the same level as ancestral spirits, was further elaborated upon in the conference. A Korean theologian stated that all

missionary work is redundant and should be discontinued as God is present in all cultures and in all religions. Missionaries do not need to introduce Him in places where He is already! The WCC maintains that God does not only reveal Himself to the world through the Christian religion, but through all the religions on earth.

- o The 1998 conference of the WCC was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, to mark the 50th anniversary of the organisation. It was announced that the Council was experiencing serious financial problems as many of its member churches had warned that past levels of funding could not be sustained into the future.
- o The theme of the WCC's most recent conference, which was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, during February 2006, was: "God, in your mercy, transform the world." Their purpose is that a new world order should be established in which there is no inequality, discrimination, poverty, conflict, oppression or wars. Socio-economic and political concerns completely dominate their objectives as no mention is made of spiritual renewal. The suffering of Christ on the cross is not related to His atonement for our sins, but advanced as a symbol of all the suffering in the world. We should reach out to all who suffer materially, to improve their living conditions. The WCC does not commit itself to the revelation of Christ's kingdom on earth under the personal rule of Jesus Christ. They seek God's help for the establishment of a humanistic and interfaith human kingdom on earth. Christ will only nominally be the head of this kingdom as it will be controlled by human leaders.

The WCC has served its deceptive ecumenical objective to associate Christianity with the non-Christian religions. Its own existence is now a hindrance to the greater unity that it promoted with the other world religions. During the past decade or so the initiative in global religious unity has increasingly been taken by interfaith movements.

The interfaith movement

There are a number of international interfaith movements, most notably the World Conference on Religion and Peace (established by the United Nations in the early 1970's as a category 2, non-governmental organisation), the Vatican's interfaith initiative, the United Religions Initiative (which aims to transform itself into the United Religions Organisation), and the Parliament of the World's Religions.

The Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) met for the first time in Chicago, USA, during the 1893 World Fair. On that occasion, 400 representatives of 41 religions met to discuss various issues of common interest. During the centenary of the PWR in August 1993, the biggest interfaith conference in history was held in Chicago. Almost 7000 delegates of 250

religions, including shamans and witches, met for nine days to participate in 700 workshops, lectures and discussion groups. At the end of the conference a document, *Towards a Global Ethic*, was accepted. It was agreed that more such conferences are needed to promote religious reconciliation as a basis for political, social, economic and other forms of reconciliation, harmony and unity among the diverse peoples of the world.

The next PWR conference was held in Cape Town, South Africa, in December 1999. It was seen as an important opportunity to facilitate a peaceful and harmonious transition into the new millennium, with all its potential for global unity. The following significant themes were evident from the various presentations at the conference:

- J Peace and unity in the new millennium
- J The role of religion in the United Nations.
- J The future of global interfaith movements.
- J The world as a *global village* – globalisation and international ethics.
- J Strategies to create a just world.
- J Spirituality and the cessation of violence.
- J Spiritual enlightenment in the new millennium: the Great Master's path of light.
- J Ghandi's relevance for the new millennium
- J Healing of our souls: the interfaith approach.
- J Ancient wisdom and modern science.
- J The human brain as the meeting-place of science and religion.
- J Spiritual psychology.
- J Buddha and Christ.
- J How the shared wisdom of Buddhism and Christianity can change human values in modern society.
- J Yoga and meditation.
- J The Bahai faith: models for unity.
- J The Zoroastrian concept of the sacred earth.
- J Veneration of the spirit of the earth.
- J Dances and songs for peace.
- J Islam and world peace.
- J Islam and the coming world messiah.
- J Judaic mysticism.
- J The role of the guru in the Indian faiths.
- J Sri Ramakrishna's pursuit of the divine.
- J Spirituality among the American Indians.
- J The positive views of pope John Paul on Buddhism, Islam and

Judaism.

- J African religions and the Abrahamic traditions: a comparative study of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- J The functional role of witchcraft and sorcery.
- J Ancestor worship in Africa.
- J The *sangoma*: healing in the African tradition.

These themes are now being further pursued by various organisations having the common objective of promoting globalisation, also harnessing mystical forces and ancient wisdom for the full realisation of human potential. The spiritual equality and unity of humankind within the diversity of all its traditions is assumed. It is claimed that all religions can contribute towards a better quality of life for humanity.

Clearly, this is now the time of the great apostasy preceding the revelation of the Antichrist as “that man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Even now “the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one” (i.e. Satan; 1 Jn. 5:19 NKJV), so we must be alert to the danger of being deceived by false prophets (1 Jn. 4:1). The only defence against religious deception is to pray, study God’s Word diligently, depending upon the Holy Spirit to guide us “into all truth” (Jn. 16:13).

4. Spiritual Warfare

Introduction

The biblical concept of spiritual warfare has a personal application in every believer's life and relates to our struggle against sin and Satan. Temptations and deceptions are experienced by every person and originate from the flesh, the world and the devil. We should resist sin (Heb. 12:4) by crucifying the flesh with its sinful lusts (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 6:14), thereby overcoming this present, evil world (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Gal. 1:4) and prevailing against Satan (Jas. 4:7).

While engaging in spiritual warfare in our everyday Christian lives, we should guard against involvement with extreme and unbiblical forms of spiritual warfare. There are people who are so preoccupied with the devil that every problem or sin experienced by a person is related to possession by a demon or evil spirit. They even claim that Christians can be demon-possessed! Deliverance ministries that deal with problems of this nature are proliferating in these times of increased confusion and deception. They offer the services of exorcists to solve people's spiritual problems that allegedly arise from demon-possession. Terms and methods often used by them are exorcising, inner healing, power encounters, the binding of the devil, the cancelling of blood guilt, curses and demonic bonds inherited from our forefathers, etc.

Strategic spiritual warfare, pioneered by C. Peter Wagner and George Otis Jr., is another deceptive variation, with aims shared by *Marches for Jesus*, viz the pulling down of demonic strongholds over cities, and even countries, in order to transform them spiritually and establish the kingdom of God on earth – part of the misconceived *kingdom theology*. Gatekeepers are assigned with the duty to protect liberated cities and territories against the return of demonic forces. For more information on this practice of territorial spiritual warfare, consult the Transformations articles on the English web page of <http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/>

The following is a biblical teaching on spiritual warfare:

The spiritual war

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day... (Eph. 6:10-13 NKJV).

We have not only been endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit to give us boldness, wisdom and courage to proclaim the gospel of salvation (Acts 1:8), but also to enable us to be victorious in the struggle against the enemy of our souls. Christians often neglect this aspect of their spiritual lives and are consequently weak, unprotected and even unarmed for the fierce battle in which all of us are involved.

In the spiritual battlefield, the Bible clearly identifies five major fronts on which the devil and his demonic forces launch their vicious attacks against all people and especially against Christians. On each front the devil adopts a different strategy and role.

1. Adversary

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

As adversary the devil will try to destroy your life, your health, your marriage, your Christian ministry and all other interests that you have. The intensity of his opposition to believers knows no bounds as he is a murderer from the beginning (Jn. 8:44). Wars, disasters, accidents, incitement to suicide, and various other means are employed by him to give vent to his aggression and murderousness. He does not have unlimited powers over people, but as far as he is allowed to go he relentlessly pursues his objectives.

Apart from sudden, violent attacks, he also uses slower methods to achieve his purpose. Many people's lives are ruined over a long period by being enslaved to liquor, tobacco, drugs, sexual perversions and various other addictions.

Countless problems, obstacles, disappointments and irritations are employed by Satan to discourage Christians and induce them to abandon their efforts for the Lord. Never acknowledge defeat, but stoutly resist the evil one through a steadfast faith in the Lord Jesus.

For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest [you] be wearied and faint in your minds (Heb. 12:3).

2. Tempter

The devil tempts people to commit moral sins by enticing them through their unregenerate nature and fleshly lusts. Due to the fallen nature of humanity, the result of our first parents being deceived by the devil, "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9) and is inclined towards sinning. The following are examples of some of the sins which Satan may tempt our unregenerate, fallen nature to succumb to:

narcissism,
pride,
love of money,
stealing,
bribery,
fornication,
lying,
unfaithfulness,

evil desires,
gluttony,
covetousness,
adultery,
slander,
anger,
wrath,
filthy language.

A prayerful and holy life surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ is needed to overcome these and other temptations:

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak (Mt. 26:41).

If any *man* will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Lk. 9:23).

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

...that ye put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:22-24).

Do not yield to temptations, but submit yourself to the Lord and resist the devil. The Lord Jesus will understand your problem, and is also able to help you because He Himself experienced and overcame temptations:

For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to [rescue] them who are tempted... For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 2:18; 4:15-16).

It is tragic that so many Christians have backslidden because they became victims of the tempter. In a survey among fallen pastors in the USA, the sins of pride (self-esteem), love of money, and adultery proved to be the most common ones committed. These sins have also wreaked havoc among other professing Christians who live fleshly lives that are not crucified to sin (Lk. 9:23; Gal. 6:14). They do not heed the commands to holiness in 2 Corinthians 7:1, Galatians 5:16 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

3. Deceiver

As deceiver the main thrust of the devil is to distort the truth about God and His Word, and to spread various lies about Christianity. He also sows serious doubts in people's minds about the existence of God by false evolutionary propaganda in the guise of science; about the historical

accuracy and inspiration of the Bible; about the historicity, deity and the uniqueness of Jesus, His teaching, His substitutionary death and resurrection; and about the Christian church, due to its divisions and its confusion in doctrine and practice. During the end-time in which we live, deception will more than ever before be prevalent in the world. Satan is described as "...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9), so we are warned that:

...in the last days perilous times will come... evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim. 3:1,13 NKJV).

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (2 Jn. v. 7).

Your knowledge of God and of His Word of truth will protect you against deception. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). The Bible is the sword of the Spirit which nullifies and destroys the deceiver's clever but false arguments and theories (Eph. 6:17).

Ignorance is the breeding-ground for spiritual deception. Many people have inadequate knowledge of the truth of God's Word, and are consequently easily deceived by false prophets:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them... And many shall follow their pernicious ways... And through covetousness shall they with [deceptive] words [exploit] you (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

False prophets abound in these last days. Most of them have large followings because their heresies are acceptable due to the already distorted views and tastes of millions of deceived believers. Many believers neglect sound biblical doctrine and instead cling to the heresies of false prophets:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Millions of *believers* are falling to the wiles of Satan, and are being spiritually deceived and ruined. They naively expose themselves to heresies propagated by deluded pastors and persuasive preachers. Paul wrote to some like them: "I marvel that you are turning... to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, *should* preach any gospel to you other than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed (Gal. 1: 6-8 NKJV).

Many preachers distort the gospel message, undermine the doctrine of salvation and introduce deceiving spirits to their naive audiences. In so

doing they are used of the devil to wage his spiritual war against Jesus Christ who is the truth, against the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth, and also against the living and true God whose Word is truth. The rapid expansion of deceptive teachings such as the Toronto and Pensacola phenomena and the seriously deficient Alpha course is proof that few people test the spirits:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 Jn. 4:1).

Satan often tries to justify his deception with quotations from the Bible. Scripture verses are twisted, quoted out of context and applied wrongly to support a misleading statement, interpretation, or dogma. He used this method when trying to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, but was defeated by the correct quotation and application of scriptural truths.

4. Robber

Christians who backslide are being spiritually robbed by the devil and will appear empty-handed before Christ's judgement seat. Even though they still cling to their basic faith in Christ as Saviour, they will still suffer great loss. Jesus said: "Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). At His judgement seat:

...the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is... If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire (1 Cor. 3:13,15).

A Christian can also be robbed of his time and material goods which he needs to serve the Lord. Be vigilant because the devil is indeed a thief who intends to rob you in any way possible: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy..." (Jn. 10:10). Do not render yourself an easy target to the thief who is intent on depriving you of as many blessings and possessions as he can – even your life!

5. Accuser

In the final instance, the devil also attacks believers by actively accusing them in various ways – either through others or by manipulating their own thoughts. He will also keep on accusing them at the throne of God until the middle of the tribulation period, and until the time when:

...the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time (Rev. 12:10,12).

However, we have an Advocate with the Father at His throne in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous, who pleads on our behalf (1 Jn. 2:1). But we must always walk in the light of His presence, have fellowship with the Lord in prayer, observe the command not to sin, and experience the

continuous cleansing by His blood. (1 Jn. 1:7).

The devil also accuses believers before secular authorities and organisations to bring about the rejection and persecution of evangelical believers. Jesus said:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before *it hated* you... The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you (Jn. 15:18,20).

Pray for your government and support proper campaigns to secure the right of freedom of religion, religious education, religious broadcasts, etc. Do not become complacent and take these privileges and rights for granted. They have often in history been denied to Christians in many countries. All that is needed for evil to triumph, is that good men do nothing. Do not neglect your calling to be the light of a dark world and the salt of a corrupt earth.

A prime target area in Satan's campaign of slander is the true brethren themselves. He is ever busy sowing seeds of discord and disunity among them by accusing the one by the other. In this way he hopes to drive in a wedge between believers, thereby harming the work of the Lord.

Do not react to grievances and condemnatory thoughts emanating from the unfounded or exaggerated accusations of the evil one. Resist all incitements of this nature and guard the peace and unity among the true brethren in Christ, "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

It is tragic to observe how quick some true believers are to condemn one another because of slight differences of opinion. Be gracious and patient with evangelical brethren and only reject unscriptural doctrine and challenge false prophets and teachers who deceive the unsuspecting.

Lastly, the devil will also accuse you personally and try to instil a guilt complex in you. He will tell you how bad you are, how unpardonable your sins are, how irrevocably you have sinned against the Holy Spirit, and how miserably you have failed in your service to the Lord. In this way he intends to burden you with guilt, destroy your faith and render you completely depressed, disheartened and powerless. Always remember that you have a sure place of refuge against the accuser of the brethren:

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? (Rom. 8:33-34).

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (Jas. 4:7).

Stand on the promises of God in His Word, put your trust in Him, and thus shield yourself against the fiery darts of the wicked one. In this area of spiritual warfare one should pray for divine wisdom and a spirit of discernment. You must learn how to distinguish between Satan's false accusations which must be resisted and rejected, and the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit.

The battle for the mind

From the preceding description of the spiritual war it is quite obvious that the attacks of the enemy are comprehensive. The effects of this battle often extend into the physical realm where they manifest as adverse circumstances in our daily lives. These circumstances are always aimed at discouraging us and weakening us spiritually. The victory must, therefore, be gained in the spiritual realm if we are not to be paralysed by the enemy and surrendered to the bondage of sin. This is essentially a battle for the spiritual control of the mind and body. Paul says:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war [according to] the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare *are* not [fleshly], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

From this description of the spiritual war it is obvious that the enemy's strongholds in our lives result from vain reasoning and fleshly exaltation that arise from evil, misguided thoughts. If the strongholds of sin are to be pulled down and eliminated, every thought must be taken into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Should this not be done, the enemy of our souls will gain a large measure of control over us by establishing wicked and uncontrolled thoughts or desires in our hearts and minds.

Due to our fallen human nature, our contact with the world, and our inability to determine the origin of all ideas, there are various ways in which we can be tempted to sin:

- Wrong ideas and evil intentions may emerge from your own fleshly nature and subconscious mind. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15; see also Mk. 7:21-23). Remember that the *old man* (your old, sinful nature) is completely corrupted by deceitful lusts (Eph. 4:22; Rom. 6:6). It cannot be reformed but must be crucified.
- Many of the things that you see are pleasing to fleshly desires and also lead to sin: "For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the

world” (1 Jn. 2:16; see also Mt. 5:28).

- Sinful thoughts are often stimulated by immoral TV shows, pornographic videos and magazines, or the conducting of immoral discussions. Do not expose yourself to these evils: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33).
- Doubts, evil thoughts and sinful desires are stimulated by spiritual agents from the kingdom of darkness. They have the ability to aim fiery darts at you (Eph. 6:16), thus defiling your mind. They can also cause your thoughts to wander and render them uncontrollable when you want to read God’s Word, pray or listen to a sermon.

Have you given the enemy the opportunity to make inroads into your mind and establish strongholds of sin in your life? Please recognise that these sins may have started with a single thought or evil suggestion that was not resisted or subjected to the authority of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Once certain ideas are established in your mind, they often tend to dominate your thinking and actions.

From the roof of his palace King David saw a beautiful woman who was bathing, and coveted her. He devised an evil plan to get rid of her husband in order to have her as his wife. He acted on the spur of the moment and did not subject his desires and plans to the authority of the clear precepts in the Word of God. In the process he transgressed the following commandments:

Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery... thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife (Ex. 20:13-14,17).

Instead of observing these statutes, David entertained all sorts of fleshly rationalisation and evil schemes to gratify his lusts. In doing so, he allowed the enemy to erect a stronghold of murder and adultery in his life. On realising his awful sin and defeat by Satan, David was a broken man under strong conviction of sin. He unconditionally put his trust in the Lord to forgive him his very serious sins and restore him to a Spirit-filled life of dedication and obedience:

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... blot out all [my] iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a [steadfast] spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation (Ps. 51:7-12).

The strongholds of sin were immediately pulled down in his heart, and the fear of the Lord restored.

Always reassert the authority of God over your mind and all the thoughts and desires of your heart. Test all your thoughts and ideas before accepting them. If they are not in full agreement with the Word of God, then reject them:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if *there be any wicked way in me*, and lead me in the way everlasting (Ps. 139:23-24).

Sinful thoughts must be dealt with immediately, and not given any chance to establish themselves in your heart or mind. The fiery darts of the enemy, as well as doubts and vain arguments that exalt themselves against the truth of the Word, can be quenched by the shield of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:16).

If you do not shield yourself against evil thoughts, they will take root in you and eventually get their way with you. They will actively resist and slowly begin to subdue the good thoughts. In the process they will defile your mind and undermine your motivation to serve the Lord by inducing you to say and do wrong things. Are the thoughts of your heart under control and well pleasing to the Lord, or are you wilfully and foolishly accommodating evil thoughts?

Satan's angels

It is clear that in his war against Christians *and* in his efforts to deceive non-Christians Satan has an active department of religious affairs. He and his accomplices (demons and deluded human false prophets) pose as 'angels of light', cleverly disguising themselves as Christian leaders, prophets and evangelists. They claim to come from God with a *gospel* of prosperity and peace, with signs and wonders, to bring in a spiritually renewed, peaceful, 'Christianised' world.

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Such deception by Satan's agents has been common since the start of the church age, and will vastly increase during the end-time. They are now stepping-up their efforts to deceive all people into accepting the coming universal messiah of all faiths, with signs and wonders, and by a false *gospel* of global peace and unity. He will be the Antichrist who, with the False Prophet, will unite all religions. Jesus Himself earnestly warned against this satanic deception:

Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many... For there shall arise false [christs], and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect (Mt. 24:4-5,24).

Spiritual deception in the name of Jesus Christ is rapidly on the increase in the world. In the light of this very common strategy of the devil we are exhorted not to accept any person or his message at face value. Investigate the matter thoroughly to expose its roots. Jesus says: "Beware

of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mt. 7:15). Outwardly they pretend to be true prophets who serve the church in the name of the Lord Jesus, but inwardly they may well be unregenerate and false. Money and fame are probably their gods, and they do not have true Christian principles.

Jesus describes the final exposure and eternal doom of the false apostles on judgement day. Although they even cast out devils as practising ministers or mass evangelists, they are agents of the kingdom of darkness with the assignment to mislead and confuse people:

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity (Mt. 7:22-23).

The deception of false prophets amounts to a complete misrepresentation and falsification of the real Jesus. His name is used but another doctrine is attached to it under the direct influence of deceiving spirits from Satan. The result is a great falling away from the true faith:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

How are people who hold traditional Christian views being deceived into believing false doctrines? Paul clearly answers this question by indicating that Satan's deception is the motivating force behind the distortion of biblical truths among believers:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his [craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him* (2 Cor. 11:2-4).

The following are examples of the false kinds of Jesus and the associated false gospels now being proclaimed:

False kinds of Jesus	False Gospels
<p>↓ A Jesus without the cross. He is only a good spiritual leader and a moral example that we should follow. Love and tolerance are his main virtues.</p>	<p>📖 A gospel in which the atonement for sins on the cross is not emphasised. New birth is substituted by good works and rituals like baptism and confirmation.</p>
<p>↓ A Jesus who only delivers people from</p>	<p>📖 A liberation theology (contextual</p>

political oppression, social injustice, and economic suffering by means of social reforms and even revolutions.	theology, social gospel, or revolutionary theology) in which political liberation and social justice are the main objectives.
<p>⚠ A Jesus who is a sinner. He does not call people to repentance and cannot save them from sins. This falsification of the real Jesus is evident in films such as <i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i>, <i>The Last Temptation of Christ</i>, and <i>Jesus of Montreal</i>.</p>	<p>📖 A humanistic gospel which explains sin as freedom of expression and not something inherently evil, so repentance is unnecessary. Jesus is not God, but is depicted merely as a prophet who has raised himself above his fellow sinful, human mortals.</p>
<p>⚠ A Jesus whose main mission is to heal people and to make them rich and prosperous to live a trouble-free life on earth.</p>	<p>📖 A prosperity gospel and kingdom now theology in which believers become like little gods who can manipulate cosmic powers.</p>
<p>⚠ The universal Jesus, or cosmic christ of all faiths. He will unite Christianity with Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and all the other religions by claiming their messianic titles.</p>	<p>📖 A gospel of universalism which teaches that all religions worship the same Creator. They <i>all</i> await the same cosmic messiah who will unite humanity politically, socially and spiritually.</p>

The above-mentioned false kinds of Jesus and false gospels are quite clearly not promoted by the Holy Spirit but by deceiving spirits from Satan's kingdom. They disguise themselves cleverly and imitate the work of the Holy Spirit. Their strategy is such that people fail to recognise them and remain under the false impression that the power of the Holy Spirit is manifesting among them. The deceiving spirits work through false prophets who outwardly seem to be godly men who can also preach very well (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

These spirits and their human agents frequently use the name of Jesus, but they disregard the cross and do not convict people of their sin. They will rather make them laugh and engage in all sorts of antics. Jesus is depicted as the one who can do mighty works for them and also give His healing and reigning power to them. Different kinds of spiritual gifts are indiscriminately offered to entire audiences.

Apart from the fact that the deceiving messages are proclaimed by false prophets who were never true Christians (Mt. 7:23), the Bible also indicates that certain Christian ministers will depart from the faith that they previously confessed, and that for the sake of popularity and special spiritual gifts they will give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

Peter refers to these fallen pastors who will bring in damnable

heresies, thereby “denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

The shocking fact is that the false teachers are not rejected because of their heresies, but enjoy considerable public support. Because of their popularity and success they become puffed-up and arrogant, and ridicule evangelical ministers and preachers who do not support the new movement because they still uphold the sound doctrine of the way of the cross. The false teachers of our time even go so far as to say that those who oppose them are resisting the Holy Spirit and provoking God’s anger.

There are a number of reasons why the false teachers enjoy large public support. Many of them appear to do spectacular signs and wonders, thereby leaving the impression that they have been specially anointed by God for their ministry in these crucial last days. They promise the most tremendous powers and gifts to all people, and draw large crowds with their sensational antics, statements and promises.

Another reason why people like the false teachers is because they all have sub-Christian standards for salvation. They make it easy for members of the public to profess Christianity and appear to enjoy it all. In most cases they do not even have to confess their sins. These lies and Christian fables suit most of the people. They quickly adapt to the distorted views and lowered standards, and strongly support the popular false apostles who comfort and entertain their audiences without disturbing them about their sins.

Paul exhorted Timothy to keep on proclaiming the true gospel, and to endure the afflictions and tribulations that would be imposed upon him by the false teachers who deceive the people with their many lies and false doctrines:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

A person who stands firm on his Christian principles and engages in spiritual warfare will endure afflictions and persecution because of the truth. Confrontation with the forces of darkness is inevitable if you do the work of the Lord. Paul says: “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Take up the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the shield of faith, and keep on resisting the devil and all his plots and lies that were devised to undermine the kingdom of God.

Spiritual weapons

We are commanded to make use of the weapons that God has provided for us in the battle against Satan and all his evil devices. It is not necessary to be spiritually defeated or forced into retreat:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds... (2 Cor. 10:4).

The following weapons are mentioned in the Bible and should be actively used to resist the devil:

1. Faith

We are involved in a battle of faith. Peter says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet. 5:8-9). We must have an unshakeable faith in Jesus as our Lord and our God (Jn. 20:28) and also in the conquering power of His Holy Spirit. Our faith must continuously be strengthened as we grow up to spiritual maturity. The victory belongs to the Lord, and we must put our trust in Him to deliver us:

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith (1 Jn. 5:4).

Fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12).

...above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph. 6:16).

Are you ready to quench the fiery darts of the devil with the shield of your faith in the Lord Jesus or are you unprotected against all the confusing, deceiving, insinuating and unclean thoughts that the devil launches at you? Take refuge in Christ against all the attacks of the enemy, as you will never overcome Satan in your own power. Faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross will make you more than a conqueror. “The name of the Lord *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10).

2. The Blood of the Lamb

It is important that our spiritual protection and victory should be based upon the shed blood of the Lamb! On the cross He has broken the power of sin to set us free: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). He died on the cross, “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

During the coming great tribulation when the devil will come down to earth with great wrath knowing that he has but a short time, there will still be only one effective weapon against him. Although many of the true

believers of that time will die as martyrs (Rev. 6:9-11), they will prevail spiritually against the attacks of Satan through faith in the Lamb of God who was slain to redeem them: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11).

The blood of Christ, which is the symbol of His atoning death, gives life (Jn. 6:53-56), it cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7) and ensures victory in the battle (Rev. 12:11).

3. Christian Testimony

Identifying ourselves fully with the victory of Jesus on the cross and waiting on the Lord to fill us with His Holy Spirit, gives us confidence to witness to other people and to resist the devil. After his conversion, Paul was “filled with the Holy Ghost... And straightway he preached Christ... that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:17,20). The bold and fearless testimony of a believer not only confirms his faith in the Lord Jesus, but also ensures the retreat of the enemy (Jas. 4:7).

People who do not confess their sins to God and give testimony to others about their faith in Christ cannot possibly be saved. “...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

Another form of confessing your faith with your mouth is by praising the Lord. To sing His praises and exalt His wonderful and conquering Name scares the enemy away and releases power within you, “for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).

4. Prayer

A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian. Intercession according to the will of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, can really change things. It moves the mighty arm of God and brings many blessings:

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (Jas. 5:16).

To pray prevailing prayers we should “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22). We should live holy lives and pray in accordance with the will of God: “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us” (1 Jn. 5:14).

Always guard against inactivity in your prayer life, as well as other areas of your service to the Lord. Idleness is the parent of vice, and the enemy will certainly exploit situations like this:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

If we ignore the attacks of the devil, shrug them off as an illusion, or try to ward them off by resorting to psychological or medical therapy, the problems will become more deeply entrenched, which will have serious consequences. If we take refuge in the Lord by taking our burdens to Him in prayer, and also ask others to intercede for us, He will certainly deliver us from evil: "...the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2 Pet. 2:9); "...be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6: 10). The victory belongs to Him who is mighty to save!

5. The Word

The Word of God is a mighty weapon in the battle against temptation, deception, unbelief, and other attacks that the enemy may launch against us. To be able to use it we must believe and know it:

And take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17).

The Word of God must govern your heart, renew your mind, and instil its divine nature and principles in your life. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps. 119:11). In the light of God's Word the true nature of your thoughts and intentions will be revealed:

For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing [apart] of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

When the devil tempted the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, He refuted all the deceptive and distorted statements of Satan from the Scriptures: In the correct application of the Word He replied by saying, "It is written..."

The quotation of biblical truths settles a matter beyond any doubt or further arguments. The Word of God has an authority that no one can challenge. Do you study and try to memorise important texts in your Bible and apply God's commandments and promises in every area of your life?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8: 35-39).

But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations (Rev. 2:25-26).

Sanctification

From the preceding discussion it is obvious that only a sanctified, Spirit-filled person is well prepared for the battle against the forces of Satan that continually exploit the fallen, sinful nature of humans. We are tripartite beings and Paul mentions all three aspects as relevant to the process of

sanctification and defence against the devil's attacks:

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do it (1 Thes. 5:23-24; emphasis added).

The three basic aspects of a human being are each associated with three distinct attributes which are most relevant to the experience and process of sanctification:

SPIRIT:	Faith, hope and love
SOUL:	Intellect, will and emotions
BODY:	Senses, physiology and members

THE SPIRIT

The spiritual life of a Christian is marked by faith, hope and love. From God's perspective, all unsaved persons are spiritually dead. They have a spirit but it is alienated from and unresponsive to God and, if not made alive, this leads to eternal death and damnation.

Faith

The child of God is spiritually alive because there is a bond of faith between him and the Lord. Note that a living faith is much more than the mental acceptance of the principles and foundations of the Christian faith. You must confess all the sins of which the Holy Spirit convicts you and embrace the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Then you will be made spiritually alive by being born again to live the life of a believer and a child of God.

As with the other gifts of the Spirit, faith is dynamic in its nature. You can have more or less of it. It is precisely here that the challenge lies to become spiritually mature:

...till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:13-14).

Satan will attack your faith in God with great force. He will try to destroy or weaken it by introducing doubt, fear, and other negative thoughts. Things may happen to you that cause you to wonder whether the Lord is still with you and whether He really loves you and cares for you. It is a terrible sin to doubt the nearness and love of the Lord during trials and afflictions (cf. Ex. 17:7). In so doing you are conceding victory to the enemy. When we allow Satan to sow doubt and bitterness in our hearts we will grieve the Holy Spirit and become discontent and even complain against God. In this state of mind we will adversely affect other people and pull them down spiritually (Heb. 12:14-15).

A doubter does not have a meaningful spiritual life. Least of all is the effectiveness of his prayer life:

...let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man *is* unstable in all his ways (Jas. 1:6-8).

Without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

We should resolutely press on in the battle of faith, despite the fierceness of the attacks against us, until that day when the victors will be rewarded in heaven:

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).

Hope

Paul encourages us that:

...we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil (Heb. 6:18-19).

Is the flame of hope still burning brightly in your heart? Are you looking forward to the coming again of Jesus and the eternal life that is awaiting you? Is this hope the anchor for your soul in the stormy and troubled waters through which you have to pass? Cling tightly to the hope ahead. It is a blessed and purifying hope that will motivate you to trust in the Lord always and stay on course in your spiritual life:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a [special] people, zealous of good works (Tit. 2:11-14).

And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure (1 Jn. 3:3).

Satan will persistently try to weaken or obliterate your expectation of the Second Coming in order to reduce your spiritual motivation and endurance. He does not want you to pursue holiness and effective service while waiting for the appearance of the heavenly Bridegroom. He will do everything possible to deceive you into believing the amillennial interpretation in which prophecies on the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ are spiritualised away and relegated to a distant future.

When hope in the Second Coming has been effectively weakened, the devil replaces it with secular objectives, e.g. the promotion of the

humanistic peace programmes of the new world order, as well as the unholy unification of world religions. In this way a man-made Utopia is being built up which excludes the only real solution for this sinful and sick world, namely, the coming of the Prince of Peace and the physical manifestation of His kingdom on earth.

Hope is a very important aspect of a Christian's spiritual life. Apart from the eager expectation of the coming of the kingdom, you should put your trust in the Lord for the needs of your everyday life, also in humanly-speaking impossible situations (2 Cor. 1:8-10; Rom. 5:3-5).

Love

As saved people, we are rooted and grounded in the love of Jesus Christ. Of these three – faith, hope, and love – it is undoubtedly love that is the greatest. I am referring to God's divine *agape* love that reaches out to the world in its desperate need. Human love can be noble, even self-sacrificing, but it is, at best, flawed with elements of self-interest and pride. More usually people are selfish, often covetous of others' possessions and status – even of their marriage partners.

In the revelation of God's love He took the first step by reaching out to us in our sinful condition. "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Jesus paid the death-penalty imposed upon all sinners in order that we may be forgiven and set free from the bondage of sin. The Holy Spirit convicts people of their sinfulness and lost state. He makes them aware of Jesus Christ's love for them and of His saving grace and gives them the faith to accept Him as Saviour.

Faith is, therefore, only the means to an end, namely, to become open to the love and mercy of God in order that it can be received into your heart. Love is still the greatest issue involved in your salvation.

Love must become the foundation of your whole life. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind and your fellow human beings as yourself (Lk. 10:27). This *agape* love must permeate your relationship with others.

The love of God will also enable you to defend yourself against all the hateful feelings and actions that the enemy can muster against you. The power of true love cannot be conquered: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:7). To share in the victory of love you must have a heart filled with it:

...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:5 NKJV).

THE SOUL

The human soul is the arena of fierce battles against the enemy. The following three aspects are considered here:

Intellect

The human mind is an important faculty through which we gain knowledge of truths, as well as of lies, which penetrate to the depths of our souls. Through the mind and the senses of sight and hearing we receive the gospel of Christ and come to faith in Him:

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Take heed... how ye hear (Lk. 8:18).

A vast amount of lies and evil teachings also enter our minds from outside. Satan uses them to create confusion and to establish false ideas in the human mind. Is your mind under the control of the Holy Spirit, or is it a receptacle for vile, immoral thoughts, materialism, deceptions such as evolution, unbiblical cult and New Age teachings, with which the devil, the god of this age, blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4) and also deceives believers? Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to resist Satan's cunning tactics and enlighten the eyes of your understanding (Eph. 1:18).

The plans and strategies whereby the enemy attempts to deceive us intellectually and spiritually, must be unmasked and every thought taken into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5). Otherwise, the devil and his lying emissaries will slip in unawares and sow confusion in our minds and souls, thereby blinding us to the truth.

Will

Although the human will is neutral and allows us to make moral choices, it too easily reacts to the evil and worldly desires of humanity's fallen nature if it is not exposed to the truth. For this reason the Bible exhorts us to gain knowledge about the will of God, and to commit ourselves to do it:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2).

Pray and ask God to reveal the deeper aspects of His will to you and to work in you "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Eph. 1:9; Phil. 2:13). Pray also that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will (Col. 1:9), that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col. 4:12).

Are you making progress in this regard, or does the devil constantly succeed in provoking you to do your own will and to gratify the cravings of your sinful nature? Ask God to free you from the snare of the devil, if he has taken you captive to do his will instead of God's will (2 Tim. 2:26).

Emotions

In the spiritual battle, many a soul has been paralysed and defeated on the emotional level. Under conditions of tension and disappointment, emotional depression is permitted to develop, resulting in negative

thoughts such as discouragement, apathy, and even a total loss of interest in life itself. There are also active negative attitudes that are used by the devil to attack people. These include hate, aggression, jealousy, self-centredness, worry, bitterness and an unforgiving spirit.

Human emotions must be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit; otherwise our carnal temperaments, stirred up by the enemy, will reign supreme. In a surrendered life you will discover that the joy of the Lord replaces and overcomes all negative experiences, observations and feelings. Paul, even under the most appalling and depressing prison conditions, could say with conviction: "Rejoice in the Lord [always]: *and* again I say, Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

Are you filled with the joy, gentleness, meekness and self-control which comes from the Holy Spirit? (Gal. 5:22-23). Or do you still have an untamed temper that can easily flare up if you are provoked by the enemy?

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city (Prov. 16:32).

It is a well established fact that highly emotional reactions do not lead to sound and lasting decisions. Many people who are emotionally charged, do things on the spur of the moment which they later regret. Even if the decisions were good, people find it difficult to uphold them after their emotional feelings have subsided.

Emotions are good and functional, but they must be under control and never allowed to reign supreme or to overrule intellectual reasoning and the quiet conviction of the Holy Spirit in the decision-making process.

THE BODY

The human body is likewise the territory where enemy attacks occur in the battle against the forces of darkness. Without a body, the spirit and mind of a person would not be able to express themselves. Any malfunctioning in this sphere would obviously also suit the devil's plans. The following three aspects of the body can be seen as targets:

Senses

The five senses of the body are gateways through which a great variety of influences can affect you for good or evil:

Ear-gate: Hearing is the gate which admits both truth and lies to the mind, which processes the information. Decisions taken in the light of the facts gathered are of great importance in determining a person's attitude. Corrupt conversation, dubious radio and TV programmes, the amoral, often satanic lyrics of pop and rock music with its heavy, hypnotic beat – all of which promote sinful, godless life-styles – enter the mind, emotions and spirit of a person via the ear-gate.

Eye-gate: This is equally important in admitting information into the mind. Think of all the deceptive propaganda and amoral material in books, magazines, TV, films and videos, and the pornographic video and internet images used by the devil to defile viewer's minds – even the minds of Christians who foolishly expose themselves to such evil influences (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Touch-gate: The sense of feeling can be perverted by indulgence in alcohol, drugs and sexual immorality. Unable to control their craving for sensual pleasure many become addicted to and enslaved by it.

Taste-gate: An undisciplined sense of taste can lead to over-indulgence in food and drink, which can harm the body and impair our usefulness in God's service.

Nose-gate: The sense of smell can entice people with delicious aromas to overindulge in food, and, with alluring, heady perfumes, into sexual immorality.

The sixth sense: The devil tries to convince people that they also have a *sixth* sense and should learn to practise extra-sensory perception by way of Transcendental Meditation and other psycho-techniques. (For more information on this subject see the booklet on *The New Age Movement*).

Physiology

Scripture says that our bodies are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14), are the temples of the Holy Spirit and we should glorify God in them (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The devil tries to damage or destroy our bodies – so, avoiding neuroticism and unhealthy life-styles, we should try to keep them healthy and fit to serve God. Smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, and sexual sins must be abandoned and a healthy life-style adopted – *ideally* including a balanced diet of natural, non-GM, organic food, adequate exercise and sleep, and a happy mental outlook, rejoicing in the Lord (Phil. 4:4). We should avoid or minimise exposure to harmful chemicals, infections, atmospheric pollution, nuclear, vhf and uhf (phone) radiations. Pray for wisdom in caring for the body!

Members

All the members of the body play a part in its wholeness and have marvellous capabilities which can be used either for good or bad purposes. The tongue, for example, can be used to speak truth, edify and bless, but also to lie, corrupt and curse – so Scripture exhorts us to refrain our “tongue from evil”, and our “lips that they speak no guile” (1 Pet. 3:10). To be wholly sanctified means that we reckon “our old man is crucified” with Christ, ourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ”, to “walk in newness of life”, so must not allow our body members to be used as “instruments of unrighteousness unto sin”,

but yielded to God as “instruments of righteousness” (Rom. 6:1-13).

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

Paul also said: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). Are you able to say these words, adding: “to see through my eyes, hear through my ears, speak through my lips, love with my heart, work with my hands and walk with my feet”?

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day” (Eph. 6:13) – and so defeat the devil at each level of the battle in your spirit, soul and body – and, as Paul desires for us all, may:

The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and... your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 5:23).

5. Israel

Calling

A large part of the Bible deals with Israel. In a very special sense they are the chosen people of God. He called them to be a holy people and led them to the Promised Land; He then dispersed them among the nations because of their disobedience; and it is the same immutable covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who will restore Israel to the land of their fathers in the end-time (Ezek. 36:24-28).

The calling of Israel started with Abraham, who is the progenitor of Israel. God said to him:

Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever (Gen. 13:14-15).

This promise of the land was later confirmed to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 26:3, 28:13). Before inheriting the Promised Land, the descendants of the founding patriarchs first spent 400 years as strangers in Egypt, where they became slaves of the Egyptians (Gen. 15:13-14). Then they earnestly called on the Lord to deliver them from their bondage and misery.

After the sacrificial lamb was slaughtered and the first Passover celebrated, God led His people with a mighty arm out of Egypt. Through these events Israel learnt the lesson that they could not take possession of God's promises in their own strength. The sacrificial lamb also pointed to the Messiah as the true Lamb of God. By His sacrifice and the shedding of His blood He would redeem people from their spiritual bondage and lead them into the kingdom of God.

Israel had to discover the principle that they were first to become a people of God who observe His laws and statutes before they could live in the land that He promised to them. They were called to be a separated and dedicated people through whom God could reveal Himself to the world. Their calling to Canaan, therefore, also included a spiritual calling.

Dispersion

The Lord set a spiritual standard to Israel for the privilege of being called a people of God. Should they continuously fail to meet this standard, they would invite the displeasure and even the anger of God against them. Extended periods of national disobedience resulted in God surrendering Israel to their enemies. Through experiences such as this they learned the hard way the consequences of straying from God. After they had humbled themselves before the Lord and confessed their sins, He again restored them to their land (Lev. 26; Deut. 30).

The warnings to Israel explicitly included the possibility of a long international dispersion, should they continue with their disobedience and rebellion against God:

And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other (Deut. 28:64).

And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste (Lev. 26:33).

The Babylonian captivity of Israel, which was confined to one area, was obviously not the international diaspora to all nations. The latter diaspora only occurred in the first century AD, and was finally announced by Jesus after He was rejected as Messiah by Israel. Prior to and in His prophetic discourse (Mt. 23 and 24) He told the apostate religious leaders that they were filling up the measure of their fathers' sins, and that Jerusalem would be destroyed as a result. In Luke 21 He indicated that the dispersion of Israel would continue for a long period during the times of the Gentiles:

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh... For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled... For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Lk. 21:20-24).

After a century under the Roman yoke, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 was the start of the long international dispersion of Israel that still continues, despite one third of Jews returning to their land in the 20th century. At some time during those 19 centuries there have been Jewish exiles in all countries of the world.

Restoration

Never in all of Israel's existence as a nation was there ever the slightest doubt of the validity of the unconditional promises that God made to the founding fathers of the nation. God Himself was, and still is, the guarantor of the Abrahamic (Gen. 15:18), Canaanitic (Num. 33:51–34:15) and Davidic (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:3-4, 34-37) covenants that ensure the eternal allocation of the land as well as the permanence of David's throne. Israel's exile from the land because of disobedience cannot invalidate these covenants. Even if Israel is unfaithful, God remains a faithful covenant-keeping God who will again restore the nation to their land. A solemn assurance to this effect was given long before the Babylonian captivity and the international diaspora:

And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant

with them: for I *am* the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I *am* the LORD (Lev. 26:44-45).

The partial gathering of Israel from their international exile is a physical restoration to the land of their fathers, but the final objective of this process is their spiritual revival from the apostate condition into which they have lapsed:

Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD... I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you... and I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgements, and do *them*. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God (Ezek. 36:22-28).

A spiritual cleansing must occur after Israel has been restored to their land. It will coincide with great distress and tribulation. God says that He will refine the remnant of Israel in the fire of His wrath (Zech. 13:9). Jeremiah also refers to this time when he says:

Alas! For that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it: It *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it (Jer. 30: 7).

This time of trouble is the coming great tribulation when Israel will call on God for mercy and help: "In their affliction they will seek Me early", says the LORD (Hos. 5:15).

The restoration of Israel occurs progressively: they are first *physically* and *politically* restored as a nation, but in the same *spiritually* blinded state that prevailed during their dispersion. Back in the land, God will allow a great tribulation upon them from which a remnant will be saved (Rom. 9:27).

The status of the city of Jerusalem is a very significant indication of the progressive physical restoration of Israel, *and* of the end of the times of the Gentiles. In Luke 21:24 the Lord Jesus said that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. The end-time restoration of Jerusalem is therefore an important parameter for the revival of the Jewish nation, while it also indicates the end of the church dispensation. It is not a sudden and quickly passing sign which leaves one no time to react to it, but a gradual process. The various phases of this process can be distinguished as follows:

In 1948, with the declaration of Israel as an independent Jewish state, the Jews only controlled the new, western part of Jerusalem. The Old City and the Temple Mount were at that time still under Jordanian control.

In 1967, in the Six Day War, Israel gained control over the whole of Jerusalem, and also over the West Bank, the Golan Heights and other

areas. At that stage, Jerusalem was physically restored and its Jewish population entered a phase of rapid increase.

In 1980, Jerusalem was declared the eternal, undivided capital of Israel, and Prime Minister Begin moved his office from Tel Aviv to Yerushalayim, the city of destiny. During the next two years, all his cabinet members were relocated. At that stage, the constitutional restoration of the city was complete. Its physical and political trampling was now over.

After 1980, the spiritual trampling of Jerusalem still continued. Three Muslim mosques are on the Temple Mount, and this area is still under the control of an Islamic committee, the *Wakf*. According to Old Testament prophecies, the orthodox faith of Israel will strongly revive and the temple will also be rebuilt. This process will coincide with the continued rejection of Jesus as the true Messiah of Israel.

The rebuilt temple will be desecrated by the false messiah (Antichrist). When Israel revoke their covenant with him, they will be driven out of the city. It will only be at the coming of the true Messiah to the Mount of Olives, that Jerusalem and the remnant of Israel will be spiritually restored. Several important events will occur before this time, most of which will be part of the coming tribulation period.

The feasts of Israel

The seven major feasts which are described in Leviticus 23, typify God's plan of salvation for Israel and the nations. The divine origin of the feasts are clearly stated by God who said that "these are My feasts" (Lev. 23:2). They are all Messianic feasts which find their final fulfilment in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:16-17). At the same time, the feasts reflect the chronological order of events in the divine plan of salvation, from the crucifixion to the coming of the kingdom:

✠ The Passover

The institution of the Passover during the exodus from Egypt coincided with the sacrificing of a lamb. The fulfilment of this feast was the crucifixion of the spotless Lamb of God during the celebration of the Passover. Here, at the cross, is the starting point of God's plan of salvation for Israel and the nations. Peter said: "...forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19; see also Jn. 1:29).

✠ The feast of the unleavened bread

The evening after the Passover is the beginning of the feast of the unleavened bread (Lev. 23:6). During this feast the people of Israel are only allowed to eat unleavened bread. They must also remove all leaven from their houses. The spiritual significance of the feast is that of self-examination and the cleansing of one's life.

This feast was fulfilled during the burial of Jesus. He is the corn of wheat that fell in the ground and died, and to us became the unleavened (sinless) bread of life. We should also examine ourselves after the Passover and abandon all forms of the leaven of sin. This rule should be applied rigidly as a single sin can contaminate one's whole life:

Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven... for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with... the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

✠ **The feast of the firstfruits**

On a Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath (Lev. 23: 11), the sheaf of the firstfruits of the new harvest season was brought as a wave-offering before the Lord in the temple. It had the momentous significance of making the people acceptable to God. This feast was fulfilled during the resurrection of Jesus on the Sunday morning after His crucifixion. He became the firstfruits of those that slept (1 Cor. 15:20-23). Through His death and resurrection He made all those people who believe in Him acceptable to God.

✠ **The feast of Pentecost**

The 50th day after the wave-offering was the last day of the feast of firstfruits, i.e. the feast of Pentecost. It was also celebrated on the day after the Sabbath (Lev. 23:16). In the New Testament this feast was fulfilled on a Sunday morning when the orthodox Jews were busy with their Old Testament celebration (Acts 2). *Pentecost* means *the fiftieth day*. The 50 days that elapsed between the two traditional feasts account for the 40 days between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the 10 days in which the disciples waited on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the upper room.

The four feasts mentioned above, were all fulfilled during the events of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The last three feasts, which are always celebrated at the end of the harvest season in Israel, will be fulfilled at the end of the ingathering of God's harvest on earth. Between the two groups of feasts there are four months in which the harvest is to be gathered (Jn. 4:35). We are at present labourers in the fields of God. When the harvest of souls has been gathered, a trumpet will sound...

✠ **The feast of trumpets**

This feast, which is celebrated on the first day of the seventh month on Israel's religious calendar, coincides with the New Year's day (*Rosh Hashanah*) on their secular calendar. It is celebrated for two days, and is followed by *the seven awful days* in which devout Jews everywhere humble themselves, confess their sins, and seek to restore their broken

relationships with God and man.

This feast will be fulfilled when the trumpet of God shall sound to gather the harvest of saved souls in the heavenly barn (1 Thes. 4:16-17). Then the *seven awful years* will elapse on earth, when Israel and all people who remain behind will have a last chance to confess their sins and restore their broken relationship with God by giving allegiance to the true Messiah, Jesus Christ.

✠ **The Day of Atonement**

The sacrifice of the Lamb of God during Passover opened the door for reconciliation to God for all people. However, Israel's national day of reconciliation with God through the atonement of Jesus on the cross, will only occur at the end of the great tribulation when He will appear on the Mount of Olives at His Second Coming (Zech. 3:9, 12:10, 13:1, 14:4-5). The remnant of Israel will then all be saved in one day, which to them will be a fulfilled Day of Atonement.

✠ **The feast of tabernacles**

This feast is celebrated in Israel at harvest-time, taking this annual opportunity to recall their exodus from Egypt when they lived in tabernacles in the wilderness (Lev. 23:43) and to give renewed thanks to God for leading them to the Promised Land. It will also be celebrated in the Millennium when people of all nations will participate (Ezek. 14:16,17).

During the final harvest feast in heaven there will also be great rejoicing because the Lord has redeemed us from the spiritual bondage of sin and brought us out of darkness into His kingdom of light. We will reflect on the difficult days when we were pilgrims and strangers on earth, and give renewed glory and praise to the Lord for His great work of salvation accomplished for us.

To the orthodox Jews who refuse to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah, the feasts are restricted to their Old Testament significance and their secular value. They are mere shadows without their rich Messianic substance.

Rejection of the Triune God

To have the right biblical perspective on the great tragedy of Israel's long diaspora, it must be understood against the background of the continuing apostasy and profound spiritual deadness of this nation. With the exception of a few God-fearing men and women, Israel has for many years turned its back upon God. They have been hiding behind a high wall of sin, agnosticism, and a lifeless form of orthodox worship in which there is no room for the Messiah, Yeshua.

It is evident that Israel rejected the Triune God in three stages. First, they rejected the Father, then the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit. In the parable of the tenants (Mt. 21: 33-43) Jesus indicated to the Jewish

leaders that they were the tenants who, up to that point, rejected the Husbandman (God) in two stages: first they rejected his servants, and then they also rejected and killed His Son.

A Rejection of the Father

Israel is the nation that was called and set apart by God. According to the parable they were to Him like a vineyard. He planted it, hedged it around and also built a tower. Israel was well cultivated and guarded, and had every opportunity to bear much fruit. In the persons of Moses and the prophets, God sent His servants to them to act as spiritual leaders so that His purpose with them could be achieved.

Under the provocation of evil kings and false prophets the nation rejected, ill-treated and killed God's servants (the true prophets). In the time of Jesus this spirit of rebellion against God had for centuries been strongly established. Jesus warned them that God would soon hold the wicked tenants accountable for having killed His servants:

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify, and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation (Mt. 23:34-36).

Before Messiah, the last prophet that God sent to gather a spiritual harvest among His people was John the Baptist. However, the leaders of the nation also rejected him and did not protest when Herod killed him. Jesus strongly denounced them for not having accepted and believed this great prophet (Mt. 21:25). But they also turned their backs on John the Baptist and approved of his wicked murder.

A Rejection of the Son

Jesus is the Son who was, in the fullness of time, sent to Israel as Messiah to lead them as a flock into the kingdom of God. The leaders were even more hostile towards Him:

But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance (Mt. 21:38).

That is exactly what happened to Jesus:

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by [guile] and kill *Him* (Mt. 26:3-4).

Through this treacherous act the leaders of Israel also rejected the second person in the Godhead, the Son. In this way they explicitly sided with their rebellious fathers who rejected the Father by killing His

prophets:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, **and ye would not!** Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord (Mt. 23:37-39; emphasis added).

The salute of acceptance (“Blessed *is* He that cometh in the name of the LORD” – Ps. 118:26), will only be uttered by the leaders of Israel on the day when Jesus sets foot on the Mount of Olives after the dark days of the great tribulation. Despite His historical and present rejection, the true Messiah will be wholeheartedly accepted by a remnant of the Jewish nation after they have suffered the many afflictions known as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). But for the present, their rebellion continues.

Because of the rejection and killing of His Son, God severely punished the leaders of Israel and their misguided followers. Jesus knew that they had sealed their own fate, but He nevertheless took great pity on Jerusalem and its spiritually blinded inhabitants:

And when He came near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation (Lk. 19:41-44).

A Rejection of the Holy Spirit

In His patience and mercy, the Father was prepared to overlook the times of ignorance, and, after the crucifixion of His Son, to give Israel another opportunity to accept Jesus as their Messiah and thus enter into His kingdom. This opportunity was offered to them during the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian church in Jerusalem. The final act of rejecting the renewed offer was the stoning of Stephen, who was the first martyr of the Church of the Messiah among the Jewish people.

In a long speech, Stephen reminded the leaders of the sins and rebellion of their forefathers (Acts 6:8–7:60). He likened those who killed the prophets to the leaders of his time who killed the Messiah, and also accused them of resisting and rejecting the Holy Spirit:

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye do always resist the Holy Ghost:** as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they have slain those who [foretold] the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:51-52; emphasis added).

added).

Stephen put the nation in the dock, accused them of repeated rebellion against God, found them guilty, and condemned them to God's rejection, punishment and extradition from their land. In principle he put the seal on the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation that started in 70 AD. The impending tragedy had, by Israel's own doing, become unavoidable.

The prophetic significance of the three critical murders committed by Israel are discussed by Warren B. Wiersbe in *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, 1989:433). He also confirms that the death of Stephen meant judgement upon Israel. It was their third murder directly related to rejecting the Triune God. They *allowed* the murder of John the Baptist who was sent by the Father; they *asked* that Jesus as the Son of God be crucified; while they *killed* Stephen themselves, thereby rejecting the Holy Spirit who spoke to them through the apostles and the early church.

As a result of these events, the commission to be the representatives and witnesses of God in the world, was taken away from Israel and given to the rejected disciples. From their ministries and missionary endeavours the church of Christ emerged among all nations.

Despite all these grave errors and misjudgements, the spiritual restoration of Israel as a nation will definitely occur. In a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit they will realise and confess their sins of rejecting God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit:

I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced... (Zech. 12:10 NKJV).

...they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, *It is My people*: and they shall say, *The LORD is my God* [Yahweh is my Elohim] (Zech. 13:9).

Under the strong conviction of the Holy Spirit Israel will be reconciled to God through the Messiah! This faithful remnant will inherit the promises of the millennial kingdom.

The temple

Although Israel is alienated from God because they rejected the Messiah, many Jews have a great zeal for God but without understanding. In their stereotyped, blinkered way the orthodox Jews continue to observe certain laws in the belief that they will thereby ensure the benevolence of God towards them. It is a source of tremendous grief to them that there is no temple where they can bring sacrifices to God.

An ideal that lives in the hearts of many Israelis is the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. After their restoration and regaining control over the Old City this ideal has come much closer to realisation. However, one of

the major problems is the high profile of Islam on the Temple Mount where three of their mosques have been built – one of which is the famous Dome of the Rock. To them, it is the third holiest place on earth after Mecca and Medina.

In the early 1960's, Islam renovated the Dome of the Rock at great expense, revealing their determination to stay on the Temple Mount. It was formerly believed that the Dome stands on the exact spot where Israel's third temple is to be built. Archaeological 'digs' have disproved this and shown that the temple can be built just north of the Islamic Dome, with 3 to 4 metres between them. The temple will face the most imposing feature of the old city's eastern wall, the East or Golden Gate, reserved for "the prince" (Ezek. 44:1-3), which Jews believe refers to Messiah – so Islam walled it up to exclude Him.

In view of the Antichrist's deceptive philosophy that he is the common messiah of all faiths, it is not impossible that during his reign the temple and the mosque will co-exist on the Temple Mount. Islam and Judaism will then be sister religions for 3½ years, and also associate with the other world religions on the false premise that they all worship the same God. The great crisis will occur when the false messiah declares himself to be God in the rebuilt temple (2 Thes. 2:4). Israel will then revoke their covenant with him.

As for the present time, the highly emotional and conflicting religious interests of Judaism and Islam renders the situation on the Islamic-controlled Temple Mount very volatile indeed. While Islam are entrenching their position there, the Jews are in various ways preparing for the building of their temple on its ancient site. The *Al Aqsa Intifada* that broke out in September 2000 bears witness to this tension. Since 1990, the Jewish group, Temple Mount Faithful, twice attempted to lay a cornerstone of 4½ tons as a first step in rebuilding the temple. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem oversees the manufacture of a wide range of gold and silver objects, ceremonial pitchers, garments for priests, trumpets, harps, fire pans, etc., for use in the rebuilt temple. There are also two *yeshiva* schools for the training of Levitical priests in Jerusalem. To many Jews the restoration of Israel will not be complete until their temple has been rebuilt.

The struggle for Jerusalem

Jewish control of Jerusalem goes back over 3000 years to the time when king David conquered the city from the Jebusites and established it as his capital. His son, Solomon, built the first temple in "the city of David". During the past three millennia the Jews often lost control of Jerusalem but always regained it again. After their long international diaspora since New Testament times, the Jews gained independence in a part of their ancient land on 15th May 1948. Initially they only controlled West

Jerusalem. During the Six Day War in June 1967 they gained control over the whole of Jerusalem, capturing the Old City and adjacent West Bank area from Jordan. In August 1980, Jerusalem was declared Israel's eternal, undivided capital and seat of government.

Religious Jews hold the firm, biblical belief that Jerusalem will be exalted to the position of world capital after the Messiah has come and established His kingdom of peace:

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart (Jer. 3:17; see also Is. 2:2-4 and Zech. 8:21-23).

However, Islam is engaged in a determined campaign to gain control over Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state. They are mustering tremendous support in the international community to strengthen their demand for dividing the land of Israel and controlling at least the eastern part of Jerusalem, which includes the Old City and the Temple Mount. These demands are contrary to Israel's biblical mandate on the land and the city:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah *and* against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces (Zech. 12:2-3).

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will [enter into judgement] with them there for my people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land (Joel 3:1-2).

The struggle for the control of Jerusalem and the land of Israel is building up to a fierce confrontation. According to the Bible, this is a united Israeli city called "Jerusalem" and not an Arab city called "Al Quds".

Messianic Jews

Although still a very small percentage, there are increasing numbers of Jews who accept Jesus as Messiah. They are called Messianic Jews. The term *Messiah* is derived from *Mashiach* which is the Hebrew term for *The Anointed One*, while *Christ* is the Grecised version of this term. *Jesus* is referred to as *Yeshua* (*Y'shua* or *Yashua*) in Hebrew, and the name *Jesus Christ* is rendered *Yeshua Ha Mashiach*.

For obvious reasons, the Messianic Jews are regarded with considerable disapproval and suspicion by the orthodox Jews. As in the first century, they are viewed as heretics who have defected from the God of their fathers. As the number of Messianic Jews increase, the spiritual

polarisation among the two groups is widening. The climate is already set for a time of intensifying persecution of Messianic Jews.

The orthodox Jews have strong representation in the Knesset (Israel's parliament). Members of this group control the departments of Religious Affairs and Interior Affairs. They therefore have the necessary power bases to achieve their objective of prohibiting missionary work and persecuting Messianic believers. Although not widespread yet, the campaign against Messianic groups in Israel has already begun and is gradually intensifying. The Messiah has warned about these developments and also indicated that they will take effect before the start of the great tribulation:

And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons... And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake (Lk. 21:11-17).

Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me (Jn. 16:2-3).

A repetition of the first century persecution of Messianic Jewish believers will take place. The same fear that prevailed during that time in respect of the orthodox religious leaders is beginning to be evident again:

These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ [*i.e. that Jesus is the Messiah*] he should be put out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22).

It is our duty to pray earnestly for the young Messianic congregations in Israel, that they should be strong in the Lord during these difficult times. The opposition and hostility that they experience will increase in the near future, and they must be well prepared to avoid compromising their position of faith in *Yeshua Ha Mashiach*.

Evangelical Christianity, world-wide, is facing the same animosity because of its uncompromising nature. It is increasingly pressurised to conform to the interfaith practice of linking hands with other religions. This body of false religions will, in time to come, all accept the Antichrist as their common messiah. This will include orthodox Jews, the Israeli government and people, most of whom will accept him as their Messiah and obtain from him the right to rebuild their temple. Against this fatal mistake the Lord Jesus had seriously warned their forefathers almost 2000 years previously:

I have come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (Jn. 5:43).

During the tribulation period there will be great animosity between followers of the true Messiah and the false Messiah (Antichrist). In a sense it already exists.

Hatred of the Jews

Despite the religious formalism and deadness of the Jewish people, there is no justification at all for waging a campaign of hatred against them. This is one of the most foolish and self-destructive things nations or individuals could do. To act against the declared will and purposes of God is to pierce ourselves with many sorrows. Consider what happened to Israel as a nation because of rejecting God! The same God warns the enemies of Israel, but blesses their friends, when He says to Abraham: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3).

Nations, groups and individuals who condemn or oppress Israel will bring upon themselves God's wrath. They are digging a pit into which they themselves will fall. Great world empires, such as the once mighty Babylonian, Assyrian, and Roman, have proved the dire consequences of trying to annihilate Israel. They are gone, but Israel still exists.

Through many centuries the Roman Catholic Church, which claims to be the new Israel, has persecuted and killed Jews. During the Holocaust in World War II, millions of Jews were slaughtered in the most gruesome ways by Nazi Germany. In the period after the restoration of Israel in 1948, the Islamic Arab nations in the Middle East have played the role of the most fanatical haters of Jews.

In Psalm 83, the Bible refers to the ancient enemies of Judah who waged a religiously-motivated war of annihilation against Israel. The psalmist says: "...Thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people,... They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance... who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession" (Ps. 83:2-4, 12).

The modern Arab nations, including the Palestinians, are descended from the ancient enemies of Judah and have declared a similar "holy war" (*jihad*) against Israel. The Israeli War of Independence in 1948, followed by the 1956 war, the Six Day War in 1967, the *Yom Kippur* War in 1974, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent internal revolt (*Intifada*) by the Palestinians bear witness to their unceasing efforts to threaten and destroy the Jewish state.

Having failed to destroy Israel, the Palestinians, with other Arab support, have been pursuing a cunning strategy of appearing to cooperate in a peace process to gain the sympathy of world opinion for them as a downtrodden people deprived of their rights. In this way they gained more and more concessions from Israel – semi-autonomy, armed militia,

most of the West Bank and massive international aid. They also greatly increased their demands, especially for sovereignty over East Jerusalem and the *whole* of the Temple Mount. Failing to get all they demanded they again resorted to violence in the *Al Aqsa Intifada* (begun AD 2000). There is no solution in sight to the escalating low-level war which resulted. The situation cries out for a strong man to negotiate an effective peace treaty appeasing the Palestinians and Arab nations while guaranteeing Israel's safety. The stage is truly set for the emergence of the Antichrist!

It is quite possible that the Antichrist, in the guise of an 'angel of light' and 'peace-maker' will emerge during a war in the Middle East. In Ezekiel 38 and 39, the Bible refers to a Russian/Arab invasion of Israel. In its war against Israel, Magog (modern Russia) will be joined by many nations, including Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer (Germany) and Togarmah (Turkey). Referring to the prince of Magog, God says: "And thou shalt come up against My people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days" (Ezek. 38:16). God will intervene and destroy the enemy forces (Ezek 39:1-13). The Antichrist may then appear on the scene and claim to be the Messiah who has been sent by God to save humanity from self-destruction.

His false peace will be short-lived, lasting only 3½ years, after which he will declare himself to be God in the temple. Israel will, on that day, reject him as Messiah. An intensive campaign of hatred and military actions will be instituted against Israel until the great battle of Armageddon at the end of the great tribulation. God will then finally deal with the enemies of Israel who have incessantly endeavoured to seize their land and deprive them of their right of existence (Zech. 14:1-13).

Bless them

To ensure God's blessing upon us, we must bless Israel (Gen. 12:3). Do not rush to condemn them because they crucified Jesus – remember Gentiles participated! It was indeed a wicked act of unbelief, but it was part of God's plan of salvation for Israel *and* the nations. If the atoning death of the Lord Jesus had not taken place, you and I could not have been reconciled to God, nor become Christians.

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Now if their fall *is* the riches of the world, and their diminishing the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? (Rom. 11:11-12).

Because Israel has rejected and crucified their Messiah, redemption has been offered to the non-Jewish peoples of the world. In their fallen state Israel is, therefore, a blessing to the entire world as their spiritual inheritance is offered to all people! In Romans 11:12 the Lord clearly says that in their future, spiritually restored state, Israel will be an even greater

blessing to the world.

Christians owe a debt of gratitude, recognition, blessing, intercession, and support to Israel. God would “provoke them to jealousy” (Rom. 11:11-15) by our worshipping and serving *their* God, Yahweh Elohim, through *their* Messiah, *Yeshua!* We must also pray for the peace of Jerusalem if we wish to prosper in our own country (Ps. 122:6).

The reason why all believers should in a very serious and dedicated way intercede for Jerusalem, is because it is the city of the great King (Ps. 48:2). This is the city where our Lord revealed Himself as King, died on the cross to propitiate for our sins, rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended to heaven. Ten days after He went to heaven, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon 120 faithful and praying disciples, resulting in the birth of the Christian church in Jerusalem. From here, the message of salvation was proclaimed and carried to the uttermost parts of the world.

It is to the city of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, that the Messiah will return at the end of the tribulation period to save the remnant of Israel, to judge His enemies, and to establish His kingdom on earth. In answer to the many prayers of the saints, and in accordance with His divine will, the Lord will transform Jerusalem to be the world capital, the wonderful city of the Messiah, and rule the millennial world from the restored throne of David (Is. 62:6-7).

Wrong concepts of Israel

For millennia Satan has been waging a wicked campaign of deception, hatred and attempted destruction against Israel and the Jews in all spheres of their existence. One of the many methods used by him in this struggle is to try to deprive Israel of its identity by assigning it to other groups.

Many churches are the victims of the confusion sown by the devil in this regard. They think that the church suddenly became the Israel of the New Testament. This form of self-deception is called *replacement theology*. Traditionally the R.C. Church has claimed to be ‘the New Israel’ and many non-R.C. theologians, even evangelicals, claim the same for themselves, thus writing off ethnic Israel and denying them any future place in the purposes of God.

It is often claimed that the church is the *spiritual Israel* or the *true Israel*. Romans 9:6: “For they are not all Israel, who are of Israel,” is cited in support of this claim. But, clearly, this means that not all ethnic Jews are *truly* Israelites nor, indeed, *spiritually* the people of God, since His laws are not written in their hearts (Heb. 8:10). The distinction is between fulfilled Jews who have accepted the Lord Jesus as their true Messiah and those who have not – it has nothing to do with being members of the Christian church!

There are also other groups who wrongly apply Israel's identity and

biblical position to themselves. Among them is the British-Israel movement and a host of related groups that are all based on the same concept. They regard the European nations as the descendants of the so-called ten lost tribes of Israel who were taken captive by Assyria in the 8th century B.C. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin are not accepted as part of Israel as they have, according to this distorted theory, mixed with the Edomites and lost their citizenship of Israel. British-Israel groups despise the Jews and do not support their present restoration to the land. Jerusalem is only of historical importance to them as they naively see the British monarchy as the throne of David!

The 70th year-week of Daniel

The prophet Daniel describes the last 70 year-weeks (490 prophetic years of 360 days each) that will pass in the history of Israel before they enter the time of everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24-27). Of this period, 69 year-weeks (483 years) have passed between the decree by Artaxerxes in the year 445 BC that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt (Neh. 2:1-8), and the death of Jesus on the cross in AD 32. Then the clock stopped ticking for Israel as a nation in the divine plan of God, and the time for the evangelisation of the non-Jewish world began. That meant that Israel would *temporarily* lose its position as a unique people and representative of God, and that all people on earth, including the dispersed Israelites, would be given the chance to accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah and enter the church and kingdom of God.

With the present restoration of Israel and the city of Jerusalem we are now very near to the end of the church age: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). We are now living in the period of Jerusalem and Israel's progressive restoration, so the last year-week of Israel's divine history may soon commence! At the end of that period the remnant of Israel will accept Jesus in one day (Zech. 12:9-10).

At the start of the 70th year-week of seven years, Israel will enter into a covenant with the false messiah (Antichrist). Daniel 9:27 reads: "Then he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." The false messiah will appear on the scene as a diplomat and peace-maker. He may well reveal himself at the height of a Russo-Arab invasion of Israel. Ezekiel 38 and 39 explain that God will defeat the invaders on the mountains of Israel, but it is possible that the false messiah will seize the opportunity to claim that he single-handedly saved Israel *and* thereby averted a third world war.

The false messiah will be endowed with all of Satan's powers of deception (Rev. 12:9; 13:2), and will use these powers to perform astounding "signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9) to deceive Israel and the nations into concluding the above-mentioned covenant with him. His

success as peace-maker in the Middle East will form a springboard from which he will rise, undisputed, to power in the Mediterranean alliance of the revived Roman Empire.

All countries will eventually become signatories of the peace treaties of the false messiah, and he will use the Mediterranean alliance to become the undisputed peace-maker and global leader. His success and diplomatic skills will deceive nearly everyone. At that stage, few people would dare to allege that he is involved in the greatest deception of all time, and that he would, within a few years, become the worst dictator in the entire history of the world!

Most of the Jews will be influenced by these highly dramatic events and will be quick to accept this man as their messiah. He will probably use a false genealogy, which will lead them to believe that he is indeed a descendant of King David and a member of the tribe of Judah. The world-wide peace and unity introduced by him, together with the fact that he will encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple, will render him a national hero in Israel. Soon he will also become the hero of all the nations of the world.

After the sensational revelation of the universally accepted world leader, posing, like Satan, as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), at the start of the seven year period there will be a revival in Israel with 144 000 Jews accepting Jesus as the true Messiah. They will openly declare that the man officially recognised as Messiah by the Israeli government is a *false* messiah. This revelation will cause great consternation and tension in Israel and immediately lead to the persecution of all who refuse to worship the false messiah.

Halfway through the seven year period, the whole world will be shocked out of the false sense of peace that it has enjoyed for three and a half years: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thes. 5:3).

Israel will be greatly disillusioned when they realise that they have been worshipping a false messiah who pretends to be God Himself. They will immediately terminate their covenant with him. The false messiah will then forbid them to sacrifice in the name of God, and instead erect a statue of himself in the Holy of holies in the newly built temple in Jerusalem, and demand worship:

...and in the midst of the week he shall cause *the* sacrifice and offering to cease [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and upon the wing of abominations *shall* come one who makes desolate; until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator (Dan. 9:27 Amplified Bible).

As in World War II, genocide will be perpetrated against the Jews during the second half of the tribulation – in that 3½ year period known as

the “great tribulation” (Mt. 24:21) or “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). The true Messiah described this time of terror in His prophetic discourse:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever readeth, let him understand): then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains: let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe to those who are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened (Mt. 24:15-22).

Daniel also refers to the dark days of the coming tribulation period in his prophecies about the end-time. Some of the Jews will support the false messiah because they will hope to gain peace, security, and economic benefits from an agreement with him; but others will oppose him and be violently persecuted:

And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily *sacrifices*, and place *there* the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet *for many* days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And *some* of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purge *them*, and make *them* white, *until* the time of the end; because *it is* still for the appointed time (Dan. 11:31-35 NKJV).

When the covenant with Israel has been broken and the false messiah declares himself to be God, the Jews will flee to a place of refuge. Then 42 months (1 260 days) will elapse before the true Messiah descends to the Mount of Olives. As this moment draws near, surviving Jews will return to Jerusalem, determined to be at the Mount of Olives by the Day of Atonement, to meet their Messiah. It will be an extremely dangerous time for them as the false messiah will still endeavour to kill all the Jews he can find. At this stage there will be a powerful multi-national force in Israel. They will be under the command of the false messiah and the false prophet, and deployed to surround Jerusalem. Their objectives will be to annihilate Israel and to kill the coming Messiah (Zech. 12:3,9; 14:2-3; Rev. 19:19-20).

The Jews who return to Jerusalem to await the Messiah will need to be deeply convinced that He really is about to come imminently, as their journey and approach to the city will be fraught with dangers. The enemy

will be all around them, and a heavily armed military force will be closing in upon them with every passing minute. Many houses will be plundered in Jerusalem as the invaders start demolishing the city. People will flee to the Mount of Olives in panic. Some of them will even lose hope completely and say: "Our hope is lost: we are cut off" (Ezek. 37:11).

The battle of Armageddon

When the false messiah is about to cut off and kill the remnant of Israel, the dramatic event of the Second Coming of the Messiah will occur. The prophet Zechariah describes the momentous and highly dramatic events of that day:

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. And the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal: Yes, ye shall flee as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with Thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth... And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold everyone on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour (Zech. 14:2-7,9,12,13).

The moment when the true Messiah arrives on planet earth, the Mount of Olives will cleave in two and the darkness of God's judgement will become physically manifest, just as happened almost 2 000 years ago when God's punishment for the sins of the world was borne by Jesus on the cross outside Jerusalem. Now, during His Second Coming, grief and anguish will overcome the people who rejected the atoning death of Jesus and worshipped false gods and a false messiah who cannot offer any sacrifice and remission for their sins and their moral depravity.

At this critical moment when the wrath of God is poured out upon a sinful world, mercy and grace will still be offered by Jesus to the remaining Jews who put their trust in Him and hope for His salvation. When the dark

clouds of judgement engulf Jerusalem and its surroundings, the remaining Jews will flee into the place of refuge caused by the sudden cleaving of the mountain. There, literally at the feet of Jesus, they will be safe. Great confusion will prevail among their enemies who will start killing one another.

Towards the evening it will become light again, for by then a decisive victory will have been gained. Jesus will reach out to His people in a gesture of blessing. They will become appalled when they see the marks in His hands, and their first words to Him will be:

What *are* these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of My friends (Zech. 13:6).

How do the Jews account for the fact that the Messiah will have wounds in His hands when He arrives on the Mount of Olives? Where were the wounds inflicted on Him? It could not have been in heaven! They will indeed look on Him whom they have pierced during His first coming, and mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son (Zech. 12:10).

It will be a dramatic reunion, mingled with joy and sorrow. The remnant of Israel will grieve for what they have done and the nation will accept Jesus as the Messiah (Zech. 12:10-14). Then all will be lost for the false messiah and his hordes on this last day of the tribulation when they face the One who has all power in heaven and on earth. Swift destruction awaits them:

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet who worked miracles before him... These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him who sat on the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of His mouth (Rev. 19:19-21).

Aftermath of His coming

After the Messiah has made His dramatic appearance on the Mount of Olives and revealed Himself as the One crucified by Israel during His first coming two thousand years ago, a time of great mourning will follow. This mourning will lead to the salvation of the whole remnant of Israel:

In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family apart... All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 12:11–13:1).

The above period of mourning will probably last for 30 days, as was customary in Israel:

And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron

thirty days (Num. 20:29).

And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses were ended (Deut. 34:8).

Zechariah likens the death of the Messiah to that of an *only son* and a *firstborn*. Mourning for an only son or a firstborn was particularly bitter and anguished. With the death of an only son, the light of a family was extinguished since they lost the only one who could perpetuate the family. With the death of a firstborn the honour of a family, the first instalment of God's blessing, and therefore the most loved, was removed.

The future mourning for the Messiah is also likened to the mourning for King Josiah. Professors Walvoord & Zuck (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 1567) say that "the future mourning of Israel over her Messiah is likened, in the second place, to the weeping on the day when godly King Josiah, the last hope of the fading Judean nation, was slain by Pharaoh Neco II, at Hadat Rimmon, traditionally identified as a village near Jezreel, in the plain of Megiddo (2 Chron. 35:20-27)." Thus the intensity of their mourning over the nation's treatment of their Messiah at His first coming, can only be compared to the weeping for the death of a great and beloved monarch and over national catastrophes.

Rev. Isaac Jennings (*The Imperial Bible Dictionary, Vol. IV, p. 302*) says:

The great mourning of the last days described by Zechariah, when *the whole land* shall mourn, and every family *apart* unite in the act, refers to the repentance of the Jewish people, and their deep contrition in view of their past unbelief, when, convinced of the sin of rejecting the Messiah, they shall *look on Him whom they have pierced*, and *shall mourn*, and find cleansing in the *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*; and so *all Israel shall be saved* (Rom. 11:26). *Blessed are those who mourn* thus (Mt. 5:4), *for they shall be comforted*, through the pardoning mercy of our God freely remitting all their sins, and imparting peace to their souls.

In his statement Daniel provides, among others, for the 30 days of mourning after the great tribulation and the coming of the Messiah:

...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered... And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days (Dan. 12:1,11-12).

The following is clear from these verses:

A From the time when the false messiah abolishes the sacrificial service and profanes the sanctuary by placing an image of himself in the Holy of holies, 1 260 days will elapse until the coming of the Messiah on the

Mount of Olives (Dan. 9:27; Rev 13:5). After a further thirty days of mourning, the spiritual reconciliation between the Messiah and the remnant of Israel will be completed. By then, 1 290 days will have elapsed since the false messiah's self-deification in the temple.

A Another 45 days will be taken up by the marriage feast of the Lamb, the restoration of the throne of David and the judgement of the nations (Rev. 19:7-9, Acts 15:16-17, Mt. 25:31-32). By then, 1 335 very dramatic days will have elapsed since that very evil day when the false messiah declared himself as God in the temple and instituted his satanic reign of terror. After 1 335 days, the Son of the living God will have crushed the evil powers and established His kingdom of peace. Jews who survive this terrible onslaught will, after 1 260 days of great tribulation, see the Messiah return. After 1 290 days they will be spiritually restored, and after 1 335 days they will enter the promised kingdom of the Messiah.

End-time events for Israel have been very clearly scheduled between the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel and the establishment of the Messiah's reign on earth. During that period the Jews will be severely tested regarding their ability to distinguish between the seducing voices of the kingdom of darkness and the voice of the Holy Spirit calling them to repentance and faith in the true Messiah – Jesus, the Lamb of God who has those wounds in His hands!

The Messiah will not only reign as Prince of peace, King of kings and Lord of lords, but also as King of the Jews – as Pilate had so rightly written as the superscription above the cross of the suffering Messiah (Lk. 23:38).

6. The Rapture

Promise of the rapture

Biblical teachings about the rapture, the end-time restoration of the nation of Israel and the millennial kingdom have, through various phases of church history, been spiritualised and brushed aside by theologians. Faith in these promises has, however, been revived time and again to become a strong motivating power in the lives of believers.

We are living in a time which sees the fulfilment of many biblical prophecies. This is an indication of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. When people accept the prophetic word and study it, they achieve greater clarity regarding future events. They see the unfolding of a world scene which is, on the one hand, very dark indeed and leads to awful judgements, while on the other hand, a joyous hope blazes in the hearts of true believers.

This hope comes from the knowledge that they will escape the coming judgements if they are truly born again. The promise of escape is the good news element in the prophecies. It is the blessed hope of Christ's return to which every believer should cling in these dark days (Tit. 2:13).

Two phases

So as to correctly understand the Second Coming of Christ, we have to clearly discern its two phases, i.e. the return of Christ *for* His saints (i.e. all born-again believers) and His coming *with* His saints. During the first phase the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom will be unexpected, like a thief in the night. He will meet His bride in the air and quickly take her away to heavenly places (Jn. 14:2-3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

During the second phase, His appearance will be public and every eye will see Him (Rev. 1:7). He will be accompanied by His bride, as well as a heavenly army, and will set foot upon the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4-5; Rev. 19:11-15).

The two phases of the Second Coming can also be discerned from the respective Greek terms which are used in the original language. The first phase, in which the Lord Jesus Christ will return privately to catch away His bride, is referred to as *parousia*. This term indicates His *physical presence*. After His *parousia* He will never again be separated from His bride, the church. At that event He will appear to all those who eagerly await Him for complete salvation (Heb. 9:28). Thereafter, they will remain with Him forever.

The second phase of Christ's coming is known as His *apokalipse* or *faneros* – that is His public *appearing* or *becoming visible*. This time, He

will not come *secretly*, as He did for His bride alone at the *parousia*, but will be *publicly* revealed as King and Judge of the world. That is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints (Zech. 14:5). Christ and His saints will be revealed to the world in glory at the same time: "When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

It is quite obvious that Christians could not accompany the Lord Jesus and be revealed in their glorified bodies unless they had already been united with Him at an earlier stage. The whole creation is awaiting this revelation, because harmony and ideal conditions will prevail on earth during the reign of Christ and His saints (Rom. 8:19). The many promises of abundance and blessing in every sphere of life will then be fulfilled (Joel 3:18; Mic. 4:3-4; Amos 9:13-15).

The Bridegroom comes to fetch His bride

During His *parousia*, which will of necessity precede the visible coming, the heavenly Bridegroom comes only to fetch His bride. On this occasion He will not show Himself to the millions of other people on earth at all.

In biblical times the Jewish bridegroom, after his betrothal, would depart for a lengthy period to prepare an apartment in the house of his father for his bride and himself. Having done so, he would then return to her home secretly at night to be reunited with her and take her with him to his father's house, where the marriage feast would be held. This is analogous to Jesus preparing a place for us in the Father's house and returning to take us there as promised:

In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also (Jn. 14:2-3).

Christ's coming at His *parousia* will be the fulfilment of that promise, also of the promise which was made to His followers at the time of His ascension:

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

After His resurrection, Jesus was seen only by believers. At His ascension He was separated from them, and with the rapture He will be re-united with them. The rest of mankind will be left on earth because, by their own neglect, they will not be among the born-again believers who belong to Jesus and with whom He has a special appointment:

I tell you, in that night there shall be two... in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left (Lk. 17:34-35).

Glorification

The glorification of Christians will begin at the moment when the trumpet is sounded, the deceased saints raised from the dead in incorruptible bodies, and the living saints transformed in an instant to receive their glorified bodies:

Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

When Christ raises the dead and changes the living at the rapture, both will be instantly clothed with immortal bodies like His own, immediately prior to meeting Him in the air:

For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21).

Caught up

Immediately after the deceased believers have been raised and they, with the living believers, have been clothed with glorified bodies, Christ will take them all up to heaven to be ever with Him. That is a clear promise of God in His Word:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not [go before those who] are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:14-17).

Note that the above-mentioned meeting will take place in the air and involves only born-again Christians. The Lord Jesus does not set foot on the Mount of Olives and reveal Himself to the world at this stage, but returns immediately with His bride to His Father's house in heaven.

The word *caught up*, that is used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (*harpazo* in Greek), clearly means to be *raptured* or *snatched away rapidly*. This word is also used to describe the action by which an eagle snatches and flies off rapidly with its prey.

There is, therefore, no truth in the allegation by some critics that the word *rapture* does not appear in the Bible. The word *harpazo* can be translated as:

- catch up,
- rapture, or
- snatch away swiftly.

In his internationally acclaimed *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, K.S. Wuest says:

HARPAZO. This is a Greek word that has various meanings. It is not translated by one uniform English word. The meanings are as follows: to seize; to carry off by force; to claim for one's self eagerly; to snatch out or away. It was used proverbially in the sense of *to rescue from the danger of destruction*. It was used also of *divine power transferring a person marvellously and swiftly from one place to another*.

The word is used in Mt. 11:12, 13:19; Jn. 6:15, 10:12,28,29; Acts 8:39, 23:10; 2 Cor. 12:2,4; 1 Thess. 4:17; Jude v. 23; Rev. 12:15. The procedure in Greek exegesis when a word has a number of meanings, is to use only those meanings which are in accord with the context. For instance, in the case of *harpazo* in its use in connection with the wolf (Jn. 10:12), it would not do to interpret it in the sense of rescuing from the danger of destruction. It would mean here *to seize and carry off by force, to claim for one's self eagerly*. Study these places where the word occurs, using as many meanings as agree with the context. Pay special attention to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, and see how much new truth you obtain regarding the Rapture of the Church.

The following are examples of Scripture verses in which the term *harpazo* is used. Please note that the basic meaning of the term *harpazo* is of being removed swiftly and purposefully from one place to another:

- o Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord *caught away* Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more (Acts 8:39).
- o And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to *take him by force from among them*, and to bring him into the castle (Acts 23:10).
- o I knew a man in Christ [more than] fourteen years ago... such a one was *caught up* to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2).
- o We who are alive... shall be *caught up*... to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).
- o And she brought forth a male Child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her Child was *caught up* unto God, and to His throne (Rev. 12:5).

The first resurrection

A concept which is closely related to the rapture, is that of the first resurrection. At this event, the Lord Jesus will come to raise *only* born-

again believers; this is why Paul says that “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16).

Nothing whatsoever is said here about the resurrection of the unbelieving, *unjust* dead. Since a first resurrection also implies a second, and since we know that the *just* as well as the *unjust* will be raised (Acts 24:15), it follows that the *unjust* dead will be raised at a later resurrection.

Revelation 20 says that at least a thousand years will separate the two resurrections. John refers to all the saints who will be raised in the first resurrection to reign as kings with Christ during the millennium:

...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6).

Those who share in the first resurrection are declared blessed; therefore, to be declared part of this resurrection signifies a very privileged status.

Various other Scripture references offer irrefutable evidence that born-again believers will be resurrected first. Paul refers to a strictly chronological order of resurrections:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who slept. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then *cometh* the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father (1 Cor. 15:20-24).

Between the resurrection of Christ as firstfruits and the resurrection of the born-again *just* at His coming (the first resurrection), the entire dispensation of the church, presently approaching two millennia, will elapse. It is clear from Revelation 20 that the further one thousand years of Christ's reign will elapse between the resurrection of the *just* and the end of this present earth, when the *unjust* dead will be raised (the second resurrection) to face the final judgement at the great white throne.

The following are expressions which refer to the first resurrection only:

- The first resurrection (Rev. 20:6).
- The resurrection of the children of God (Lk. 20:36).
- The resurrection of those who died in Christ (1 Thess. 4: 16).
- The resurrection of the just (Lk. 14:13-14).
- A better resurrection (Heb. 11:35).
- The resurrection to life (Jn. 5:29).
- The resurrection from the dead through Jesus (Acts 4:2).

When the resurrection from the dead of either Christ or of Christians is referred to in Scripture, the Greek expression *ek nekroon* is used. It

means *from among the dead* and is *only* used when other dead are not raised at the same time, but are left behind in their graves. This expression, which is used 49 times in the New Testament – 34 of which refer to the resurrection of Christ Himself – is not used even once when the second resurrection is referred to. When the latter, i.e. the raising of the *unjust* dead, is referred to, *toon nekroon*, meaning *of the dead*, is used instead.

At the rapture, the *just* will be raised *from among the unjust* dead and, together with the living *just*, who will be instantly changed, both will rise in glorified bodies to meet Christ in the air. The *unjust* (unsaved) dead will remain in their graves, since they did not “die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13).

Escape

In the light of the circumstances which will prevail on earth, the rapture will offer Christians an escape from the threatening judgements. As the moment of the rapture nears, it will be a dark time of massive spiritual deception. Evangelical Christians will be declared unchristian, unloving and judgmental, and will be despised. They will be regarded as prophets of doom because they proclaim the imminent judgements of God which will fall upon the world during the great tribulation. They will also be regarded as disloyal to the Christian cause because of their unwillingness to join the ecumenical movement and accept the unitary reforms of the New Age Movement.

As the time for the revelation of the Antichrist approaches, true Christians will be subjected to immense pressure, intimidation and threats. However, they should take courage in the light of the promise that the truly born-again children of God will *escape* the coming tribulation period:

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to **escape** all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (Lk. 21:36; According to Rev. 3: 10, we will be kept *from* the hour of tribulation).

Advocates of the false peace of the humanistically inspired and anti-christian new world order will, however, *not escape* the great tribulation:

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall **not escape** (1 Thess. 5:3).

In the first of these two scriptures reference is made to a group that *will* escape the coming judgements of God on earth, and in the second case a group that will be caught unawares and will certainly *not* escape the sudden destruction. The first group put their trust in the Lord and His Word, while the second group will trust in their own peace programmes to make the world a better place.

A dramatic rescue operation

Apart from taking the bride away to enjoy the glory of heaven, the rapture also constitutes a dramatic rescue operation in which true believers will be

removed from the scene of imminent divine judgement. Although the rapture is a unique occurrence, there are examples in the Bible of times when God poured out His wrath, but provided an escape route for true believers since they were not the objects of His wrath.

In the days of Noah, God announced His judgements upon a wicked and depraved generation:

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark... (Gen. 6:13-14).

Shortly before the outpouring of God's judgements eight believers escaped the disaster area by entering the ark. God Himself closed the door behind them before He judged the wicked who despised God's way of escape (Gen. 7:11-23).

In the time of Lot another rescue operation took place. The night before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Lot and his family received an urgent command to depart from the area marked out for judgement. The angels urged Lot to leave Sodom and helped him and his family to do so before they destroyed it. Shortly after their departure, fire and brimstone rained down on the ungodly (Gen. 19:13-25).

The Lord Jesus says that there is a clear correlation between these historical events and God's end-time dealing with believers *and* unbelievers:

And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man: They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed (Lk. 17:26-30; also read Genesis chaps. 6, 7 & 19).

Because the depravity which characterised the time of both Noah and Lot is typical of the spiritual, moral and social decline of the last days, the following correlation between the historical and end-time conditions should be made:

- o In the times of Noah and Lot anarchy prevailed as people in these lawless and promiscuous societies did just as they pleased. Violence was the most common means used to resolve conflicts. So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah and Lot moral depravity was widespread. People became so corrupt that they were "wicked in every intent of their thoughts." So will it be again...

- o In the times of Noah and Lot people were excessively materialistic and adopted permissive life-styles involving all sorts of licentiousness, including sodomy (derived from the name *Sodom*). So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah and Lot people scoffed at the believers and chose to ignore the prophetic warnings of forthcoming judgements. They regarded them as far-fetched speculation and continued with their reckless lives. So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah and Lot God gave the degenerate sinners reasonable time to repent of their evil ways. They refused to repent and thereby sealed their own fate. They had only themselves to blame for their downfall and punishment. So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah and Lot God offered a way of escape to the believers at the critical moment before He turned in wrath to punish the wicked. The order of events was: First the prophetic warnings about the impending judgements, then the safeguarding of the believers who took heed of the appeal to repent, and ultimately the outpouring of wrath upon the wicked. So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah and Lot there was no security for nominal believers whose hearts were still devoted to the things of this world. Lot's wife was a type of those believers who only have an outward form of godliness, but are still spiritually dead. This false pretence cost her her life at the last moment. So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah and Lot an awful disaster struck this world soon after the evacuation of the believers. Death and destruction occurred as never before in history. So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah and Lot the wicked did not realise how many privileges and blessings they enjoyed due to the presence of a few believers in their midst. God was prepared to pardon a whole city if there were only ten believers in it. When these believers, who shone like lights in a wicked and perverted generation, were taken out of the way, complete spiritual darkness characterised the godless, and provoked the anger of God. So will it be again...
- o In the times of Noah people scoffed at the builders of the ark, and in their ignorance were unaware of their peril "until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Mt. 24:39).

The minds of those at enmity with God are darkened and they persist in pride and rebellion until disaster and judgement overtakes them. If this describes your condition, will you not rather come over to God's side today and be reconciled to Him through His Son's death on the cross? He alone can make you worthy to escape the approaching tribulation, which

is God's judgement on a sinful world. Believers pass from death into life (Jn. 5:24). You can be with Jesus in the safety and joy of His Father's house when tribulation comes upon the world.

Withholders

Noah and Lot had to remonstrate with the ungodly people of their time with persistent warnings. Christian believers of the church era have an even greater responsibility to fulfil their role as the salt of a corrupt earth and the light of a dark world. The church indwelt by the Holy Spirit is opposing the iniquitous spirit of the Antichrist in advance of his coming:

And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:6-9 NKJV).

"The great and the terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31) will not come prior to the rapture and the subsequent revelation of Antichrist. That awful period of judgement will be preceded by a great "falling away" (2 Thess. 2:3). This Greek term (*apostasia*) literally means "to depart". When the truth departs, the lie prevails. When Christians depart at the rapture, spiritual darkness will prevail on earth.

While Christians remain on earth they are expected to make a bold stand for the truth, thus restraining the build-up of antichristian forces. After their departure at the rapture, the Antichrist will be able to take over the world unopposed. A spirit of delusion will then prevail and, as "the man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3), the Antichrist will display to all the world a personal example of an utterly amoral, godless life-style.

The Antichrist cannot be revealed until the one who restrains him has been taken out of the way. This role is fulfilled by the church as the body of Christ indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Do not attach any credibility to the theory that the rapture will occur in the middle of the tribulation period of seven years. After 3½ years the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, desecrate the temple and declare himself to be God (Dan. 9:27, 11:36-37; Mt. 24:15-21; 2 Thess. 2:4). Then Israel will have to flee to the wilderness for survival (Mt. 24:16; Rev. 12:14). This flight to the wilderness in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period is not to be confused with the rapture. It is something quite different.

The unscriptural teaching of a mid-tribulation or a post-tribulation rapture leads to a warped perspective and wrong priorities. Instead of awaiting the coming of Christ, people are awaiting the Antichrist. In this way they compromise their commitment to Christ. Instead of striving for sanctification in expectation of the imminent coming of the heavenly Bride-

groom, they start planning an earthly survival strategy for the tribulation period. Such activities are irrelevant as they are motivated by a distorted prophetic vision of future events.

The command to us is not to prepare for the coming of the Antichrist, but for the coming of Jesus Christ! We should remain engaged in His work until He comes. If we are constantly occupied with the work assigned to us by Christ, we will not be on earth when the Antichrist is revealed.

People who think that they can calculate the time of the rapture by waiting for the Antichrist to come and then add another 3½ years until the Lord comes, are missing the point and also a very important aspect of the prophecies.

The judgement seat of Christ

The rapture should never be viewed in isolation, but as a means to an end. It describes *the way* in which all true believers will be swiftly removed from earth to heaven where they must appear before the judgement seat of Christ (this is the subject of a separate booklet). To be ready for the rapture, therefore, implies readiness to give account of one's life and stewardship before Christ's judgement seat:

For we must all appear before the judgement 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 (2 Cor. 5:10; see also Rom. 14:10,12).

After having received crowns as reward for faithful service, the glorified believers will gather around the throne of God to worship Him for His great creation and worship the Lamb for His righteousness and great work of redemption (Rev. 4 & 5). They will keenly anticipate their return to share with Christ in judging the world (1 Cor. 6:2), and to reign with Him as kings during the Millennium:

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10; see also Rev. 19:11-15, Zech. 14:4-5).

Chronology of Revelation

The rapture of the church to heaven before the coming tribulation period is also clearly evident from the chronology of the events described in the book of Revelation. In these events, the true church of Christ mysteriously vanishes from the earth before the start of the tribulation period, only to re-appear when Christ comes back after the seven years. The believers of the tribulation period do not constitute the church. The main events in the book of Revelation occur in the following order:

- ◆ The glorified Christ after His ascension (chap. 1).

- ◆ The dispensation of the church on earth (chap. 2-3).
- ◆ The heavenly vision, including the glorified church after the rapture (chap. 4-5).
- ◆ The seven years of the tribulation period (chap. 6-18).
- ◆ The Second Coming of Christ, accompanied by His saints and the armies of heaven (chap. 19).
- ◆ The millennial reign of Christ and His glorified saints (chap. 20:1-6).
- ◆ The final judgement (chap. 20:7-15).
- ◆ The new heaven and the new earth (chap. 21-22).

After describing the church on earth in Revelation 2-3, it is subsequently shown in its glorified state in heaven in Revelation 4-5. Chapter 4 opens with the words, "After this" (Greek *meta tauta*), which clearly indicates that the events which follow are in chronological order. This expression often occurs in the book of Revelation, thereby confirming its general chronological ordering of events.

During the dispensation of the church (chap. 2-3) the following words are repeated seven times: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). The believers of the tribulation period, who are saved after the rapture, do not represent the church. To them it is merely said: "If any man have an ear, let him hear" (Rev. 13:9). In Revelation 19:7-14 we again read about the church as the wife of the Lamb, who will return with Him to earth after the tribulation period.

Getting ready

The next important event on the prophetic calendar is the rapture. Before the Antichrist can be revealed and the tribulation begins, the meeting between the true church and the heavenly Bridegroom has to take place. As members of the true church of Christ we have to be ready, hence the many exhortations in the Bible to expect the Second Coming and to be watchful and vigilant at all times.

It must be stressed that sanctification and the consequent spiritual readiness render believers worthy to receive rewards at the judgement seat of Christ directly after the rapture. It is very clear from Scripture that the spiritually *unworthy* servants of the Lord who are nevertheless born-again, will also appear before the judgement seat in heaven, but empty-handed and without receiving any rewards (Lk. 19:20-26; 1 Cor. 3:8-15).

To appear before the Lord in a worthy state it is important to receive Him not only for salvation but also for sanctification. He made provision for a complete work in our lives:

Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be

holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

Everyone who has the hope of the return of Christ “purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:3). The Christian endeavours, therefore, to be like Jesus and to abide in Him:

And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (1 Jn. 2:28).

Paul says that the grace of God teaches us that:

...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Tit. 2:12-13).

The Thessalonian church had a strong expectation of the Second Coming. Paul encourages this attitude:

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing... Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings... Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful *is* He that calleth you, who also will do *it* (1 Thess. 5:16-24).

Peter reminds us that all the material things around us are going to be dissolved, so we should live serene, blameless, holy lives as we await the coming of Christ:

Seeing then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in holy [conduct] and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God... Therefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found by Him in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Pet. 3:11-14).

You should be on the alert lest you be influenced by the world and your spiritual standard be lowered, resulting in your being distracted from the work of the Lord. One of the signs of the times is a spirit of backsliding and lukewarm commitment among believers. Many Christians, instead of being inspired to renewed holiness by the growing unrighteousness in the world, lose their motivation and give up:

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall [grow] cold (Mt. 24:12).

Amid the general falling away, our attitude and motivation should be in the diametrically opposite direction:

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward *is* with Me, to give every one according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:11-12).

Guard against spiritual passivity. The devil encourages people to hide behind full programmes and exhaustion as excuses to keep them from prayer. In the garden of Gethsemane the disciples were unable, in a time

of spiritual crisis, to watch and pray for even one hour with the Lord Jesus. His command was: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh *is* weak" (Mt. 26:41).

Christ gave us a similar command for watchfulness and dedicated prayer regarding His sudden coming:

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. *For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch (Mk. 13:33-37).

Remain in union with Christ, stay alert and keep looking for the "bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16) that will soon appear above the dark horizon of this present evil world. In the twinkling of an eye the battle on earth will be over and we will stand amazed at what the Lord has prepared for us (1 Cor. 2:9). Our biggest joy will be at the sight of the Bridegroom "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe in that day" (2 Thess. 1:10). Make very sure that you will be among them!

Signs of the times

The rapture definitely has a strong element of surprise to it as no one knows when it will occur. But, there are certain signs which clearly point to the nearness of the rapture. As will be shown in this section, many of the signs that were popularly regarded as referring to the end of the church age, or 'the end of the world', really only apply to the tribulation period. Among these are the enormous natural disasters, wars, famines and pestilences predicted in Luke 21:10-11. An example of signs given to indicate the nearness of the Second Coming of Christ (His appearing at the *end* of the tribulation, *not* the rapture) is the following:

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and [the expectation of] those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh (Lk. 21:25-28).

The signs that point to the end of the church age prior to the tribulation period, relate to the consummation of the present dispensation, the moral, spiritual and social deterioration, the restoration of Israel, globalisation and the build-up to the Antichrist's emergence and reign. Although these signs are very evident, they cannot be fitted into a rigid time frame. They may unfold faster or slower, and there is always the

possibility of more developments before the time is finally ripe to lower the curtain on this dispensation.

Two sets of signs are given which indicate the end of the church age. The first set deals with the end of the existing old order, and the second set with the rise of a new world order in anticipation of the coming of the Antichrist. He can only appear after the world stage has been properly set.

We are witnessing the decay and collapse of the existing world order. The signs of decay cover a broad spectrum and include all walks of life:

- ◆ Economic decay is evident in many places with poverty, unemployment and rampant inflation in some countries.
- ◆ Political decay is seen in the acceptance of humanistic constitutions, anarchy, chaos, and violence.
- ◆ Social decay leads to disintegrating social structures, crime and the breakdown of marriages and the family.
- ◆ Religious decay leads to spiritual confusion, turning to New Age philosophy, the occult and amoral life-styles.

From the ashes of the old order, the global structures of a new world order will arise. They will constitute the framework for the global society, global economy, global religion, and global government of the Antichrist:

- ◆ A unitary global economy will be set up in which 666-related PIN numbers are used for financial transactions.
- ◆ Political unity in the form of a world government and a global peace-keeping force will emerge.
- ◆ Social unity among the internationalised planetary citizens will give further expression to the ideology of globalism.
- ◆ Religious unity will be based on the deceptive idea that all religions worship the same God.

Another phenomenon which must occur toward the end of the church era is the progressive return of Jews to Israel to become the largest single Jewish population in the world – a situation that last prevailed in the first century. At the time of writing the 5,4 million Jews in Israel were almost the same number as those in the USA. When the Israeli Jews are the largest single concentration of Jews in the world, the Israeli government will be able to take decisions and sign covenants, etc., on behalf of all Jews. They will then also be empowered to decide on behalf of all Jews regarding the authenticity of any claimant to be the Messiah. Their true Messiah, whom they rejected at His first coming, predicted that, tragically, they will accept the wrong man (Jn. 5:43).

Last days of the church dispensation

In the last days perilous times will come upon the world and many professing Christians will only have “a form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:1,5);

“because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Mt. 24:12). The Spirit says, “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1).

Dismantling the old order	Build-up to a new world order
<input type="checkbox"/> The old order is dismantled and boundaries removed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Establishment of a new world order of international unity.
<input type="checkbox"/> Judeo-Christian teachings and morality are rejected.	<input type="checkbox"/> The promotion of multi-faith values in all countries.
<input type="checkbox"/> Individuals freed from restraint become selfish and permissive.	<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-cultural, Babylonian societies emerge everywhere.
<input type="checkbox"/> Moral depravity, violence and breakdown of family life occurs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Humanistic freedom within a new charter of human rights.
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal and abnormal lifestyles become the norm.	<input type="checkbox"/> Crime is contained by force without moral reformation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Christian beliefs phased out to make way for occult practices.	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible replaced by non-Christian religions and mysticism.
<input type="checkbox"/> Excessive democratisation and human rights promote anarchy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Nations lose their sovereignty under a world government.
<input type="checkbox"/> Corruption and the abuse of power become general trends.	<input type="checkbox"/> Military power is used to enforce the new world order.
<input type="checkbox"/> Gender differences are denied in many areas of public life.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender equality enforced through radical feminism.
<input type="checkbox"/> Nations lose their ethnic, cultural and political identities.	<input type="checkbox"/> National identities become submerged in a world culture.
<input type="checkbox"/> Israel is condemned and the hatred of Jews rapidly increases.	<input type="checkbox"/> Enforcement of the new world order leads to Middle East war.

The Rapture <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>The seven year long absence of the bride of Christ after the rapture. Spiritual darkness will then prevail on earth.</i>	The Second Coming <input type="checkbox"/>
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THE TRIBULATION OF SEVEN YEARS

u **FIRST 3½ YEARS** u **LAST 3½ YEARS** u

Immediately after the rapture the Antichrist	The Antichrist will change his image in
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will be revealed and the first 3½ years of his reign on earth will commence.	the last 3½ years to become a military dictator who will enslave humanity.
The institution of a new world order according to the Plan of the New Age Movement. World unity will be established.	Strict economic control will be exercised through a cashless economy by computerised 666-related codes.
Israel and an alliance of world religions will accept the Antichrist as Messiah and the Jewish Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem.	The temple will be desecrated by the Antichrist when he declares himself to be God in the Holy of holies.
An international campaign will be waged against Messianic Jews and Christians who refuse to accept the Antichrist.	The summary execution of all people who refuse to worship the Antichrist and to accept his number.
A deceptive world peace will be achieved, based on a pact between the Antichrist and the alliance of false world religions.	The multi-national forces of the Antichrist will surround Jerusalem, leading to the final world war of Armageddon in Israel.
A deluded global community will idolise and worship the Antichrist for his personal charisma, political skills and miraculous powers.	Christ will descend to Mount of Olives to destroy Antichrist and his armies, rescue repentant Israel and commence His reign.

Authoritative book on the rapture

In 1995, an authoritative book on the pre-tribulation rapture (*When the trumpet sounds*, edited by Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy) was published by Harvest House Publishers in Eugene, Oregon. Contributions were made by 23 leading experts in this field. They include names such as Prof. Paul Feinberg, Dr. Elliot Johnson, Dr. Tim LaHaye, Prof. Dwight Pentecost, Dr. Randall Price, Prof. Robert Thomas, Prof. Charles Ryrie, and Prof. John Walvoord.

In the Introduction, the editors say the following about the rapture as the blessed hope of the church:

The New Testament clearly teaches that each believer has a hope, a *blessed hope*, which is a grand and glorious destiny. This hope is both personal and a Person. First, it is given to each individual believer and, second, our hope is in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible portrays this hope as pictured in ancient Jewish marriage customs. In biblical times a betrothed maiden would eagerly await the any-moment coming of her groom to take her to his father's house in marriage celebration.

During this time of waiting and watching expectantly, the bride's loyalty to the groom was tested. In a similar way, the rapture provides for the church this same sense of expectation and anticipation. The rapture expectation provides believers with a similar

daily motivation for a pure and godly life until He comes. Just as the betrothed maiden eagerly waited because of her love for the groom, so also do we await our Lord's any-moment coming. *Though you have not seen Him, you love Him* (1 Pet. 1:8). Such motives are not *escapism* but, rather, flow from the love and devotion of a sincere believer to our Lord.

Christ's rapture of His bride holds a central place in the New Testament, and it assumes the same in the thought and life of the Christian. The study and implications of God's Word are always important... The rapture is the central future prophetic event for the Christian, and its study is therefore vital in the lives of Christians...

Thomas Ice (p. 23) says: "Another point to remember is that just as there was a transition in the early church away from God dealing with Israel as a nation, so it appears that there will be a transition at the end of the church age as God sets the stage to resume His unfinished plan with Israel after the rapture. The church age clearly began on Pentecost, but about 40 years later in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, a specific prophecy relating to God's plan for Israel was historically fulfilled. This was the final fulfilment relating to the transition from Israel to the church. During the last 100 years we have seen events occur which are setting the stage for the players to be in place when the rapture brings the church age to an end and God resumes His plan for Israel during the tribulation."

An end-time strategy

Christians should have specific strategies, or plans of action, through which they give practical expression to their general objectives to live holy lives, to do the work of the Lord, and to be ready for His coming. The promise of the rapture is a very important motivating force in determining our objectives and the strategies emanating from them. The main guiding principles of this promise are the following:

o Good news

The rapture is the good news element in a dark scenario of end-time prophecies. Without this promise Christians would be left only with the bad news about the coming of the Antichrist and the tribulation period which they would have to face before Jesus comes. Their chances of surviving all the apocalyptic disasters of the great tribulation and the battle of Armageddon would be slim indeed. A situation like that can be equated to the Flood without the ark, or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah without any provision for the escape of the believers from the scene of God's wrath.

Such a situation would be highly demoralising and contradict a clear biblical principle that true believers are never the objects of God's wrath. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation..." (1 Thess. 5:9).

People who are cynical about the promise of the rapture and do not

heed the exhortation to be prepared to escape the coming tribulation period reveal a very irresponsible attitude. What would have been the consequence for Noah and family (and for the future survival of the entire human race!) if Noah had argued as follows: “God is a God of love and I do not really believe that He will send a flood to judge all people; therefore, I am not going to build an ark to escape this so-called judgement.” Or what would have happened to Lot and his family had he taken the following stand: “I think the prophesied judgement upon Sodom and Gomorrah should be interpreted symbolically. I do not have to escape for my life. Even if the disaster does occur I believe that God will protect us from His wrath here in this place.” Similar arguments are often heard today.

The coming judgements during the tribulation period are irrefutable biblical facts. Jesus said there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world (Mt. 24:21), and that we should be ready to escape it. The rapture is part of the good news of the gospel of our Lord Jesus. He came to this sin-drenched world to pay the price for the salvation of sinners. He returned to heaven to prepare a place for us. He will come back to take us away to our heavenly abode. If we are truly born again we will be worthy to escape the horrors of the coming tribulation on earth by way of the rapture. We do not have to despair at the knowledge of what is coming upon the world since there is a wonderful element of good news in the prophetic word.

o A correct future expectation

To believe in the pre-tribulation rapture gives us the assurance that we have a truly biblical future expectation. It does not in any way contradict other biblical truths. This end-time perspective honours the Lord Jesus and recognises Him as the key to all prophecy in Scripture, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). Christians should remain focused on Him and wait for *His* sudden appearance – not for the Antichrist’s. Those who deny Him will remain behind after the rapture. Having rejected the way of escape and salvation offered by the true Christ, they will have to endure the Antichrist’s dictatorship and the terrible judgements to follow. What they experience on earth will be a direct result of the seals broken by the Lamb in heaven. Never deny Jesus Christ His central position in biblical prophecies. To expect His imminent return, and to order your life accordingly, is a command which is intended to be a strong, positive motivation to all Christians of all ages.

o A motivation for steadfastness

The coming of the heavenly Bridegroom will occur during a time of religious compromise and worldliness. There will be a great falling away from the truth of God’s Word. A relatively small group of evangelical

Christians will shine like lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15). As in the times of Noah and Lot, the earth will be filled with violence, materialism, and sexual perversion. Unfortunately, the spirit of unrighteousness and immorality will also take its toll among Christians. They will relax their vigilance and make downward adjustments to their spiritual standards: "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Mt. 24:12 NKJV). Some Christians will become backslidden or discouraged in the work of the Lord.

Inactive Christians often compromise their dedication to the Lord and their responsibility to serve Him faithfully. Their spiritual decline may manifest itself in various ways. The most common are, either to abandon the need for sanctification, becoming worldly-minded, enjoying worldly parties and eating and drinking to excess; or to become critical and dictatorial in their relations with other Christians. The Lord Jesus warned against such sinful behaviour and challenged it by using the prospect of His sudden, unexpected return as a positive motivation to remain steadfast to the end:

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing... But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*... (Mt. 24:45-50 NKJV).

o Correctly determining and prioritising works

To expect the coming of the Lord Jesus before the tribulation period, guides your actions in the right direction. You prepare for *His* coming and not for the coming of the Antichrist. The concept of the rapture explicitly confronts you with your responsibility to give account of yourself before the judgement seat of Christ immediately after being caught up to heavenly places (2 Cor. 5:10). The following crowns will be awarded to the faithful:

- The crown of rejoicing for soul-winners (1 Thess. 2:19).
- The incorruptible crown for a holy life (1 Cor. 9:24-25).
- The crown of life for Christian martyrs (Rev. 2:10).
- The crown of glory for faithful shepherds (1 Pet. 5:2-4).
- The crown of righteousness for those who loved the appearing of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8).

The fact that our works will be judged after the rapture, and that only those with eternal value will be rewarded, is of great significance in helping us to devote ourselves to objectives that are higher than the material things of this perishable world. After conversion our lives should

yield the fruit of the Spirit and we should not waste time and resources on earthly things, pleasure or valueless works:

...let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon... Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire (1 Cor. 3:10-13).

Will you be found a worthy servant or will you stand empty-handed before the judgement seat of Christ on that day, saved as by fire? If you lose sight of the possibility of the Lord's imminent return you may lapse into complacency, spiritual inactivity, and even into sin:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night... You therefore, beloved, since you know *these things* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and for ever (2 Pet. 3:10, 17-18 NKJV).

The faithful and wise servant keeps himself busy with the work of the Lord, always realising that the time to work for his Master is running out. The Lord Jesus Himself said: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jn. 9:4). The night of God's judgements during the great tribulation is fast approaching – then, there will be no religious freedom.

o Motivation for holiness

One of the strongest motivations that the promise of the rapture instils into a Christian is that of holiness. As members of the bridal church we should commit ourselves to the challenge of being presented to the heavenly Bridegroom as chaste virgins. That implies the responsibility to be vigilant by not allowing the wicked one to pervert or corrupt our minds and lives (2 Cor. 11:2-3). Jesus Christ gave Himself to sanctify and cleanse the church that He might present it to Himself holy and without spot or blemish (Eph. 5:25-27). We have a distinct responsibility to use the means of grace at our disposal to walk in the ways of the Lord and to become holy in all our conduct (1 Pet. 1:15). "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord" (2 Cor. 7:1).

If we abide in Christ, we will have confidence when He appears and not be ashamed before Him (1 Jn. 2:28).

o Hope during trials and afflictions

Under the dark shadow of trials and afflictions, when our prospects on earth look bleak, the belief in Christ's coming for us at the rapture is a light at the end of the tunnel. Through many sorrows and suffering, millions of Christians have clung desperately to the promise of resurrection and

union with the Lord at the rapture. It gave them strength to endure, counting earthly things and even their own lives as of no account so that they might win eternity with Christ. So, take courage, lift up your head, and expect the coming of the Lord, knowing your future is safe and sure in His hands.

o **A sense of destiny**

Like Abraham we should see ourselves as strangers and sojourners in a world that “lies *under the sway of the wicked one*” (1 Jn. 5:18). Since our future is not here, we need a vision of the city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). In our pilgrimage through this world, we need a strong sense of destiny. When the Lord comes for us at the rapture, He will take us to our eternal home in the new Jerusalem (1 Cor. 2:9; Jn. 14:2; Rev. 21:2).

We should not identify ourselves with this world and become one with its materialism, pleasure-seeking and moral depravity. This would not mean we are poorly motivated and a people without a mission. To the contrary! We are happy to proclaim the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. The unbelievers around us are in spiritual darkness, and we are “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation” among whom we “shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

While serving the Lord as faithful witnesses, we should always keep our eye on Him as “the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16) that shines above the dark horizon of a troubled and hostile world. The morning star tells us the night is far spent and the day is at hand. Before Jesus appears as the Sun of Righteousness, when every eye shall see Him, Christians will have a thrilling meeting with Him in the air!

The great significance of the rapture

In the light of all the biblical facts about the rapture it is clear that this is an extremely important teaching to all believers. There are at least 12 different aspects of the rapture that need to be properly understood and taken account of:

† **It is a direct intervention by God**

The supernatural nature of the rapture, in which millions of Christians will be caught up in the air, will be so clearly an intervention by God that no scientific explanation will ever account for this astounding phenomenon. “The Lord Himself” will remove the saints from planet earth (1 Thess. 4:16).

† **It is a meeting with the Lord Jesus**

When the Lord Jesus descends from heaven with the sounding of the trumpet of God, those who died in Christ will be raised from the dead, while the living believers will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Together they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:16-

17). The unsaved people on earth will not see Him on this occasion.

† **It is associated with the first resurrection**

The rapture is directly related to the first resurrection when all believers will receive glorified resurrection bodies. Those who have died in Christ will be raised first – then the living believers will be miraculously changed while they pass from mortality to immortality without dying (1 Cor. 15:52).

† **It separates true and nominal believers**

Apart from the division that the rapture will effect between the saved and unsaved people in the world, it will also separate born-again believers from the nominal Christians within the professing church (Mt. 25:1-13), many of whom have only a form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5)

† **It marks the end of the church age**

It is important to consider the rapture in its dispensational context – i.e. at the *end* of the church age and just *before* the tribulation period, which will be a distinct dispensation with its own characteristics (2 Thess. 2).

† **It makes way for the revelation of the Antichrist**

The rapture is directly related to the revelation of the Antichrist. The true church of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is withholding the Antichrist, who can only be revealed after the church has been taken out of the way (2 Thess. 2:6-10).

† **It is an escape from divine wrath**

The rapture constitutes a dramatic rescue operation in which believers will be removed from impending divine judgements upon earth, since they are not the objects of God's wrath (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Lk. 21:36).

† **It is a motivation for steadfastness**

There will be a great end-time falling away from the truth of God's Word. Christians having the hope of Christ's coming, purify themselves as He is pure (1 Jn. 3:3), and resist any tendency to grow cold in their love for Him (Mt. 24:12).

† **It is a summons to the judgement seat of Christ**

The certainty of the rapture confronts us with the solemn prospect of appearing before Christ at His judgement seat to give account of our lives (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

† **It is a journey to the marriage of the Lamb**

After appearing before the judgement seat, believers forming the bride will be united to the heavenly Bridegroom never to be separated from Him again (Rev. 19:7-8; Ps. 45:9).

† **It is a journey to our eternal home**

The Lord Jesus promised that He would return to take the saints away to their heavenly abode in His Father's house with the many mansions (Jn.

14:2-3). “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9 NKJV). What a wonderful future to look forward to!

† **It will promote us to be co-rulers with Christ**

After the rapture and the tribulation period, the glorified saints will return with Christ and reign with Him as kings on earth (Lk. 19:17-19; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10).

7. The Antichrist

Rise of the Antichrist

The Antichrist is a key figure in the kingdom of darkness which is engaged in a full-scale war against the kingdom of light. The arena in which this war is waged is in the lives of people who have been created in the image of God. The weapons used range from the *direct* use of occult powers in spiritually influencing people, to the *indirect* deceiving of millions who practise false, man-made religions. Every effort is made to corrupt or destroy true Christianity.

Satan's final objective in this struggle is to gain control over all people and to establish the Antichrist as king and universal messiah on earth. From God's point of view this great conflict will lead to the final defeat of Satan and his followers, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom of righteousness on earth. The power of darkness will be broken and all its supporters condemned to an eternal hell.

This war has continued unabated through the ages. It started when Lucifer and the fallen angels were cast out of heaven. When God created humans, Lucifer saw in it an opportunity to destroy God's handiwork. He deceived Adam and Eve into disobeying God and thereby to rebel against Him. At that moment Adam and Eve died spiritually and also, ultimately, brought physical death upon themselves and their descendants, who became a fallen race of spiritually dead men and women with a natural propensity to sin.

With the opportunities that humanity's depraved nature offered to the kingdom of darkness, large-scale cultural and spiritual degeneration followed. During the thousands of years until the coming of Christ all the heathen nations on earth were spiritually blinded by Satan into worshipping idols. For extended periods, apostasy also prevailed in Israel as the chosen people of God. There were times when it seemed as if the entire nation of Israel would succumb and be destroyed in the fierce battle that raged against them. Even the prophet Elijah at one stage despaired and almost abandoned the struggle against the enemies of God:

Lord, they have killed Thy prophets and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal* (Rom. 11:3-4).

With the coming of Christ the command was given to evangelise the entire world. The great commission resulted in an intensification of the battle, as people from all nations were to be delivered from the kingdom of

darkness and brought into the kingdom of light. God's plan is, ultimately, to bring the world under the rule of *His King, His Christ*, i.e. to have a Christian world. The gospel having been proclaimed to all nations, Jesus Christ will physically return to establish His literal kingdom on earth, ruling from David's throne in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Christians are waging a spiritual battle against a spiritual enemy. Christ is with us spiritually in this battle, empowering us by His Holy Spirit.

Right from the outset Satan actively resisted God's plan for world evangelism. His plan was, and still is, to create a rival antichristian world. At present he pursues his objectives by way of spiritual deception, but physical manifestations are soon to follow. As an alternative to Christ's bodily return to earth to establish His kingdom, Satan promises to humanity a world empire under the leadership of a world messiah called 'the Christ'. His counterfeit christ will be the Antichrist who will be the head of a satanic new world order.

During the entire church dispensation, the followers of Jesus Christ have been actively opposed by the satanic spirit of antichrist. In this struggle, the kingdom of darkness mobilises as many people as possible to persecute and try to destroy Christianity. Tyrants like Nero, Stalin, Hitler, and many others, may rightly also be called antichrists. But they are only forerunners of the end-time Antichrist:

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time (1 Jn. 2:18).

Revelation of the Antichrist

The Scripture below (from NKJV which is closer to the Greek here) gives details of the revelation of the Antichrist:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God... And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thes. 2:3-12 NKJV).

In this section, Paul gives two indications of things that must happen first before the Antichrist can be revealed. In verse 3 he says that the

falling away must first occur. The root meaning of the Greek word *apostasia*, which is here translated as *falling away*, is *depart*. When the truth departs, then great apostasy sets in, as implied in this text. However, the reference here is not to the departure of truth as an abstract moral virtue, but to the departure at the rapture of Christians who stand for God's truth against error.

In an authoritative book by eminent evangelical theologians on eschatology (*When the trumpet sounds*, edited by Thomas Ice and Dr. Tim Demy) the word *apostasia* is rendered *rapture*. In Chapter 14, Prof. H.W. House indicates that in seven of the earliest Bible translations this word was rendered as *departing first* and not as *falling away*. These translations are Wycliffe (1384), Tyndale (1526), Coverdale (1535), Cranmer (1539), Breeches (1576), Beza (1538), and the Geneva Bible (1608). In a footnote on 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the Amplified Bible quite aptly says: "A possible rendering of *apostasia* is 'departure [of the church]'."

A great falling away will at any rate occur in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-5), particularly after the sudden departure of true Christians, and great spiritual darkness will prevail on earth. The Antichrist will then be revealed as the unmistakable, evil man of sin and the son of perdition. He will lead a world-wide rebellion against biblical norms by establishing and strongly encouraging a culture of sin and violence.

A further reference to the important event that must take place before the Antichrist is revealed is in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 (NKJV): "And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed..." The one who restrains is the Holy Spirit indwelling the church. At the rapture the true church of Christ, as the temple of the Holy Spirit on earth (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21,22), will suddenly be caught up to heaven. Great spiritual darkness will then descend upon the world, giving the Antichrist the ideal opportunity to reveal himself and make his bid for power unopposed.

After the rapture of the church and the revelation of the Antichrist, there will be a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel (Zech. 12:10). That will be the final fulfillment of Joel 2:28, in which an outpouring of God's Spirit is promised just prior to the apocalyptic events ushering in the day of the Lord (Joel 2:27-32). During the tribulation period, many people on earth will be saved (Rev. 7:1-17).

All these facts indisputably point to the rapture taking place before the revelation of the Antichrist and the beginning of the tribulation period. He who restrains must be taken out of the way before the Antichrist can be revealed. An element of surprise is associated with the rapture because it is impossible to calculate when it will happen. We must always be ready

for this great event. Anticipation of the sudden coming of the heavenly Bridegroom at an unknown day and hour was intended to be a strong motivation to all believers throughout the centuries to live holy lives.

For this reason, Christians have a Christ-expectation and not an Antichrist-expectation. We are waiting for the Lord Jesus and not for the appearing of the man of sin. In the meantime we have to warn all people against the rise of antichristian ideologies and be the salt of a corrupt earth. But we are not destined for the Antichrist's cruel dictatorship in the tribulation period if we are true believers. That is why we should not occupy ourselves with survival strategies for the coming great tribulation, but do the work of Jesus Christ in anticipation of His sudden coming.

A further important statement about the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2 is that he is an end-time figure and not a figure of past history. He appears on the world scene shortly before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, and will be alive on earth when Christ sets foot on the Mount of Olives. On that day, the Antichrist will be destroyed:

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thes. 2:8 NKJV).

Those who hold historicist views about the prophecies related to the Antichrist are out of touch with what the Bible says about this subject. To brand Nero, Hitler or certain of the popes as the Antichrist, only ends up in contradictions and confusion. How can any of these tyrants be destroyed at Christ's Second Coming if they are already dead? They may be called antichrists in the sense that they paved the way for the *end-time* Antichrist, but they were not *the* Antichrist! The final fulfilment of the prophecies about the Antichrist are still future because he will clearly act within an eschatological context during the seven years of tribulation prior to the public appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is also important to note that the Antichrist will be a living person and not an impersonal system. He is called the man of sin, the son of perdition, and also the self-declared God and the lawless one. The Bible says that he will be cast into the lake of fire alive on the day when Jesus comes (Rev. 19:20). That he will have a unique system of government as well as an ideology in terms of which he will rule, is certain. But as the head of this system he will be a living person who will form a two-man government with the false prophet to subject all people to Satan's authority.

The four horsemen

According to Revelation 6:1-8, the Antichrist will be revealed in a highly deceptive way as an angel of light in an effort to first mislead people, and later to extend his merciless dictatorship over them. In the first stage of his

rule he will appear to the world as a global peacemaker who brings hope and new opportunities of economic survival to a conflict-ridden and poverty-stricken world (the rider on the white horse). In a show of clever diplomacy he will deceive the people into accepting a new world order under a one world government which will operate in close association with an alliance of religions in order to accomplish international unity.

When his peace initiatives and political and religious unification reforms collapse after 3½ years, the Antichrist will show his true colours and turn to coercion to enforce his authority over the world, becoming a cruel military dictator (the rider on the red horse). The next logical action will be stringent economical control and food rationing during the severe wars and famine (the rider on the black horse). After these calamities, the only activity left for the Antichrist is his ride as the angel of death to reap as many souls as possible to join him in perdition (the rider on the pale horse). What started as a peace movement will end in utter tragedy.

In His prophetic discourse, Jesus Christ described a similar sequence of events that will occur during the coming tribulation period (Mt. 24:4-9):

- o “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (the white horse);
- o “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:... For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (the red horse);
- o “...and there shall be famines, and pestilences” (the black horse);
- o “Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you” (the pale horse).

Identity of the Antichrist

In Revelation 13, more details are given about the identity and character of this evil world leader. He is described as “a beast... having seven heads” and his co-ruler, the false prophet, as “another beast”:

The Antichrist: And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon [*Satan*] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months... And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues and nations... (Rev. 13:1-7).

The false prophet: And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth... And he

exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means* of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image of the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he hath power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore *and* six [666] (Rev. 13:11-18).

In Revelation 17, another intimate ally of the Antichrist is mentioned, from whom we may learn more about the beast. That is the harlot woman who represents all the false, antichristian religions of all times:

...and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns... And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (Rev. 17:3-5).

This woman is the mother of the apostates, and as such, a spiritual parent organisation (an alliance or ecumenical body) of all the false religions. She was closely associated with the previous world empires and will also enjoy official recognition in the future kingdom of the beast. In Revelation 17 we are given more information about her and the beast on which she is riding:

And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five have fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition (Rev. 17:9-11).

The first conclusion that we must come to about this Scripture is that it is *not* referring to the seven mountains of Rome, and therefore the prophecy is not about the Roman Catholic Church per se. It says that the seven mountains are seven kings (or kingdoms) that succeed one another chronologically. We know that it does not refer to Roman emperors, as between Nero and Constantine alone there were ten antichristian caesars in power. In this passage God gives us a broad perspective on seven consecutive world empires as the major strongholds of heathen religions through the centuries. In Genesis, Isaiah and Daniel mention is made of these empires. They are:

1. The ancient Babylonian Empire established by Nimrod.
2. The Assyrian Empire that took the ten tribes of Israel captive in the 8th century BC.
3. The neo-Babylonian Empire that conquered the kingdom of Judah in the 6th Century BC and took many of its subjects captive to Babylon.
4. The Medo-Persian Empire.
5. The Greek Empire.
6. The Roman Empire.
7. The restored Roman Empire of the tribulation period.

When Revelation was written in 95 AD five of these empires had fallen – the ancient Babylonian to the Greek –the Roman was currently ruling, while the end-time empire of the beast (Antichrist) was still future. (This is precisely what Revelation 17:10 says, i.e. “five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come.”) This last empire is symbolised by the head with ten horns. The allusion in verse 11 to the beast being “the eighth” and “of the seven” kingdoms indicates that his will be *both* the 7th and the 8th. The 7th is an empire like the Roman when he rules in alliance with other kings during the first 3½ years (v. 12); while the 8th is when, as sole military dictator, he rules over the whole world during the final 3½ years (Rev. 13:3-4).

A common characteristic of the first six empires is that all of them were extremely hostile towards the kingdom of God on earth. Their occult practices, pantheism, immorality, the deification of their leaders, humanism, and rebellion against God, will culminate in the seventh empire of the Antichrist and descend to even greater depths of spiritual darkness and deception. The unanimity among them has its roots in mystery Babylon, the immoral mother of all the false religions. She exerted a tremendous influence on the previous world empires, and was responsible for their wicked nature. “The woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18).

The same evil alliance between a world government and a false world religion will be characteristic of the reign of the beast. It will form part of the age-old struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. For this reason, the beast and his end-time kingdom must not be viewed and interpreted in isolation but as the grand culmination and final manifestation of their evil predecessors.

The Antichrist is so closely identified with the previous world empires that he is depicted with the body of a leopard, the paws of a bear, the mouth of a lion and with ten horns on his head (Rev. 13:2). These symbols correspond with those in Daniel 7 where the Babylonian Empire is represented as a lion, the Medo-Persian Empire as a bear, the Greek

Empire as a leopard and the Roman Empire as a ferocious beast with ten horns on its head:

- The Antichrist will follow the tradition of the Babylonians who deified their kings. He will declare himself above all that is called God and even challenge the authority of the God of heaven. He will cause an image of himself to be erected in the temple and force all the citizens of his global empire to worship the image. Those who refuse will be executed. He will also make relentless attacks on the Jewish people after they have revoked their covenant with him, and try to annihilate them all.
- As in the Medo-Persian Empire, he will trample upon all the nations, make an end to their independence and incorporate them into his own empire. He will establish a merciless government and rule over his kingdom with the irrevocable and unchangeable laws of the Medes and the Persians. He will also order the destruction of the Jewish people.
- The Greek Empire was depicted by Daniel as a leopard with four wings. It operated highly mobile armies characterised by skilful military manoeuvres that enabled them to carry out their attacks with speed and efficiency. The Antichrist will revive these tactics in his well-disciplined armies. He will be able to deploy rapid-reaction strike-forces practically overnight in any part of the world. An anti-Jewish policy also ruled supreme in the Syrian province of this empire. The Greek dictator, Antiochus Epiphanes, was a fanatical hater of the Jews and as such also a type of the Antichrist.
- The fourth beast with its ten horns and teeth of iron had a terrible appearance. This is symbolic of the inflexibility, ruthlessness and cruelty by which the Roman Empire made its authority and sovereignty felt. During the invasion of Israel and the siege of the city of Jerusalem, hundreds of thousands of Jews were gruesomely murdered, crucified on trees and sold as slaves, while many of the survivors were taken as captives of war to other parts of the empire. An even more devastating war of annihilation will be waged against Israel by the Antichrist during the great tribulation.

It is evident that the empire of the Antichrist will not only be a revival of the Roman Empire, but of all the great world empires. It will have particularly strong Babylonian features. For this reason it is wrong to regard Western Europe as the revived Roman Empire and to allege that the Antichrist must come from Rome. His origin will be from a country that formed part of all the previous world empires, viz. the land of the king of the north (Dan. 11:36-45). This land lies to the north-east of Israel and was, during various times in history, referred to as Babylonia, Assyria, and

Syria. It is presently known as Syria and Iraq, but its heartland is in Iraq. That is also where the ancient city of Babylon is situated, which is now being rebuilt. The book of Daniel is of great help in determining the Antichrist's country of origin:

- ◆ He is initially depicted as one out of ten (Dan. 7:7-8), being one of the ten countries of the old Roman Empire. The Syrian province, which included the present Iraq, was part of this empire.
- ◆ In a following scenario his country of origin is indicated as one out of four, being the four provinces of the divided Greek Empire (Dan. 8:8-9). Syria (including the present Iraq) was one of these provinces.
- ◆ He is finally identified as one out of two, i.e. the countries of the king of the north (Syria) and the king of the south (Egypt) in the divided Greek Empire after Alexander the Great (Dan. 11). The historical battle between these two kingdoms is described in Daniel 11:1-35, while the end-time king of the north, the Antichrist, is described in Daniel 11:36-45. It can thus be concluded that he will originate from Syria or Iraq.

In Isaiah there is another important prophecy on the revival of the ancient Assyrian Empire in the end-time. It is discussed within the context of the day of the Lord (Is. 10: 20) and the Antichrist is described as the king of Assyria:

Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done *it*, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man (Is. 10:12-13).

The Antichrist will, without compunction, remove the boundaries between the nations to internationalise them. He will also appropriate their treasures and gain control over the world economy. The blind and deceived political leaders of that time will give their full co-operation to him:

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast (Rev. 17:12-13).

Israel, as well as all the nations of the world, will only be delivered from the dictatorship of the end-time king of Assyria at the Second Coming of Christ. He alone can break the power of the Antichrist (Is. 10:23-25; Mic. 5:4-6).

Power bases of the Antichrist

During the first 3½ years of the tribulation period the Antichrist will reign

as prince of peace and pursue world unity. Then he will make his big move to gain absolute power. The Antichrist's change of image and strategy in the middle of the tribulation will be very dramatic and terrifying and he will endeavour to force all people into satanism. After he has received a deadly wound and comes to life again, the devil will no longer operate through him in the guise of a prince of peace and an angel of light.

He will now reveal his true nature as a power-hungry dictator who will give full expression to his propensity for blasphemy, sadism and brutal murder. He will establish a dictatorship that will be power-based on politics, religion and the control of economic resources. On each of these spheres, totalitarian control will be exercised with the main objective of reducing all people to absolute slavery. They will be denied political rights, religious liberties or economic freedom outside the unitary structures of the new world order. The three power bases are:

□ **Political power**

In the political sphere he will be the sole ruler of the world during the last 3½ years, and base his power on military strength. No alliance will be able to match him because "power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev. 13:7). There will not be a single nation with a sovereign government, as they will all be subjected to the decrees of the Antichrist's military regime. Political disloyalty will not be tolerated and rulers who do not subject themselves to his authority will be deposed: "I have brought down those who sat on thrones" (Is. 10:13; Amplified Bible).

The Antichrist will be a modern Nebuchadnezzar who will manipulate the global citizens of his empire at will. The brutality of historical world dictators such as Nimrod, Alexander the Great, Nero, Hitler, and Stalin will be repeated in his reign in a surpassing way. His military campaigns will not only be directed at earthly targets, as the greatest military deployment in the history of mankind will occur in Israel against a heavenly army (Rev. 19:19). That will give rise to the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14,16).

□ **Religious power**

After the false peace has expired and as the last 3½ years of the great tribulation unfold it will, spiritually, be the darkest time in world history. The satanic triumvirate of the dragon (Satan), the beast (Antichrist), and the false prophet will then assume dictatorial powers on earth. They will make concerted efforts to crush the power of the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, by destroying all people who worship the God of heaven. The Antichrist, assisted by the false prophet will, on behalf of the devil, claim the position and title of God for himself:

...the falling away (*the departing*) comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is



REIGN OF THE ANTICHRIST	
FALSE PEACE (3½ years)	GREAT TRIBULATION (3½ years)
<p>↓ The Antichrist is revealed as prince of peace. He bases his global leadership position on political, religious, and economic structures.</p>	<p>↓ The Antichrist desecrates the temple, abolishes the sacrificial service and declares himself to be God. Israel revokes its covenant with him.</p>
<p>↓ The new world order with its universal government and world peace force is instituted, and it greatly empowers the alliance of world religions.</p>	<p>↓ The alliance of world religions (the false world church) is destroyed and replaced by the forced worship of the Antichrist as the god of this world.</p>
<p>↓ The Antichrist concludes a covenant with Israel as their Messiah. All other religions accept and worship him as the universal messiah.</p>	<p>↓ Jews and tribulation saints who refuse to worship the Antichrist as God will be severely persecuted by being hunted down, convicted and executed.</p>
<p>↓ The third temple is erected in Jerusalem next to the Islamic mosque. The lie is proclaimed that all religions on earth worship the same God.</p>	<p>↓ The Antichrist becomes sole ruler and military dictator. He controls a cashless world economy by means of computerised 666- related codes and PIN's.</p>
<p>↓ Babylon is rebuilt in Iraq as the New Age capital and a symbol of world unity. A temporary economic recovery and a false peace prevails on earth.</p>	<p>↓ An unprecedented death-toll is caused by wars, pestilences, and natural disasters. International armies mass in Israel for the battle of Armageddon.</p>

Daniel also warned against this evil, end-time god-man who will arrogantly exalt himself and claim to be God:

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods... Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers... But in His [place] shall he honour the God of forces (Dan. 11:36-38).

The Antichrist will exalt himself to the position of God. But his fraud will be evident because he will recognise a power still higher than himself – that is Satan who is also called the God of forces. He teaches his

followers to wage war and capture fortresses and strongholds, and thus to achieve their political and religious objectives by force.

Revelation 13:3-4 clearly confirms the rise to religious power of the Antichrist, and shows that all the deceived people in the world will worship him. Through the mediation of the false prophet, who will do great signs and wonders to deceive the masses, an image of the beast will be erected in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and it will be compulsory to worship the image (Rev. 13:15).

Such a totalitarian form of religious slavery will necessitate the disbanding and destruction of the alliance of false religions that will be formed during the first part of the tribulation period under the auspices of the Antichrist as universal messiah (Rev. 17:16). Only then will it be possible to force all people to worship the beast as God.

□ **Economic power**

Besides the political and religious macrostructures, a cashless world economy under the control of the Antichrist will be instituted. With the use of 666-related codes and PIN numbers, he will control a computerised system of funds transfer from a central part of the world (Rev. 13:16-18).

From this scripture it is obvious that 666-related codes or PIN's will be allocated to all people, without which no one will be able to buy or sell. Cash will be withdrawn from circulation. The system of electronic funds transfer will only be accessible to people who have "the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:17).

The condition for obtaining this number is that an oath of allegiance will have to be made to the universal messiah and his world government. Only then will a 666-related personal identity number (PIN) be issued. However, a transaction of this nature will involve the selling of one's soul to Satan for temporary economic gain. By signing the oath of allegiance, the Antichrist will be recognised as the sole political, religious and economic head of the new world order.

Many theologians allege that there will be no spiritual dangers involved in a cashless monetary system and the acceptance of the Antichrist's number. They spiritualise this prophecy by saying that the Antichrist will only adversely affect a person's ability to work (the hand) and his way of thinking (number in the forehead). Even though the Antichrist may issue a literal number or code system for funds transfer it will, according to them, be quite harmless. In this way they are joining Satan's propaganda campaign in which people will be deceived and brainwashed into accepting the coming antichristian new world order.

Those taken up to heaven at the rapture will escape the tribulation and the Antichrist's number will never be imposed on them. If you are among those who are left behind, you will have to repent and give your

allegiance to the true Messiah, Jesus Christ. This will mean that you will have to utterly reject the false messiah, his world government, his alliance of false religions, his demand for personal worship, and his number for electronic funds transfer, irrespective of the severe consequences that you will have to face.

Those who declare their allegiance to the Antichrist by accepting his number, will be enfolded by the darkness of eternal condemnation:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Rev. 14:9-11).

Those who gain the victory over the satanic conspiracy by not bowing the knee to the Antichrist, will be rewarded by an honourable place in the presence of God in heaven:

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass... (Rev. 15:2).

Character of the Antichrist

The Bible mentions a number of key aspects of the Antichrist's wicked, perverted, and distorted character:

- ◆ He will be *lawless*. After "he who restrains" (the Holy Spirit indwelling the church) has been taken out of the way, complete spiritual darkness will set in, followed by the revelation of the *lawless one* (2 Thes. 2:8), a name implying utter rejection of God's right to rule over all people.
- ◆ He will be *without integrity*. Through political fraud he will gain a position of leadership, and by the use of clever diplomacy and political manipulation he will soon become the undisputed world leader (Dan. 9:27).
- ◆ He will be the *big briber*. Double standards, bribery and corruption will be the order of the day in his wicked regime. Special favours will be granted to his accomplices: "...he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain" (Dan. 11:39).
- ◆ He will be a *satanic reformer*. "And he shall... think to change times and laws" (Dan. 7:25). He will nullify various traditions and repeal laws that impede the freedom of people. He will possibly also abrogate the institution of marriage and even change the days of the week. In the political sphere, he will remove the boundaries among the nations and institute a unified Babylonian world order of planetary citizens (Is. 10:13; Rev. 13:3).

- ◆ He will be *the man of sin* and *the son of perdition* [the son of ruin, loss and pernicious ways] (2 Thes. 2:3). Disobedience, arrogance, rebellion, moral depravity and utter selfishness are manifestations of the spirit of sin, and will pave the way for the revelation of the man of sin. There will be no limits to the conceit and evil intentions of this dictator's perverted character. His close companion, the false prophet, will deceive the nations into accepting sinful and occult practices.
- ◆ He will be the *self-declared god* of this world (2 Thes. 2:4). After being honoured as world messiah for 3½ years he will proceed to the most extreme form of rebellion against God by declaring himself to actually be God and to demand the worship of all people.
- ◆ *Pride* and *self-exaltation* will motivate him to claim the position of God as ruler of the universe (Dan. 11:36).
- ◆ He will be a *blasphemer* of the true God and of the saints (Rev. 13:5-6; Dan. 7:25).
- ◆ He will be the greatest *hater and persecutor of Jews* of all time. Although he will be accepted as Messiah by the Jews during the first 3½ years of the tribulation, he will order the killing of all Jews after they have revoked their covenant with him (Mt. 24:15-22).
- ◆ He will be a notorious *occult practitioner* who will use the great powers given to him by Satan (Rev. 13:2). His coming will be "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders" (2 Thes. 2:9 NKJV).
- ◆ He will be the *great deceiver* of mankind. His coming will be "with all unrighteous deception among those who perish" (2 Thes. 2:10 NKJV). Blaspheming God will be encouraged: "And men... blasphemed the name of God ... and... repented not to give Him glory" (Rev. 16:9).
- ◆ He will be a *man of violence* and a *murderer*. "But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Dan. 11:44).
- ◆ He will be a *psychopath* with a schizoid personality: a man with many facets as he is also seen as a beast with many heads. At times he will be exceedingly friendly and charming when he deceives people – to the extent that no one will believe that there is anything evil in him. But there will also be times when the dark side of his character gets the upper hand and induces him to commit the most unimaginable cruelties. During the first half of the tribulation period the innocent, angel of light aspect of his personality will be dominant, while in the second 3½ years his dark and vicious aspect will be openly manifest. Because of his lack of moral principles he will be completely unpredictable.

- ◆ Emanating from the example of the Antichrist as a violent person and a man of sin, a culture of violence and sin will be established world-wide.

Philosophy of the Antichrist

The underlying philosophical principle upon which the Antichrist will base his global system of religious, political and economic governance is monism – everything is one. It is obvious from the prophecies that the Antichrist will be heading a new world order based on the concept of unity. During the first half of his reign unity will be promoted by nice sounding slogans of peace, globalism and reconciliation among all religions and cultures. But in the second half, unity will be enforced by military power.

The following ideologies of unity will form the basis of the Antichrist's global empire:

o Political ideology

The political ideology of the Antichrist will be that of globalism, or world unity. It will entail an entirely new world order of internationalism. Nations will have to surrender vital aspects of their sovereignty to become provinces, or regions, in the global empire of the Antichrist. Only a limited degree of local autonomy will be retained by them. Most of their functions will be to implement the policies and decisions of the world government.

The need for international unity and harmony, as well as finding solutions to world problems and regional conflicts which are beyond the capacity of individual countries to solve, will be the motivation for the establishment of a world government. In a combined effort the beast and false prophet will join with the harlot woman (alliance of false world religions) and the ten kings or kingdoms (rulers/provinces of the revived Roman Empire) to achieve their purpose of uniting the world, thus forming a neo-Babylonian world empire. According to Revelation 17:11 this will constitute the 7th head of the beast. Shortly after his revelation, the Antichrist will distinguish himself as a diplomat of exceptional stature. He will, almost overnight, reach agreements for the ending of conflicts that afflicted the world for many years. As a result of his astounding success he will be praised and supported everywhere, and quickly rise to a position of world-leadership. He will ride the wave of popular opinion and command the respect of all governments and communities because of his success and the amazing way in which he achieved unity, peace, and reconciliation among all nations:

...all the world wondered after the beast... and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:3,7).

The Antichrist's new world order based on a false peace and the socialistic grouping together of all people into a single class of planetary citizens will only last for 3½ years. Opposition will develop against his rule, especially when he declares himself to be God in the rebuilt temple in

Jerusalem and demands the worship of all people (2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:15). An assassination attempt will then be made on him but, in a display of satanic powers, he will be healed and recover completely from his wound (Rev. 13:3,12).

Dramatic changes will occur after this event, as the Antichrist will abruptly change his appearance from international prince of peace to military dictator. From that moment onwards his ideology of world unity will be enforced with military power. The kings who ruled with him previously will, possibly under coercion, surrender all their power to him in order for him to become the sole ruler of the world: "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (Rev. 17:13). That will mark the end of the 7th world empire ruled by the evil alliance of Antichrist, the false prophet, the harlot woman (alliance of false religions) and the ten kings or kingdoms. It will be followed by the openly satanic 8th world empire of the Antichrist. He will rule by military decree and honour the god of forces (Dan. 11:38).

The last 3½ years of the 7-year tribulation period is referred to as the great tribulation. The world will then be ruled by a satanic triumvirate: the dragon (Satan), the beast (the Antichrist) and the second beast (the false prophet). On the outward, physical level, it will appear to be a two-man government consisting of the Antichrist and the false prophet. However, from the spirit world Satan will be the main power behind this government. He will take the decisions and delegate his power to the Antichrist:

...and the dragon gave him [*the beast*] his power, and his seat, and great authority (Rev. 13:2).

The Antichrist will begin his new world order (7th empire) in the guise of an angel of light, with nice-sounding slogans and promises of unity and peace. It will end as an openly luciferic world order (8th empire) marked by oppression, death and the compulsory worship of the beast and Satan: "And they [the inhabitants of the earth] worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4). The Antichrist will wage his final war against the true Christ (Rev. 19:19-20).

o **Religious ideology**

Universal religious unity, i.e. the inherent unity of all faiths on earth, will be the religious ideology of the Antichrist. The starting point for this ideology is theistic universalism: all the faiths worship the same god in different ways and by using different names. Despite the differences that meet the eye, all religions allegedly originated from the same source of cosmic wisdom. The logical conclusion from this surmise is that the various religions are awaiting the same universal messiah, even though they use different names for him.

That is indeed the ideology that paves the way for the coming of the Antichrist. He will have many facets: he will be the Christ to the Christians, the Messiah to the Jews, the Imam Mahdi to the Muslims, Krishna to the Hindus, and the Maitreya Buddha to the Buddhists. He will unite these religions into a close alliance under his supreme leadership. They will link hands to form the ecumenical body referred to as “the mother of harlots” in Revelation 17:5. She will be recognised, carried, supported, and used by the beast.

The Babylonian inter-faith body (the harlot woman) will be the bride of the Antichrist, as an imitation of the church which is the bride of the true Christ. He will give her a position of power, including the right to persecute and even execute the tribulation saints who refuse to worship the beast (Rev. 17:6). He will greatly use her in his campaign to establish world unity. All her followers will be made conscious of their common unity, and that belief will be the foundation of an international mystical brotherhood of all people. Once this ideology has been established, the realisation of social, political and economic unity will be achieved.

In keeping with his character as a treacherous person, the marriage of the Antichrist with his bride (the false religions) will not last very long. After 3½ years he will declare himself to be God and demand the worship of all people. By then, the different religions, their churches, temples, synagogues and mosques will become redundant and be destroyed. The Antichrist will offer his bride the option of either accepting his claim of enhanced status from universal messiah to being God and worshipping him as such, or be executed if she refuses. The world alliance of religions and their association with the Antichrist will then be terminated:

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire (Rev. 17:16).

The final religious objective of the Antichrist will be for both Satan and himself to be worshipped as God (Rev. 13: 4,8). Thus, satanism will be the only official world religion during the great tribulation (the second 3½ years).

The first phase of the Antichrist’s religious ideology is currently being implemented in preparation for his coming. It will move through the following stages to its final objective:

- ◆ **Religious equality.** All religions are of equal standing and none is better nor more important than any other. The playing-field is equalised, and they are all encouraged to join ecumenical bodies such as the World Conference on Religion and Peace, the Parliament for the World’s Religions, and the United Religions Initiative. They can all collaborate on moral and ethical issues.

- ◆ **Religious unity.** All religions worship the same God, and should therefore also give religious expression to their common ecumenical ties. Because of this premise they will despise and ostracise evangelical believers who bluntly refuse to join the ecumenical movement.
- ◆ **An intimate alliance of world religions.** When the Antichrist appears as the common messiah of all faiths, he will unite this body as his bride on condition that they all recognise and worship him. Great power and honour will be bestowed upon them, and they will function as a corporate body. They will use their power and influence to persecute evangelical Christians and Jews who refuse to join hands with them in worshipping the beast.
- ◆ **Compulsory worship of Satan and the Antichrist.** This body of false religions will, to their horror and disillusionment, be rejected and sentenced to death by their universal messiah unless they are prepared to renounce their religions and worship the beast and Satan as God. If they do so, and also accept the number and name of the beast, their end will be in the lake of fire where they will share the eternal punishment of the Antichrist, the false prophet and Satan (Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:10).

The Antichrist will order the execution of all tribulation saints who refuse to accept and worship him (Rev. 6:9-11; 13:7,15; 20:4). During the last 3½ years of his reign in the great tribulation, he will increasingly and continuously blaspheme the true Christ and the true God while using all his power to destroy those who confess God's Name:

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven (Rev. 13:5-6).

The Antichrist's last desperate bid to save his satanic empire from collapse will be centred on Jerusalem, where he will deploy the greatest show of military might ever seen, to fight against Christ on His return to the Mount of Olives.

o **Economic ideology**

The economic ideology of the Antichrist will be aimed at the centralised monetary control of the world. This control will be exercised by using a system of electronic funds transfer. All people will be allocated 666-related PIN numbers, without which they cannot buy or sell (Rev. 13:16-18). Through monetary control the Antichrist will achieve the following:

- He will enslave people and monitor all their movements.
- He will blackmail people into worshipping him as God before they can be allocated a number that will allow them to be economically active.

- He will redistribute the wealth of the world and in this way rob most nations of their assets.
- The inevitable result of his evil economic ideology will be unemployment, hunger, deprivation, war and unspeakable suffering for millions of people.

Fate of the Antichrist

From the onset of the tribulation period, the Antichrist will know that he has only very limited time to establish Satan's kingdom on earth, as the true Christ promised to return and judge the Antichrist. However, he will not accept the inevitability of biblical prophecies but do everything in his power to oppose and thwart them. The tremendous personal attacks on Jesus at the time of His first coming, as well as the fierce efforts to eradicate the early Christian church, will be repeated during and prior to His Second Coming. The annihilation of Christianity will be high on the agenda of the Antichrist.

The seven year long tribulation period has a fixed time span of which the two halves of 3½ years each are expressed in terms of years, months and days. No one knows when the rapture will occur or when the year-week of the tribulation will begin, but once it has started, apocalyptic events will follow one another in quick succession.

The promises about the Second Coming of Christ will infuriate the Antichrist and he will do everything possible to eradicate Christianity from the face of the earth. He will also try to destroy Israel as God's chosen people in order that the promises of the true Messiah's reign of peace and the restoration of the throne of David in Jerusalem (Acts 15:16-17), remain unfulfilled. However, the Lord will protect a remnant of Israel in the wilderness for 3½ years (Rev. 12:14) to meet Him at the Mount of Olives when He comes.

The Antichrist will commit himself to an evil plan by trying to prevent the promised meeting between the remnant of Israel and the true Messiah. His main military camp will be on the plain between the mountains of Judea and the Mediterranean Sea (Dan. 11:45). From this camp he will deploy forces in the valley of Jehoshaphat in Jerusalem:

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will [enter into judgement] with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land (Joel 3:1-2).

The remaining Jews will go up to the Mount of Olives in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. While doing so, they will be surrounded by the armies of the false messiah and threatened with extermination. Great chaos and consternation will prevail in Jerusalem:

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled... (Zech. 14:2).

At the height of this war of Armageddon, Jesus Christ will descend with His heavenly hosts and set foot on the Mount of Olives:

And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be a very great valley...* And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains... In that day, the light shall not be clear... but at the evening it shall be light (Zech. 14:4-7).

When Christ returns, He will save the remnant of His people who will take refuge in the valley of the Mount of Olives. Darkness will prevail when God's judgements are poured out upon His enemies who will be unable to pursue Israel any longer, but will be consumed by divine judgements:

And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouths. And... a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them (Zech. 14:12-13).

The main objective of the Antichrist in the siege of Jerusalem will not be the destruction of the remnant of Israel, but to fight against the Messiah of Israel and try to conquer Him. That will be his final, ill-fated effort to save his satanic empire from annihilation. What a futile exercise that will prove to be – to fight the One who has all power in heaven and on earth! That will be the last public appearance of the Antichrist, the false prophet and their evil accomplices on earth. Their demise will be swift and final:

And I saw the beast [*Antichrist*], and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him [*Christ*] that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of His mouth: and all the [birds] were filled with their flesh (Rev. 19: 19-21).

Comparison between Christ and the Antichrist

Christ

Antichrist

- ✠ He descended from heaven and appeared as Man, but He is of a heavenly origin (Jn. 3: 13; 6:38).
- ✠ He is the Son of God who has come to reveal His heavenly Father and His righteousness to the world (Jn. 14:9).
- ✠ He is the true God and eternal life (1 Jn. 5:20).
- ✠ He is without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).
- ✠ He came in the Name of His Father (Jn. 5:43).
- ✠ He came to glorify the Father (Jn. 17:4).
- ✠ He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and came to reveal the Father (Jn. 1:18, 14:9; 1 Jn. 5:7).
- ✠ He is the Saviour of the world and came to redeem us from the power of Satan (1 Jn. 4: 14; Heb. 2:14-15).
- ✠ He came to the world as a humble Servant to offer His life as a ransom for our sins (Mk. 10:45).
- ✠ He came to save sinners and give them abundant life (1 Tim. 1:15; Jn. 10:10-11).
- ✠ He came to establish God's righteousness on earth (Mt. 6:33; Acts 17:31).
- ✠ He came to establish and fulfil the law (Mt. 5:17-18).
- ✠ He brings true peace to men's hearts (Jn. 14:27; Lk. 1:79).
- ✠ He came to unmask Satan as adversary and to destroy his works (Col. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:8).
- ✠ He will ascend out of the bottomless pit and emerge as man from the sea of nations (Rev. 17:8 and 13:1).
- ✠ He is the son of perdition, the lawless one, who reveals the evil character of his father, the devil, to the world (2 Thes. 2:3).
- ✠ He will declare himself to be God (2 Thes. 2:4).
- ✠ He is the man of sin (2 Thes. 2:3-10).
- ✠ He will come in his own name (Jn. 5: 43).
- ✠ He will glorify himself and blaspheme God (Rev. 13:4-6).
- ✠ He will form a triumvirate with the dragon and the false prophet and represent Satan on earth (Rev. 13:4,11-12).
- ✠ He will make people slaves to sin and of his satanic empire of darkness, and control their lives (Rev. 13:7,15-18).
- ✠ He will be exalted in his own eyes and be a dictator who will ruin people's lives (Dan. 11:36; 2 Thes. 2:4).
- ✠ He will come to scatter people abroad and to destroy them (Dan. 11:44).
- ✠ He will promote wickedness and unrighteousness on earth (2 Thes. 2:3,9-12).
- ✠ He will change times and laws (Dan. 7:25).
- ✠ He will create a false peace on earth (1 Thes. 5:3).
- ✠ He will worship the God of forces [Satan] with everything he has (Dan. 11:38).

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✚ He condemns greed and the excessive accumulation of material wealth (Lk. 12:15). | J He will gather vast riches and use it to bribe people in his kingdom (Dan. 11:39,43). |
| ✚ He came to proclaim the truth about God, sin, salvation, heaven, and hell to people (Mt. 22:16; Jn. 1:17; 8:31-32). | J He will deceive humanity into believing lies that will lead to their eternal ruin (Mt. 24:4-5; 2 Thes. 2:9; cf. Jn. 8:44). |
| ✚ He only associates with the true church that confesses His name as Saviour and rejects idols (Jn. 14:6; 2 Cor. 6:14). | J He associates with the false religions whose members are prepared to accept him as their messiah (Rev. 17:3-6). |
| ✚ His bride, the true church, will be glorified and be with Him forever in the new Jerusalem (2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Thes. 4:17). | J His bride, the false world church, the Mother of Harlots, will be destroyed by fire after 3½ years (Rev. 17:16). |
| ✚ He convicts people through the Spirit of truth who leads them into all truth (Jn. 16:13). | J He convicts people through the spirit of deceit to mislead them (2 Thes. 2:9; 1 Jn. 4:3). |
| ✚ He will come from heaven in a cloud with glory and every eye will see Him! (Rev. 1:7). | J He will emerge from the desert and might be seen on television (Mt. 24:26). |
| ✚ His kingdom will endure forever (Rev. 11:15). | J His kingdom will be short-lived (Rev. 17:9-12). |
| ✚ He will conquer the Antichrist and achieve the final victory (Rev. 19:19-21). | J He will be cast into the lake of fire forever when Jesus Christ comes (Rev. 19:20; 20:10). |
| ✚ His followers will all inherit an eternal and imperishable kingdom of everlasting joy (Col. 1: 13-14; 2 Pet. 1:11). | J His followers will share his eternal fate with him in hell, with wailing and gnashing of teeth (Rev. 14:9-11). |

8. The New Age Movement

A new international order

Early in the 1980's the New Age Movement emerged from its secluded circles and began to vigorously propagate its ideology around the world. It is closely associated with the concept of a new world order, and forms part of it. The movement and its doctrine is by now well known, and the media often refers to it. Newspaper and magazine headings such as the following no longer sound strange to the person in the street:

- ◆ **Welcome to the Global Village**
- ◆ **The World Teacher is now here**
- ◆ **The Age of Aquarius has dawned**
- ◆ **Americans get religion in the New Age**
- ◆ **Anything is permissible if everything is God**
- ◆ **Tutu decries break up of New Age prayer meetings**
- ◆ **Soul of a New Age**

The movement endeavours to raise the consciousness level of humanity, to unlock mystical powers in people, to unite the world religiously, politically, economically, and socially, and to pave the way for the appearance of a single world leader. He will be the common messiah of all faiths. Not only in the field of religion, but in all other areas, will he establish the concept of *planetary citizenship*. In the process, all boundaries and divisions will be removed for the sake of greater unity.

Origin of the movement

According to Revelation 17, the origin of the false world religion of the end-time period can be traced back to Babylon. The ancient Babylonian Empire that was founded by Nimrod, was governed in close association with the heathen religion of that time. The marriage between religion and politics was so intimate that this empire was controlled by a priest-king who made use of occult powers and astrology to take decisions and to rule. The king was the personification of the sun-god, who was regarded as the giver of light and life. This superstition gave rise to the cult of the sun-pillars, from which the later obelisks and peace-poles of modern times evolved. Revelation 17 and 18 describe how a neo-Babylonian government, religion and economy will be established before the Second Coming of Christ. The roots of the New Age Movement, therefore, go very far back in time – it is nothing new!

The end-time emergence of the New Age Movement is linked to the Russian-born Madame Helena Blavatsky who founded the Theosophical

Society in New York in 1875. She received her revelations and commands directly from a spiritual master with whom she had telepathic contact. She offered herself as a medium to higher (demonic) powers that worked through her.

As a result of these revelations, she published the book *Isis Unveiled* in 1877, and the six volume *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888. In these volumes she expounded the secret doctrine that, according to her master, forms the foundation of all religious, philosophical and knowledge systems. In the introduction to Volume 1 of *The Secret Doctrine* she says:

The teaching in these volumes belong neither to the Hindu, the Zoroastrian, the Chaldean, nor the Egyptian religion, nor to Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, nor Christianity exclusively. *The Secret Doctrine* is the essence of all these. Sprung from it in their origins, the various religious schemes are now made to merge back into their original element, out of which every mystery and dogma has grown, developed, and become materialised.

The New Age objective is, quite clearly, to unite all religions, including an adulterated version of Christianity, in an alliance of world religions. In association with demonic doctrines such as evolution, reincarnation, metaphysics, parapsychology, astrology, pantheism and socialism, all faiths and philosophies must revert to their common luciferic origin. In this way, unity can be achieved in the world and all people's lives be ordered according to the same principles.

It was not opportune in 1875 to promote these ideas in public. Consequently, Blavatsky's master instructed her that the theosophical ideal of a united world under the final control of a spiritual hierarchy, should be kept secret for a hundred years. During this time it was only to be revealed to initiated members of the Theosophical Society.

The last quarter of the 20th century was earmarked as the revelation phase of the movement. By then, it was planned, the general climate would be conducive to New Age teachings due to the supporting influence of humanism, liberalism, socialism, and the consequent eroding of nationalism and evangelical, biblical Christianity.

Shortly after 1975, the New Age Movement began to go public with their teachings in an effort to establish a broad support base. In 1977, the Tara organisation was founded in London under the leadership of Benjamin Creme. He announced that the common messiah of all faiths has come and was ready to reveal himself as world teacher. As the Maitreya Buddha, he originated from a Buddhist tradition, but at the same time he is claimed to be the personification of the messianic expectation of the Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Christians. He is the cosmic christ of all faiths. Creme published a book about the world messiah, titled *The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom*.

During the period after 1975, various Eastern cults with their esoteric

teachings came to the West and seriously challenged traditional Western thought. Among them are Hinduist Transcendental Meditation (TM), Zen Buddhism, the Bahai faith and gurus from various other sects. They all pose a threat to Christianity by popularising mysticism and the New Age dogma of monism (everything is one; see pages 12 and 13). All of them promote the false expectation of a Utopia that will follow on the world-wide achievement of their ideal of cosmic unity based on a universal mystical brotherhood.

New Age organisations

The network of organisations and groups that promote the New Age ideology is expanding by the day. The movement is at present still without a central authority because its expected world leader has not yet made his appearance. However, there are many organisations that are paving the way for the new dispensation. They function on various levels and can be classified as follows:

0 Core organisations

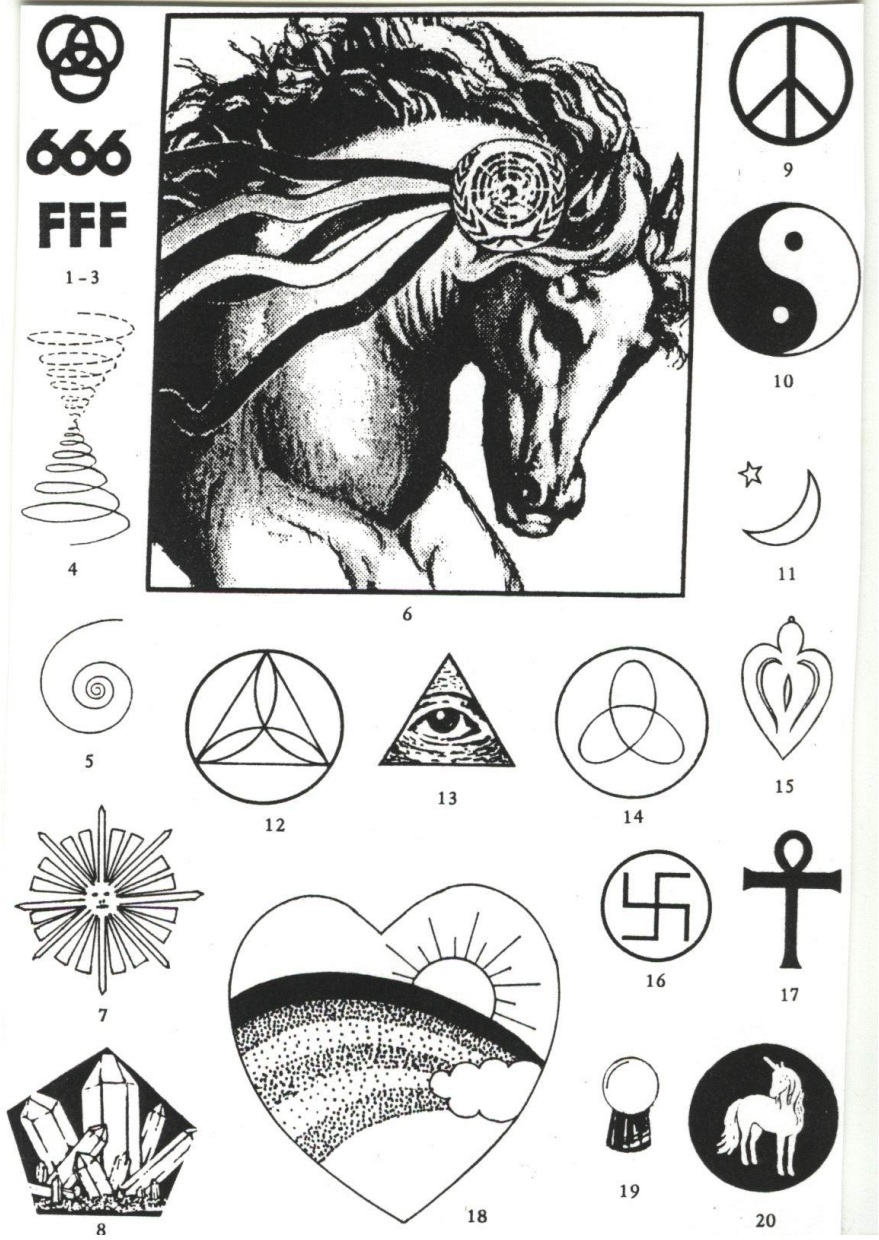
The inner circle of the movement is luciferic. Its final objective is to worship Lucifer and to subject the entire world to his direct authority. Organisations on this level include the top three grades of Freemasonry, the Illuminati, and other secret societies. Furthermore, there are Planetary Citizens and Lucis Trust (formerly called Lucifer Publishing Co.), which give open recognition to Lucifer. One of the leading organisations at this stage is Planetary Initiative for the World we Choose, under the leadership of David Spangler. He is also the head of Planetary Citizens.

0 Middle order organisations

A world-wide network of organisations has already been established, of which many are deeply mystical. Most of them hide their occult nature by using terms such as the universal god of all faiths, masters of wisdom, spirit guides, the coming world teacher, the higher self, a cosmic consciousness, and psychic powers. Their primary aim is to promote practices and a way of thinking that are favourable for the transition to a new world order.

The most well-known of these organisations are the Freemasons (including the lower grades), Tara, New Group of World Servers, World Future Society, the Theosophical Society, the Association for Humanistic Psychology, the World Council of Wise Persons, the Club of Rome, the Humanistic Movement, Global 2000, various Eastern meditation cults, the Astrological Society, as well as a number of peace movements and ecological groups that use New Age symbols such as reincarnation signs and the broken cross. Other symbols that are commonly used include the rainbow, the pyramid, the third or all-seeing eye, the number 666, the yin and yang, the pentagram, pegasus, and images of gods, religious leaders

or people who are in a lotus position portraying yoga or meditation.



Examples of New Age symbols

CAPTIONS TO FIGURES

- 1-3. These three symbols depict the antichristian 666 of Revelation 13:18. F is the sixth letter in the alphabet.
- 4-5. The inward and outward movements of spirals are associated with the life process of inhaling and exhaling, the yin and yang, the cycles of evolution, and the rhythms of nature. All spiral shaped objects are important. In a whirlwind or cyclone is an upward movement to cosmic spheres. A whirlpool has a downward suction and generates much power, while a labyrinth is a horizontal journey to the unknown.
6. The white horse is a portrayal of a painting exhibited in the building of the United Nations in New York. The white horse and the UN emblem symbolise peace through power. It also depicts the ideal of the new world order in which the UN will be the maintainer of world peace.
7. The Sun-god is the creator God who is the giver of life and light. He is the universal God of all faiths.
8. Crystals are commonly used to produce cosmic rays in a room, or to focus it on a person or persons. It promotes calmness, peacefulness, and ensures nice dreams.
9. The broken cross is the symbol of a humanistic peace without Christ. The Cross of Jesus is rejected and broken in order that people of all religions and ideologies can join hands to bring about their own peace *without* Christ, the Prince of Peace.
10. In Eastern mysticism, the yin and yang symbol is regarded as the creative power in the universe. The two poles must always be in complete harmony and balance to ensure the flow of cosmic power. Yin is the negative pole that is black, cold, slow, and female, while yang is the positive pole that is white, warm, fast, and male.
11. The crescent moon symbolises the queen of heaven, who is associated with love, femininity and care. The star is Lucifer and it represents magical power.
12. The triangle with the three overlapping circles, forming three sixes, represents holism, or the unity of man's spirit, soul, and body.
13. The all-seeing eye in the pyramid indicates insight into mysteries. It is often shown as a third eye on a person's forehead. The pyramid is regarded as a focal point or a point of convergence for cosmic power. It can also emit healing rays.
14. Eternity is depicted by this symbol, as the line follows a continuous and never-ending course. It takes the shape of three sixes that are intertwined.
15. The Egyptian holy bug is a symbol of reincarnation.

16. The hooked cross indicates the rejection of Christ and the exalting of humanity in His place. It is also associated with distorted versions of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
17. The ankh cross symbolises eternal life. It consists of a combination of the female and male signs of Isis and Osiris in the Egyptian mythology. Sex consciousness is also associated with this sign.
18. The rainbow is one of the most important symbols in the New Age ideology. According to them, every person must have a rainbow in his heart. The rainbow (*antakarana*) leads you to your higher self, your deeper self, or the god within you. It is a mystical bridge to Lucifer, who allows a person access to a new world, as well as to a new self-image and a cosmic consciousness. Feelings of peace and the unity of all things take possession of a person. The transcendence to the mystical world by way of this bridge occurs during meditation sessions and the use of special *mantras* (Eastern *prayer* words).
19. The crystal ball indicates the ability to see into the future, and to prophesy.
20. The mythological white horse, unicorn, is associated with the coming New Age Utopia on earth.

Front organisations

The New Age Movement also enjoys the spontaneous collaboration of a large number of front organisations. They advance its ideologies of globalism, religious unity, and the use of cosmic powers to attain a higher level of consciousness. Some of them may not even be aware of the agenda of the New Age Movement, but they are all under the power of the same spirit of delusion, and therefore natural allies in advancing the cause of the new world order. There are clear signs that many of them are moving closer together, and that they will join forces to achieve their common goal.

Among these front organisations are the Roman Catholic Church, ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches, the Parliament of the World's Religions, the United Religions Initiative, the United Nations with its agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, large bankers such as the Bilderberger and Rockefeller groups, the US Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the British Royal Institute of International Affairs, as well as the G8 countries, political movements, educational institutions, and influential media groups that can strongly influence public opinion.

The modern way of thinking in the world is largely supportive of the New Age Movement, the new world order, the humanistic movement, the interfaith movement, the realisation of the human potential by exploiting psychic powers, and the granting of unrestricted human freedom of speech, expression, sexual orientation, and religious conviction to people

everywhere. The idea of new age globalisation is also promoted by many international summit conferences.

The age of Aquarius

The coming dispensation for which the New Age Movement prepares the world, is called *the age of Aquarius*. This is an astrological concept derived from the movement of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac, as seen from the earth. Apart from the annual movement through the twelve constellations, there is also a larger orbit in which the sun slowly passes through the constellations in an inverted order. On this basis, ages or dispensations of 2000 years each are identified.

In their book, *Entering Aquarius*, Michal Eastcott and Nancy Magor allege that every constellation through which the sun moves, exposes the earth to a particular kind of cosmic influence. The period between 4000 and 2000 before Christ was the dispensation of the Bull (*Taurus*). The bull was a holy symbol in the mythology of that time. The 2000 years before Christ was the dispensation of the Ram (*Aries*). During this time, the sacrificial lamb (a ram) was a strong symbol in Israel, and also the scape-goat. Israel was severely reprimanded for worshipping a golden calf, which was an obsolete symbol of the previous dispensation.

With the coming of Christ, the dispensation of the Fishes (*Pisces*) has dawned. The fish is often used as a symbol of Christianity, also in some of the parables. The disciples themselves were fishermen who became fishers of men.

During the time of the Fishes the emphasis was, according to astrologers, on authority, idealism, and the fanatical dedication to a cause. These characteristics gave rise to a great deal of militancy in people's religious and national life, leading to wars and religious persecution.

However, the spirit of fanatical dedication to causes also had positive results in the form of many discoveries and scientific advancement. In this dispensation, humanity developed from the level of barbarism to the civilisation of the nuclear age. Two major religions were founded in this time, viz. Christianity and Islam.

Now, after 2000 years, we are at the end of the dispensation of the Fishes; consequently, it is asserted, humanity must be prepared to enter the dispensation of the Water-bearer (*Aquarius*). In this regard, justification for astrology is also sought in the Bible. Before the last Passover, Jesus said to His disciples: "Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in" (Lk. 22:10). It is alleged that the Water-bearer has all along been walking before us, leading the way, and that the door to the next dispensation will now swing open.

The time has come, they say, for us to evolve to a higher level of consciousness and become the universal man (*homo universalis*). It

entails the development of a changed cosmic consciousness which will enable us to realise the inherent unity of all things in the universe. Once this enlightenment has occurred, it will no longer be necessary to take a stand for one's national or religious interests, or to fight to protect them. Everything is one. This principle necessitates the harmonising and uniting of all things, to be like a calmly flowing river. The dark, stormy night of *Pisces* is over and the light of a new dispensation of unity and reconciliation is now dawning. The big challenge of our time, they assert, is to convince those people who still cling to the old order.

The New Age concept of learning how to draw on the great treasure house of cosmic wisdom, strongly appeals to many people. It is claimed that in all civilisations the star-gazers, or astrologers, were the wise men, prophets and seers whose advice was sought on almost all matters.

What does the Bible say about this cosmic source of wisdom and of its associated magical power?

Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: [*it is* no] coal to warm at, *nor* fire to sit before it (Is. 47:12-14).

Though they do not hesitate to quote from the Bible to give credibility to their deceptive teachings about a false unity, cosmic powers and wisdom, these people are practising sorcery and idolatry, thereby only bringing greater condemnation upon themselves.

Philosophical principles

The three fundamental principles upon which the New Age philosophy is based, are the following:

1. Everything is one (monism)

All things that exist are parts of a larger whole. The same cosmic life force permeates the material and spirit worlds, but this unity has become fragmented and must now be restored. On the vertical level, the ill-defined boundary between the natural and supernatural worlds must be transcended in order to re-integrate the material and cosmic spheres. On the horizontal level, people must refrain from establishing rigid boundaries among races, cultures, religions, and political ideologies, as it leads to divisions and the pursuit of conflicting group interests. These divisions disturb the inherent cosmic unity.

Monism must be promoted in all areas of life through a process of synthesis, convergence, and the building of bridges of reconciliation. There is no antithesis in the universe and therefore nothing that is inher-

ently evil that should remain outside this all-encompassing unity. According to this philosophy there is no devil, no Antichrist, no evil spirits, and no hell. The only evils are the wrong attitudes of *unattuned* people, resulting in divisions, intolerance, and condemnation of others because of cultural, political or religious differences. Such people either need to be reoriented and reprogrammed or eliminated.

2. Everything is god (pantheism)

God is in everything – in all people and in all nature. He may be described as the cosmic intelligence, but he is mostly referred to as an impersonal cosmic power (cosmic life force or vital force). Because the cosmic life force permeates the entire natural world, there is also a mystical element in mother earth (the *Gaia* concept). Within nature, among animals and human beings, there is a slow evolutionary progress to higher forms of life. Death is only an illusion, as one life cycle is followed by another. By way of reincarnation, deceased people return to earth and continue their development to higher forms of consciousness, or divinity.

3. We are god (self-deification)

Because humans are leading in the evolutionary process, they have attained the highest level of consciousness development. They are conscious of the mystical, cosmic world, and can make further progress to higher levels of wisdom and divinity. Through techniques such as meditation, they can become one with the cosmic world around them, and in this way ultimately become masters of wisdom. Such people are gods in their own right because they have acquired the christ or Buddha consciousness. That is, the wisdom and power of the cosmic christ of all faiths.

There is also a corporate sense in which humanity is regarded as god. All human beings together constitute the global brain. If the thoughts and cosmic energy of a large group of people are concentrated on the same area, power can be released to produce big changes. For this reason, mass-meditation sessions are organised to concentrate on problem areas, and to generate positive thoughts of unity and harmony. In this way, according to the New Age Movement, humans can determine their own destiny, hate and divisions can be countered, and the ominous possibility of a third world war can be averted. The god of this world must, therefore, not be divided and ineffective, but united to conquer the evil of disunity.

Cosmic consciousness

The most important objective of the New Age Movement is to establish contact and eventual unity between people and the cosmic powers of the universe. Implicit in this process is an altered state of consciousness, the psychic ability to practise extrasensory perception, and a completely changed world-view. The following steps are followed in the awakening and development of a person's consciousness:

▼ **A new self-image**

All people must first discover their inherent divinity. This discovery will lead to the mental and spiritual realisation that everything is one because god is in everything. These perceptions are derived from the deeper, creative levels of their right brain, where their cosmic consciousness and dormant psychic powers are allegedly vested.

▼ **A decision for deeper involvement**

At this stage in the awakening of people's consciousness they are faced with the need for intensive instruction in the practice of extrasensory perception and the use of cosmic powers for a number of different purposes. A choice for deeper involvement must now be made. They can then become cult members and learn Transcendental Meditation, astrology, fortune-telling, astral travel, self-healing, etc.

▼ **Meditation**

A psycho-technique must now be learned to effect *attunement* with the cosmic sphere. The most important one is meditation. Initiates must disengage mentally from the present reality by emptying their minds. To effect the change-over to an altered state of consciousness, a *mantra* must be used, which is an invocation. In Transcendental Meditation, the *mantras* are the names of Hindu gods. The word or phrase is repeated until *illumination* occurs and a new state of consciousness sets in. Initiates now see a different, integrated, cosmic reality. Their intuition is activated and they may even become aware of spirit guides.

▼ **Psychic gifts**

Entrance to the world of cosmic powers offers a variety of psychic gifts to the person who meditates effectively. It includes paranormal abilities such as clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, prophesying, intuitive contact with spirit guides, and self-healing. One can also get a super-memory to help one to learn better. This New Age technique is known as suggestopedia. Children are taught to do relaxation exercises while they are listening to rhythmic baroque music until they lapse into a meditative trance and switch over to their right brain. Information can then be read into their super-memories by the teacher, and they will allegedly remember everything.

▼ **Channelling**

There are thousands of highly skilled New Age members who offer their services as channellers, or psychic consultants, to the public. Most of them have a spirit guide with whom they communicate telepathically. The spirit provides answers to the questions and solutions to various kinds of problems that people may have. In this way the consultant channels the cosmic power or wisdom to the client. He is, therefore, a spiritualistic medium. Other methods of healing are also used, e.g. acupuncture, which

is aimed at removing blockages in the cosmic energy flow in the body.

▼ **Utilisation of cosmic focal points**

Mass actions are organised in which large groups of people congregate at fixed times and in particular places for co-ordinated meditation sessions. The aim with these meetings is to focus cosmic energy on a country or society that badly needs peace, unity and harmony. This practice is considered to be most effective if it is performed at one of the strong focal points for cosmic energy. Among these places are Stonehenge in England, Table Mountain in Cape Town, the Egyptian pyramids, the Olympus Mountain in Greece, the Ganges River in India, Mount Fuji in Japan, and Central Park in New York.

▼ **Masters of wisdom**

Persons who penetrate the deepest mysteries of the cosmic world and achieve a high level of consciousness development, are regarded as masters of wisdom. After their death, such people become *avatars* (ascended masters) who are worshipped by their followers – among the best known are Krishna and Buddha. Their esoteric wisdom is proclaimed by special disciples known as *gurus*.

To people in the West who may still be sceptical about the philosophy and mystical techniques of the Eastern religions, the New Age Movement offers the same occult powers in another form. Under the cloak of humanistic psychology and suggestopedia, programmes are compiled for right brain development, paranormal abilities, psychic powers and a new self-image which is based on the same mystical foundation. Higher work efficiency, revolutionary new study methods, and psychic powers for self-healing, are offered as the advantages of an altered state of consciousness in which one discovers one's *higher self*. To the Christian church, a misleading form of Christian meditation is offered which is based on the same principles as TM. Those who practise it, also discover the cosmic christ (the god within) and are consequently drawn into deception.

Prayer

The following standard prayer has been distributed world-wide among New Agers to be prayed at fixed times daily:

From the point of Light within the Mind of God,
Let Light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God,
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known,
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –

The purpose which the Masters know and serve.
From the centre which we call the race of men,
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.
Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

The motivation behind this prayer is explained as follows in the booklet: *The Mantram of the New Age – the Great Invocation and how to use it* (published by Sundial House):

In 1945 this prayer or *Mantram* was introduced to the West. It had long been used by the Wisdom Teachers... Down the ages humanity has, in times of crisis, ever invoked a power beyond its own. Each era has, in response to its particular conflicts and stresses, brought forth its own form of appeal, and today, as we face the challenge and problems of transition into a new era, this great Prayer, or *Mantram*, comes at a time to meet the new needs and empower our entry into the New Age.

The superficial Christian observer may find this prayer harmless. However, the Eastern concept of God, and the fact that they exchange the name "Christ" freely with other names, renders it a very subtle and deceptive effort to involve Christians in their false world religion. Christians are seduced into believing that we all worship the same God.

A study of this widely-circulated prayer reveals the following New Age objectives and principles upon which it is based:

J Pantheism

Because god is, according to pantheistic ideas, present in all people, this prayer is an effort to fix the collective attention of as many people as possible on thoughts, attitudes, and deeds of love. The New Age publisher, Sundial House (*ibid*) describes this prayer to their god as follows:

It expresses certain central truths which most people innately and normally accept – the truth of the existence of a basic Intelligence to Whom we vaguely give the name of *God*; the truth that, behind all our seeming, the motivating power of the universe is *Love*; the truth that both love and intelligence are effects of what is called the *Will* of God, and finally, the self-evident truth that *only through humanity itself can the divine Plan work out*. No one can, in fact, use this invocation thoughtfully and with intention without profound changes coming about in his own life, in his attitudes, nature and life intention; for it is a basic law that 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he'. The constant turning of the mind towards Light, Love and Divine Purpose cannot but have effect, and when the Great Invocation is rightly used on a wide scale and it becomes a world prayer it will invoke into mankind as a whole the Light and Love and Spiritual Power that will eventually *seal the door where evil dwells*.

As a philosophy, pantheism is a natural ally of humanism. Because humans are also seen to be gods, they must change themselves through their own efforts, and move up to higher levels of existence.

J Psychic powers

Humans must activate their inherent psychic powers to achieve this objective: "Let Light descend on Earth, is at once a demand upon the Sources of Light and a stimulus to those making the appeal... *The energy of the mind should be used* particularly in this stanza, invoking illumination and enlightenment into the minds of men" (*ibid*).

J The universal christ

About the inclusive identity of the cosmic christ, Sundial House (*ibid*) is very clear and explicit. It is not at all the Christ worshipped by Christians:

May Christ return to Earth is a joyous and triumphant framing of the expectation of men all over the world that the World Teacher, the *Avatar* who will bring the next unfoldment of Divinity, will make His appearance in our crucial times. The word Christ embodies much more than the leader of the Christian Church. He is the World Teacher of the present cycle and is also known throughout the East as the Lord Maitreya, as the Bodhisattva and as the Imam Mahdi.

J Meditation and cosmic powers

Through meditation, people become channellers of cosmic energy and thus creative reformers of the world:

The combining of these energies of mind, heart and will is *invocation*. It is the highest type of prayer there is, and a new form of spiritual appeal which our mental growth has made possible, and which our understanding of the power of thought and the science of meditation will make increasingly effective. By invocation, prayer and meditation, spiritual energies are contacted and brought into activity. By clear mental perception and directed thought they can become objects of desire and be brought factually into the world of daily living (*ibid*).

The power of positive thinking, meditation, and visualisation, affords humans the creative ability to change things. Certain Christian groups have already been penetrated by these Eastern New Age psycho-techniques.

J The Plan of Love and Light

The New Age Movement's Plan for a take-over is based on the implementation of their universal antichristian concepts of love, light, and a mystical brotherhood of all men: "The urgent need of the New Age is a cry for light upon our way, for more love and brotherhood" (*ibid*).

Love and brotherhood

A strong theme of the New Age message to the world is love and brotherhood. The universal propagation of this message is so successful that it has been accepted as the most important theme for preaching by most religions. This humanistic love is of such great importance for the future existence of humanity that it cannot be confined to one dogma alone, but must be preached by all faiths. All people must concentrate on this broad,

encompassing love to enable them to completely accept and love the members of all other cultures and religions without reservation.

In the light of this broadly defined love, Christians must abandon their prejudices against other religions and join them in brotherly love. Where estrangement and separation has occurred due to ignorance or dogmatic fundamentalism, bridges of love, mutual acceptance and unity must now be built. Every effort must be made to realise this ideal.

The New Age author, Michal Eastcott, says in his book, *The Spiritual Hierarchy of the World*, the following about Jesus' ministry of love:

Through His work in Palestine we know He anchored the fullness of the nature of love. But it is not so widely known that in this He was completing the work begun by the Buddha some five centuries before. The Enlightened One, as the Buddha is frequently called, made known the Lighted way... Through His life and teaching He anchored *Wisdom* as one part of the great dual Second Aspect of God: *Love-Wisdom*. Christ then brought about the manifestation of the other, *Love*.

Philosophers of the New Age Movement have no objections to the love of Christ being proclaimed, as long as it is not defined in terms of His death on the cross. The blood and the cross must be completely detached from this message as it does not fit into the New Age ideology. Emphasis must rather be placed on subjects such as the kingdom of God that is in the hearts of men, and that they must discover it there and develop their hidden divinity to become gods. The thought of dying and crucifying yourself is completely contrary to their teaching. That is why the death of Jesus on the cross is foolishness to them. In his book, *The Path of the Masters*, Santon Ki Shiksha says the following about the Christian gospel:

When the new religion was formulated and given out, it was but little more than an allegorical metamorphosis of Judaism. Jesus was now made the sacrificial offering, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. It was his blood that was to take away the sins of the world... Thus the real mission of Jesus, which was to lead his disciples to realize the kingdom of heaven within themselves, was turned into a bloody tragedy... This was a gross insult to the sublime idealism of the Masters.

Why do these masters of the new world order scare people away from the cross? They know that if people become true Christians, they will reject other religions. If they remain nominal Christians they can easily be seduced by deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). Such people may think that all religions worship the same God.

The love of God is fully revealed by the death of Jesus on the cross. Without the cross, no salvation is possible. Paul clearly says that in Jesus Christ "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

Are you exposed to *another gospel* of humanistic love without the blood and the cross of Jesus? From such turn away and go instead to

churches where only the true gospel is preached, which alone is able to save your soul.

Another Jesus

The Eastern religions, Roman Catholicism and apostate Protestantism are natural allies of the New Age Movement's emerging world religion. It is the Bible-believing, evangelical Christians who are the movement's primary target. In their propaganda campaign they do everything in their power to adulterate the Bible by offering another Jesus, another spirit and another gospel to Christians. We are earnestly warned against deceptions of this nature:

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent [deceived] Eve through his [craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him* (2 Cor. 11:3-4; see also v. 13-15).

In Galatians 1:6-8 Paul says that if anyone perverts the gospel of Christ, let him be accursed. This remark obviously applies to the New Age Movement. They promote a Jesus without the cross, an unbiblical cosmic christ who is associated with Buddhism and other false religions.

Of all the attempts that this movement has made to pervert the gospel message, the most dangerous is probably the spurious *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*. It is an effort to identify Jesus Christ outside the context of the inspired, historical, biblical account. Various Eastern religious titles are assigned to the New Age Jesus, thus portraying him as the universal, cosmic christ.

The account of this *Gospel* is based on the so-called lost years of Jesus between the ages of 12 and 30, which are not recorded in the Bible. It is alleged that during this time he (the New Age Jesus) visited India, Nepal, Tibet, Egypt, and Greece before returning to Israel to commence his public ministry there. A review is given on how he made an intensive study of the Vedas – the holy books of the Hindus. While in the Himalayas in Nepal he devoted himself to a study of Buddhism. He was regarded as a reincarnation of Buddha and the title *Issa* (Son of God) was conferred on him. In an Egyptian temple in Heliopolis (the City of the Sun) he acquired the title of *the Christ*, by which time he was suitably prepared to start his ministry in Israel.

A Russian historian, Nikolai Notovitch, made the discovery of the journey of *the Son of God* through the East in 1897 in Tibet where he investigated the history of *Issa*. In association with this account, but completely independently of it, the Scottish mystic, Levi Dowling, published the perverted *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* in 1908. In writing it he relied solely on a mystical source of revelation, called the *Akasha* records.

Akasha is a Sanskrit word that may be freely translated as the *Universal Brain*, the *Cosmic Computer*, or the *Book of Life*. A human brain that is in deep meditation, and fully attuned to the universal brain, can allegedly extract any information from it – even about events that happened thousands of years ago. The author had to meditate forty years before he could unravel the mysteries of the *Akasha* records. In the *Aquarian Gospel*, where he explains the pantheistic concept of an impersonal god (a belief strongly entertained in the New Age Movement), the New Age Jesus is quoted as saying:

The universal God is one, yet he is more than one; all things are God; all things are one... Men and birds and beasts and creeping things are deities, made flesh; and how dare men kill anything?... The God I speak about is everywhere; he cannot be compassed with walls, nor hedged about with bounds of any kind. All people worship God, the One, but all the people see him not alike. This universal God is wisdom, will, and love. All men see not the Triune God. One sees him as the God of might; another as the God of thought; another as the God of love. A man's ideal is his God, and so, as man unfolds, his God unfolds... The nations of the earth see God from different points of view, and so he does not seem the same to every one. Man names the part of God he sees, and this to him is all of God; and every nation sees a part of God, and every nation has a name for God. You Brahmans call him Parabrahm... and Zeus is his name in Greece; Jehovah is his Hebrew name... When man sees God as one with himself... he needs no middle man, no priest to intercede... Just give your life in sacrificial service to the all of life (Chapter 28:4-25).

A new social order

The dominant unity syndrome of the New Age Movement is the motivating power behind various actions by a whole network of organisations that all endeavour to create a new, integrated social order on earth. Boundaries must be obliterated to bring about the end of conflicting group interests. Races, cultures and the followers of different religions must merge into a global society, abandon their traditional values and accept universal norms for living. The new order of planetary citizens must lead to such a close association of its members that they will function as one big family in the global village. In her book, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, the New Age psychologist, Marilyn Ferguson, says the following about this new orientation of mankind:

The discovery of our connection to all men, women and children joins us to another family. Indeed seeing ourselves as a planetary family struggling to solve its problems, rather than an assorted people and nations assessing blame or exporting solutions, could be the ultimate shift in perspective.

To create such a social order, all national and other boundaries must be removed. According to Ferguson, that is already happening:

Today there are millions of residents of that **great country, the whole earth**. In their

hearts and minds, war and boundaries and dogma have indeed already died. *The whole Earth is a borderless country...*

A new economic system

The redistribution of wealth and the establishment of a new economic order in the world, is also a high priority of the New Age Movement. All natural resources, as well as financial and industrial resources, must be controlled by a world government, ensuring equal access to it by all people. In this way, universal economic equality must be effected.

The entire world must have only one financial system with centralised control. That will enable a world government to enforce its policies and financial control on all countries and individuals. Uniformity in the new world order can be ensured in this way.

It is conspicuous that global financial magnates, e.g. the Bilderberg group, have for centuries been controlling governments through secret societies, thereby influencing them in the direction of the new world order. Slowly but surely they are moving closer to their final objective.

A master-plan for a take-over

The New Age Movement has worked out a thirteen-point *Plan* to establish the new world order:

1. The principal aim of the *Plan* is to establish a one-world religion and a one-world political and social order. The key concept is that everything is one. This unity must be established in all spheres of life.
2. The New Age world religion must constitute a revival of the religion of ancient Babylon in which mystery cults, sorcery, occultism and immortality flourished.
3. The *Plan* will be fully implemented when the New Age messiah (the Antichrist) with his number 666, reveals himself as head of the coming world religion and world government of the new world order.
4. Spirit guides (demons) will prepare people for the coming of the cosmic messiah, by acclaiming him as the world teacher.
5. Peace, love and unity are to be used as buzz-words for the new world religion and the new world order.
6. New Age teachings must achieve scientific credibility and be vigorously propagated in every sphere of life in the public and private sectors around the globe.
7. Jesus must be portrayed as a prophet, a master of wisdom and one of the disciples of the cosmic christ. It should be denied that he is unique, divine and is to be worshipped as God over and above humanity.

8. Christianity and all other religions must be integrated into the inclusive world religion of the New Age.
9. Biblical Christian principles that stand in the way of this reform movement (e.g. the atonement for sins on the cross) must be discredited and abandoned.
10. Children must be spiritually influenced and indoctrinated with multi-faith ideas in schools in order to promote the New Age dogma of global religious unity.
11. Flattery will be employed to entice people into believing that humans are inherently divine. They should be told that we are all gods.
12. Science and the New Age world religion must become one. Evolution must be presented as fact and the cosmic unity of humanity and nature researched.
13. Christians who resist the *Plan* must be reoriented or dealt with in other ways. If necessary, they should be eliminated and the world purified of their influence.

Consciousness programmes

The movement has extensive consciousness programmes. They not only try to influence religious groups and governments with their ideology, but also the media, educational, and entertainment establishments.

The educational system must undergo the most radical transformation process. Changes must be introduced and implemented across the entire spectrum from the pre-school child level right up to the most advanced tertiary institutions, including theological seminaries. The identity consciousness of pupils and students must be neutralised. They must be prepared to take their place as planetary citizens in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, non-racial and non-sexist society. Narrow-mindedness must be replaced by the largest possible degree of open-mindedness on all matters, thereby eliminating any narrow ideological orientation. Theological faculties at universities must be declared open faculties where Eastern, African and other religions can be included in the curricula of disciplines such as comparative religion, science of religion, or religious studies. In this way the gap between different religions and ideologies can be narrowed.

In many institutions psycho-techniques are taught to children from a young age to obtain higher levels of consciousness, and to discover and use the latent powers of the mind. In certain educational programmes, strong emphasis is placed on cosmic powers.

Due to a renewed interest in astrology, cosmic influences on people's lives are studied. Paranormal phenomena are also investigated. Several universities recognise holistic health practices, including the role of tradi-

tional healers in treating the sick. Their mystical psycho-techniques and alternative medicine are often recommended to patients.

The New Age's view on cosmic consciousness ties up with many of the self-image development theories with which humanistic psychology is experimenting at present. Management seminars are also conducted for the business sector in which a new self-image, Silva Mind Control, telepathy, influencing people psychically, future projections, meditation, and yoga relaxation exercises are taught.

A theme that is strongly emphasised in the entertainment world, is the existence of beings of a higher order in the universe. They are often referred to as *masters of wisdom* or *masters of the universe*, and their leader is somebody like He-man or Superman who has unlimited powers.

These and occult fantasies such as Harry Potter and Pullman's trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, feature in books, films, video and TV sagas, promoting new and dangerous ways of thinking in the young, making them discontented with their present limitations. They feel like captives in a real world which unfairly restricts them. To escape this harsh reality, modern youth look for heroes who flout civilised norms, despise God's laws and offer liberation for spirit, soul and body. In flights of imagination they can escape to another world of fantasy. Techniques for mystical experiences inevitably lure them into the devil's kingdom of darkness.

Rock stars are also regarded as heroes and youngsters mould themselves on them as idols – yet they portray and promote an immoral, escapist, irresponsible, decadent life-style of promiscuous sex, drug-taking, alcohol abuse, involvement in the occult and godlessness. Mystical experiences, drunkenness, free sex, witchcraft, and satanism are regarded as adventurous challenges in the search for freedom. Despite the destructive results of this false utopia, the victims of deceit carry on regardless of the consequences.

Many of the adults of our time are products of the godless cults of the past four decades. As a result of the ideological corruption in their education, the immorality of a permissive humanistic society, and the religious decadence of backslidden and dead churches, they now look for sensational and mystical ways to escape the dullness of life. These popular interests have given rise to film productions such as the following: Star wars, The Empire Strikes Back, Return of the Jedi, Poltergeist, The Exorcist, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, ET, Close Encounters, and The Dark Crystal.

The world is now almost ready to be taken over by the big superman and practitioner of dark, occult powers, the lawless one and false prince of peace, the cosmic christ and universal messiah – the Antichrist. The Bible calls him “that man of sin... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thes. 2:3,9). Are you and

your children among the victims of Satan's intellectual, moral, and spiritual corruption, or have you "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11)? The kingdom of darkness is now making a final bid to delude all people into believing the New Age lie of cosmic unity.

Luciferic doctrines

The highest-ranking deities in the New Age Movement are (1) the universal god of all faiths, (2) the cosmic christ, and (3) Lucifer. In his book *Reflections on the Christ* the head of Planetary Citizens, David Spangler, included a chapter titled: *Lucifer, Christ and God*. In it, an important role in the consciousness evolution of humans is assigned to Lucifer:

When man entered upon the pathway of self, he entered into a great creative adventure... There he can say, 'I have fully and absolutely accepted the responsibility of who and what I am. In so doing I am free...' The being that helps man to reach this point is Lucifer. That is his role. He is the angel of man's evolution. He is the angel of man's inner light. Lucifer is the spirit of light in the microcosmic world. God is the spirit of light in the macrocosm, and Christ is the bridge between the two that spells freedom in manifestation.

David Spangler (*ibid*) promotes a luciferic initiation to effect the transition to a higher level of consciousness:

The true light of Lucifer cannot be seen through sorrow, through darkness, through rejection. The true light of this great being can only be recognised when one's own eyes can see with the light of the Christ, the light of the inner sun. Lucifer works within each of us to bring us to wholeness, and as we move into a new age, which is the age of man's wholeness, each of us is brought to the point of a Luciferic initiation, the doorway through which the individual must pass if he is to come fully into the presence of his light and wholeness.

Through the spirit of the cosmic christ of the kingdom of darkness (the Antichrist), people are introduced to the false light and peace of Lucifer, who is the father of lies. Full luciferic revelations are at present still confined to the inner circles of the New Age Movement, as members must pass through various stages of spiritual illumination before the real identity of the movement's leader is revealed to them.

A good example of progressive revelation is the system followed by the Freemasons. They are a New Age organisation, and the title of their monthly magazine is *The New Age*. Although they are subjected to strange rituals, members enjoy freedom of religion in the first 14 grades of the organisation. From this point upwards to the 29th grade, they worship the universal God of all religions, *Yahbulon* (it is a combination of *Yahweh*, the God of the Bible, *Bel* or *Baal*, the god of the Babylonians and Assyrians, and *On*, the Egyptian sun-god). From the 30th degree upwards the God of Masonry is called by his true name, *Lucifer*. Albert Pike, a 33rd

degree leader of Masonry in the 19th century, sent the following directive to the 23 supreme councils in the world on 14th July 1889:

That which we say to the crowd is: "We worship a God, but it is the God one adores without superstition." To you, Sovereign Grand Instructors General, we say this, that you may repeat it to the Brethren of the 32nd, 31st, and 30th degrees: "The Masonic religion should be, by all of us initiates of the high degrees, maintained in the purity of the Luciferian doctrine. If Lucifer was not the true God, then why would Jesus, the God of the Christians, calumniate him?"

A strong luciferic influence is also evident in the works of Alice Bailey. She supplemented Madame Blavatsky's writings by continuing the preparatory work for the dawning of the New Age. In 1922, she founded the Lucifer Publishing Company in New York. In 1923, its name was changed to Lucis Publishing Company – Lucis is just another (less well known) name of Lucifer. Branches of this publishing house were established in Britain and South Africa. Alice Bailey's New Age ideas were almost identical to those of her husband, Foster Bailey. He was a 32nd degree Mason. In his book, *The Spirit of Masonry*, he strongly emphasises the universalistic religious nature of Masonry:

The Master Masons are called by many names and are known at different times by various appellations. They can be referred to as Christ and His Church, the Masters of Wisdom, the Illuminati (the Enlightened Ones), the Rishis of the Oriental Philosophy, the Builders of the occult tradition, and those individualities of outstanding wisdom.

From this occult, luciferic tradition come the leaders of the new world order. Bailey claims that since the Freemasons are so universalistic in their thinking and objectives, they will play a major role in the establishment of the coming New Age dispensation:

It should be remembered that Masonry is not specifically Christian. Membership should be open to all. It is interesting to remember also that Jews were admitted 150 years ago, Hindus in 1865, and Muslims in 1836. Let us, therefore take our stand on this broad and generous platform and refuse to limit the original ideal by the pettiness of our views and the smallness of our vision... There will be seen in the world an organisation based on a foundation so broad and tolerant, that it provides not only a universal platform for thinkers of all schools of thought, but a universal religion and a form of government which may serve as an example to the restless peoples of the world.

Constance Cumbey, an American attorney who did extensive research on the New Age Movement, said the following about the New Age connection to Masonry:

The Masonic teachings are absolutely identical to the New Age teachings... I have a book by a prominent Mason called *The Meaning of Freemasonry*, which says: "Now

that we are going into the Age of Aquarius, and so many groups are working for the restoration of the mysteries, we Masons are the proper people to bring these teachings to the world because, after all, this is the same thing we've been teaching all along."

Active programme

The network of organisations in the New Age Movement is still expanding. Everywhere in the world they follow active programmes to recruit members, and to establish the right climate for the coming of the world messiah. Meditation sessions are often organised in conflict areas. As a result of these actions they claim credit for all breakthroughs in negotiations for peace and reconciliation. The movement regards the dismantling of the iron curtain between Eastern and Western Europe as a very significant turning point in achieving greater unity in Europe and, in a wider context, the moves to merge the Western and developing worlds, as advancing the realisation of a world without boundaries.

New Age groups were jubilant when the new South Africa elected a government that is positively inclined towards the new world order. This transition coincided with the abandonment of the former, largely biblically-based constitution, the acceptance of the interfaith principle, the establishment of a unitary state for the various national groups, and the integration of people from different races and cultures.

From the New Age point of view, an important step towards resolving the crisis in South Africa was taken by arranging a world focus rally in Cape Town for the weekend of 11-13 November 1989. New Age meditators came from far and wide (including various overseas countries) to meditate for peace and unity on Table Mountain. To them, it is an important planetary centre from where cosmic energy can be channelled to the surrounding communities.

Since 1987, co-ordinated meditation sessions are organised in many different countries on the 31st of December at 12 o'clock Greenwich time for the sake of peace, unity and reconciliation in the world. This day is referred to as *world-wide healing day* because its main purpose is to heal the international community of its divisions and lack of love. Among certain groups, the day is called a *luciferic baptism* for the world, in order that the christ consciousness may take possession of people.

The assault on the natural order and biblical Christian standards is extensive and well-planned. It is spearheaded by a host of seducing spirits from the kingdom of darkness. Any who are overcome by curiosity, or who open themselves to such spirits in ignorance, will succumb to the devil's power of deception and believe his lies. Stay well clear of all New Age and occult spiritual deception!

Anyone who has already been drawn into New Age and occult practices or is tempted to dabble in them should stop and urgently con-

sider where it will lead him. The personal stories of those who have been set free from its clutches demonstrate the very real dangers involved. A once famous USA New Age leader and author, Randall Baer, tells how, in a state of trance and enjoying 'heavenly light', he suddenly saw an evil face of absolute hatred and realised it was a demon. Horrified, he turned to the Bible and, recognising New Age for the false religion it is, received Christ as Saviour. Alan Morrison, another converted New Ager who became a Christian pastor, exposing the danger of occult influences in the church, said of the Christian hope of eternity in heaven with Christ, "That will be the true new age!" (see *Dawn of the New Age*, Penfold, 1998).

The Christian answer

The Bible has clear and specific guidance for us on this. Firstly, all should take to heart God's commandment that:

There shall not be found among you *any one*... that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the Lord... (Deut. 18:10-12).

Anyone involved in New Age should follow this example:

And many that believed came, confessing and telling their deeds. Also many of those who had practised magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and *it* totalled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. (The action of new converts at Ephesus – Acts 19:18-19 NKJV).

Christians tempted to dabble in the occult should beware of:

...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world (Rev. 12:9) ...lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his [schemes] (2 Cor. 2:11). Be sober, be vigilant; because the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (Jas. 4:7). Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places* (Eph. 6:11-12 NKJV).

Christian and New Age world-views contrasted

Biblical Christianity and the New Age Movement are based on diametrically opposite world-views. A comparison follows:

Christian world-view	New Age world-view
An antithetic way of analytical thinking in which discernment is needed to be able to categorise things and to think in opposites.	A synthetic way of thinking which ignores differences and integrates all things into a larger whole. This philosophy is called holism.
Continued divergence to a point of eternal separation between light and darkness. No unity can occur between the two poles.	Sustained convergence until all things in the cosmos become integrated and unified. Separation should not occur.
The cosmic domain of demons is prohibited to Christians. No experimentation with the occult is allowed.	The development of a cosmic consciousness by transcending the boundary to the supernatural world, is recommended.
Monotheism. The triune God is a transcendent God whose abode is in heavenly places. He must be worshipped independently of His creation. God works within people through His Holy Spirit, but remains a distinct Being who should be reverently approached in prayer.	Pantheism. God is mystical and impersonal. There is an element of divinity in the entire creation, which means that everything is god. Since all people are regarded as inherently divine, they must deepen the level of their consciousness and discover the god within themselves.
Humans are a special creation of God, distinct from the natural world and were commanded by God to subdue it and rule over all the living creatures.	Humans are part of nature, emerging from a single line of descent by biological evolution. They must be at one with nature and maintain a mystical bond with it.
Humans have only one life-cycle. After death, those born again will be raised by Christ to eternal life in heaven. Others will face God's final judgement.	Human beings have various life cycles in which they evolve to higher forms of life. By way of reincarnation they often return to a new life cycle on earth.
Humans are inherently sinful and, unless they repent and believe the Gospel, face eternal punishment with the devil in hell.	Humans are inherently good and only act badly because of adverse external influences. There is no devil or hell in the universe.
Through repentance and prayer, the remission of sins can be obtained from Jesus Christ, and the love and peace of God will flow into your heart by the work of the Holy Spirit. Christian meditation is a counterfeit form of worship derived from TM.	Through a process of quiet meditation and the opening of the receptive faculties of your right-brain you can develop a deeper state of consciousness. You will then become one with the christ within you and experience a mystical peace and tranquility.

Christian world-view	New Age world-view
<p>When Christians join together in corporate prayer, the Holy Spirit works in a powerful way to convict people of sin and to save their souls.</p>	<p>When large numbers of people meditate at the same time, cosmic energy will be released to promote peace and to heal humanity's many divisions.</p>
<p>Jesus Christ is the Son of God who has all power in heaven and on earth. The cosmic christ is Satan's counterfeit christ who endeavours to be worshipped in place of the true Christ. After the seven-year reign of the Antichrist, Jesus will come back in power and majesty to destroy the Antichrist and to reign over His kingdom on earth. All people would do well to worship only the true Christ, to prepare for His coming and to reject the antichristian New Age Movement.</p>	<p>The cosmic christ is the expected world teacher who will arise from the highly evolved ranks of <i>homo universalis</i>. The members of all the religions will recognise and worship him as their saviour and common messiah. He will introduce the next unfolding of human history to the Age of Aquarius, which is the widely propagated Utopia of cosmic unity on earth. The ultimate form of human freedom will then be achieved in which nothing will be regarded as wrong or sinful. All will be one.</p>

9. The Judgement Seat of Christ

The Judgement Seat of Christ

The church of the Lord Jesus has nearly reached the end of her earthly pilgrimage. She can look forward to an imminent reunion with her Lord at the rapture, followed by the marriage supper of the Lamb. But prior to the latter, every true Christian must keep an important appointment at Christ's judgement seat where He will review and assess their lives.

At the judgement seat of Christ, the works of believers will be tested by fire to determine whether they were spiritual or of the old sinful nature. Rewards will be granted to those who led fruitful and victorious lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, while unspiritual Christians will see all their works consumed by fire, though they will be saved. They will be ashamed and empty-handed in the presence of the Lord who purchased them at such great cost and to whom they were not fully committed in this life.

The apostle Paul describes the scene at the judgement seat where some Christians will be rewarded while others will stand there empty-handed:

...every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon... For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (1 Cor. 3:8-15).

A close study of the judgement seat of Christ reveals the following important facts with regard to the nature and purpose of this judgement:

A fixed appointment

Christians are reminded that the judgements of God will begin at His house, which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15):

For the time has *come* that judgement must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:17).

In the first phase of the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, members of His church will face their Lord at the judgement seat. For this reason Christians are repeatedly challenged to be prepared for this important appointment:

For we must all appear before the judgement 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 (2 Cor. 5:10).

Good works, typified by gold, silver and precious stones, the fruit of the Spirit, will be rewarded. *Bad* can be translated *fruitless* or *futile*, i.e. works of the old nature, not Christ-like or not done with a pure motive. When tried they will be rejected and, like wood, hay or stubble in a fire, be consumed.

Paul confirms the sobering fact that we must all give an account of the way we have lived our lives, which the Lord Jesus will examine at the judgement seat:

But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ... So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:10,12).

Believers only

Only born-again believers will appear before the judgement seat of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:15 it is clearly stated that those believers whose works are consumed will still be accepted as redeemed. Works obviously have no bearing on redemption, because there is absolutely nothing that we can add to the perfect work of redemption by Christ on the cross. No room is left for self-righteousness since we are saved only by the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8-9 NKJV).

At the judgement seat, all believers will have one thing in common – the foundation of the new birth. This is the only basis for acceptance by God. That is why Paul emphatically states in 1 Corinthians 3:11 that no one can lay a foundation other than the one which has been laid, that is, Jesus Christ. There is, therefore, no other means of reconciliation to God than faith in the Person and work of His Son Jesus:

...for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

The basis for judgement

We have already shown that the foundation of the new life is the common characteristic of all those who appear before the judgement seat. Because Christ has already borne the punishment for the sins of all believers, they

will not be required to give account of their faith or of whether they are saved or unsaved. On this occasion a whole new criterion for judgement is applied – that of works. During this interview the Lord Jesus will examine the way Christians have lived their lives after conversion, to what extent they have carried out His commission to act as His witnesses and to serve Him faithfully, while shining as lights in a dark world.

1 Corinthians 3:11-12 (quoted on p. 3) reveals that the standard which the Lord sets will result in widely different outcomes – the works of some believers will be consumed, while the works of others will be commended. This indicates that there are two categories of works, of which only one is acceptable to the Lord. From these verses also emerges the important fact that it is indeed possible to lead an unfruitful life after being born again, by doing things that are devoid of eternal value. It is therefore of the greatest importance that Christians should be fully aware of the standard required for their works and way of life.

Fleshly or spiritual?

If it is true that professing Christians can be divided into two groups, one would surely expect to find clear statements to this effect in the Scriptures. Paul does indeed make this distinction just before he describes the judgement seat. He first refers to the *natural man* who does not accept the things of the Spirit of God because he cannot understand them and they are foolishness to him (1 Cor. 2:14). This applies to people who still remain in their unsaved condition and therefore will not appear before the judgement seat of Christ, where believers will give account of their stewardship. The unsaved will be judged according to their evil works at the great white throne after the second resurrection when they will be condemned to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:12-14).

By way of contrast, Paul then refers to the *spiritual man* who has been born again and lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:15; Rom. 8:14), while bearing fruit to the glory of God and for the extension of His kingdom:

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Christians of this kind bear fruit worthy of repentance, consequently their works will endure and not be consumed in the fire. Spiritual Christians are definitely not without problems and setbacks, but they resist the evil tendencies of the old nature and persevere in a life of sanctification.

Paul then refers to another type of Christian who is clearly immature in the faith, has not yet learned to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16), but is still dominated by the old nature:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto [fleshly], *even* as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet [fleshly]: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not [fleshly], and walk as men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Christians referred to in these verses (whether or not they are new converts) though having a foundation of salvation yet, so far, have built futile lives, typified by using non-durable materials like wood, hay and stubble. Having failed to make any spiritual progress, they are in danger of being content to stay indefinitely in a state of spiritual immaturity. This is not what we are saved for, so we are sternly warned against such stagnation and urged to grow up spiritually:

...let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God (Heb. 6:1; see also Heb. 5:12-14).

We should build our lives on the foundation of repentance and the study of the Bible. However, we are called to be not only hearers, but also doers of the word of God (Jas. 1:22-25). God has called us to be conformed to Christ's image (Rom. 8:29) and only by surrendering to God's will, obeying His word, praying and following Jesus can we grow spiritually and become mature, Christ-like Christians:

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the [dishonesty] of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, *even* Christ (Eph. 4:11-15).

Works

In the light of the above it has now become possible for us to distinguish three broad categories of works. They emerge from different motivations and sources, and therefore have quite distinctive characteristics. These are the fruits in people's lives that reveal their inner spiritual state. "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:16).

1. The evil and sinful works of those who are lost

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death (Rom. 7:5).

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them* (Eph. 5:11).

This group of people includes not only the heathen who have never heard the gospel, but often highly civilised, decent people who are church

members. They think they are acceptable to God by observing rituals such as baptism, confirmation, holy communion, and doing good works *without* repenting of their inherent sinfulness and seeking cleansing by the blood of Christ. They are building their lives on false foundations and, unless they repent, will be condemned at the great white throne judgement – so will not stand before Christ’s judgement seat. Then there are the evil impostors described in 2 Timothy 3:1-9, who use religion as a cloak for wicked deeds, much like the Pharisees whom Jesus called hypocrites “like white-washed tombs” (Mt. 23: 27,33 NKJV), and will be severely judged except they repent.

2. The works of fleshly believers

Many Christians who have not surrendered the full control of their lives to the Holy Spirit, try to establish their own righteousness and serve the Lord in their own strength. However, the works of the uncrucified flesh are unacceptable to God as they are opposed to the works of the Spirit:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:17).

Unspiritual Christians lead a life marked by ups and downs, in which free reign is given to human failure and weakness. There is sound, biblical advice to those who are perpetually motivated by the uncrucified *old nature*:

Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:16).

...reckon... yourselves to be dead... unto sin (Rom. 6:11).

To be able to do this, a full surrender is required of us. Every sin and human effort of self-righteousness that still separates us from the Lord, has to be confessed and forsaken. We have to surrender ourselves to the Lord with an undivided heart in earnest prayer, in order to be filled with and used by His Spirit (Lk. 11:13; Eph. 5:18).

3. The good works that flow from a Spirit-filled life and are acceptable to the Lord

We have to emphasise here that there must be no question of pursuing a humanly inspired works-holiness in the sense that we would attempt to present our achievements to God in an effort to earn our salvation. The works we are referring to here must be those which have been worked out in our lives by the Holy Spirit *after* salvation:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10; see also Jas. 2:14-26).

Only works which the Lord has done *through* us, and not those which we have done in our own strength *for* God, will be able to come up to His standard. Our role is that of willing channels for His use and service.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:13).

We are repeatedly encouraged to persist in good works of this kind, that we may glorify God through our lives and contribute towards the extension of His kingdom:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).

Watch and pray

In order to be in a perpetual state of readiness for Christ's return and for His judgement seat, a life of spirituality based on prayer and watchful service to Him is essential. We should always keep in mind that the present world is passing away, and that we are heading for our eternal home in heaven:

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (1 Pet. 4:7).

Seeing then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy [conduct] and godliness? (2 Pet. 3:11).

In this regard, the apostle Peter's exhortations are in close harmony with the statements of the Lord Jesus, whose advice for spiritual readiness always remains the same, namely: *Watch and pray!* (Lk. 21:36).

We are called upon to pray and be alert always, but especially in times of crisis. In the garden of Gethsemane, when the forces of darkness descended upon the Saviour and His small group of disciples, the latter fell asleep as they failed to appreciate the seriousness of the situation. What did the Master say to them?

And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak (Mt. 26:40-41).

The same exhortation to vigilance applies with regard to the Second Coming of Christ:

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. *For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch (Mk. 13:33-37).

There are those who argue that it is not really essential to watch and pray, seeing that it is not possible for a Christian to be lost once he has been saved. However, it is possible that born-again children of God could backslide and lapse into an unspiritual, worldly state in which they will forfeit their reward (2 Tim. 4:10; 2 Jn. v. 8). Others may even suffer shipwreck in their spiritual lives (1 Tim. 1:19).

Satan, the deceiver, is ever on the look-out to lay cunning traps for the active Christian. He often succeeds in his goal of distracting and diverting them from the great commission of world evangelism. For this reason Christ exhorts Christians to be watchful lest anyone should steal their crown and even their white garments (Rev. 3:11; 16:15).

We have to keep on watching, praying and fighting the good fight of faith to remain steadfast as Christians amid the utter depravity of the end times. We must accept that to follow our Lord we must tread a narrow and difficult path, and no one lukewarm, or unwilling to “endure hardness” can be “a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3,4).

Many Christians do not stand firm in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, but lapse back into some of their old weaknesses, sins and worldly life-styles. The Galatians, for instance, returned to a legalistic way of life. Paul is clearly concerned about this turning back:

Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? If *it be* yet in vain (Gal. 3:3-4).

It is the tragedy of our day that so many believers fail to grow and mature spiritually and seem quite content to lead a life of defeat. As a result they not only fail to fulfil their life’s calling as ambassadors for Christ, but also show a bad example to unbelievers who might otherwise have been open to receiving Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

There is but one solution to this problem. Only a complete surrender to Christ can transform lukewarm, sluggish and inefficient Christians into people consumed with zeal and a burning desire to serve the Lord. It also has to be fully understood that total surrender is not a one-off decision like the step of receiving Christ, which signifies the start of the Christian pilgrimage, but a commitment which must be renewed and re-affirmed every step of the way. Holiness and self-denial must become a way of living:

And He said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Lk. 9:23).

Let us joyfully proceed with the journey and,

...seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith (Heb. 12:1-2).

As we approach the finishing line and draw closer to the goal with every passing day, we must reach new heights of perseverance and commitment:

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:11-12).

Crowns for the faithful

The New Testament often refers to the promise of the Lord Jesus that He will reward His faithful servants after His Second Coming. It is His heartfelt desire that all Christians should exert themselves in this regard, because striving for a crown contributes to the motivation and spiritual idealism which are required to resolutely persevere to the end. It also emphasises the necessity of being always equipped with the whole armour of God for the struggle against Satan and his kingdom (Eph. 6:13-17). This will ensure that we do not risk stunting our spiritual growth, nor stand impoverished and empty-handed before Christ's judgement seat. For this reason the Lord warns and exhorts every Christian:

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Rev. 3:11).

The Scriptures abound in promises of reward for the faithful servants of the Lord. It serves as a special encouragement to those who find themselves in difficult circumstances and are suffering severe affliction. It is also a rich source of inspiration which fills the weary traveller with strength and zeal to persevere in the struggle. It creates in the Christian a living expectation of a glorious and incorruptible heavenly kingdom that awaits those who are willing to make significant sacrifices for the sake of Christ and His kingdom (1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 8:17).

Hebrews 11 confirms the fact that the spiritual vista of the life to come was a strong motivating force in the lives of many Old Testament worthies – the world's greatest heroes of faith. They derived strength from faith in God when obeying His commandments, standing firm against fearful odds, and loved not their own lives even when facing death. Because of this same conviction, Moses chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, and considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he looked forward to the reward (Heb. 11:25-26).

The following promises were made to all the warriors of Christ who have taken up their positions in the front line of the battle against the forces of darkness:

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine,

and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations (Rev. 2:24-26).

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and... I will confess his name before My Father (Rev. 3:5).

Categories of service

The Bible identifies five broad categories of service against which the granting of rewards are measured. These works are collectively called “the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev. 19:8 NKJV) and are compared to gold, silver and precious stones because they will withstand the test of the fire of Christ’s judgement (1 Cor. 3:12-14). As the fruit of the Holy Spirit they have the stamp of incorruptibility.

It is evident that these works essentially originate from God. Christians are important co-workers with God in this regard, because they are the channels through which the works of their Father take on a visible form on this earth. Christians should be storing up treasures in heaven which will be awarded to them at the Second Coming of Christ, in direct proportion to the extent to which they were committed to the pursuance of their divine calling.

U The crown of life for martyrs

The crown of life is reserved as a reward for those who have laid down their lives for their faith. This also applies to all who were severely persecuted and who bore the reproach of Christ through suffering, beatings and ridicule.

According to 1 Peter 4:12-16,19 the martyrs are seen as partakers in the sufferings and afflictions of Christ because they are in the heat of the battle against the forces of Satan. This kind of sacrifice is precious to God and the oppressed are encouraged to accept their suffering joyfully:

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

This promise is addressed to the church in Smyrna. Smyrna means *bitterness* and as such it is representative of the bitter suffering of the persecuted church of Jesus Christ throughout the ages. The ten days of tribulation evidently refers to the age of ferocious religious persecution which characterised the reign of ten consecutive Roman emperors, from Nero in 64 AD to Diocletian in 312 AD. The property of Christians was confiscated and robbed, many sought refuge in secret catacombs, they were thrown into prison under inhuman conditions, many were thrown to lions in the arenas in Rome, while others were burned at the stake.

The emperor Constantine's acceptance of the Christian faith early in the 4th century did not bring a permanent end to the persecution. Medieval Europe gradually became the scene of intensified action against Christians who refused to accept the authority of the Roman Church. So-called 'holy wars' were waged against true Christians who fled to remote parts of the Alps and sought refuge in caves.

There have always been faithful servants of Jesus who risked their safety and even their own lives to keep the flame of the faith burning in a hostile world. They realised and accepted the full implications of Christ's words when He said that He would send His disciples out as lambs in the midst of wolves (Lk. 10:3). In the world they would be hated and persecuted (Jn. 16:33; 17:14), but like the three friends of Daniel in the furnace, they would never be forsaken.

The Protestant reformation in Europe also claimed a frightfully high price in the blood and tears of Christian martyrs – Hebrews 11:32-40 was almost literally rewritten in the histories of these heroes of the faith. They had such an important and far-reaching influence on the survival and advance of the Christian gospel that some historians claim that our present (perhaps soon *past?*) religious freedoms can to a large extent be attributed to the unwavering testimonies of French Huguenots who gave their lives to defend the faith.

The persecution was to increase in scope and severity and, under the onslaught of communism, claim the lives of more martyrs in the twentieth century than in the previous nineteen centuries put together. When communism started to crumble, evangelical Christians began to encounter rising hostility from human rights and radical Islamist movements, increasingly powerful interfaith alliances, and humanistic, multi-racial, multi-faith or Islamic governments. The popular religious trend in the world today is the New Age philosophy that all religions worship the same God, so must accept each other as brothers and sisters in a one-world faith. Evangelical Christians are increasingly branded as judgmental, uncompromising isolationists who resist efforts to create a new one-world religion by refusing to link hands in unity with other religions.

It is under gloomy circumstances such as these that the true worth of the Christian faith is powerfully manifested. It is imperishable in the midst of the strongest persecution and to many people remains the highest aspiration in life. Its inherent strength is evidenced by the fact that some of the most cruel oppressors were conquered by the power of divine love while their helpless victims prayed for them.

The gospel of Christ did not reach us by easy means or without cost. It was confirmed by the testimonies of millions of martyrs who laid down their lives for it. They sealed it with their blood and in this way made a major contribution to its survival. Through their heroic actions they con-

firmed the validity and truth of our faith beyond any doubt. They were willing to pay the highest price to defend the Christian faith against the vicious, satanically inspired attacks aimed at its total destruction.

It is clear that costly sacrifices for the sake of the gospel are required even in countries where no religious persecution occurs. Also, the Lord often allows severe afflictions in the lives of His people to test their faith, mostly in the form of sickness, bereavement, financial setbacks or other disappointments, in order to help them feel their need to depend upon Him fully, and to give them the opportunity to encourage others and take a clear Christian stand in life (2 Cor. 1:3-10). Those who do not become bitter or despondent as a result of their trials and afflictions but allow themselves to be purified and edified by these experiences, will also receive a crown from the Lord on that day:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him (Jas. 1:12).

U The imperishable crown for a holy life

The heroic conduct of martyrs who suffered the deepest and most terrible anguish has often been a challenge to lukewarm and backslidden Christians to recommit their lives to serve the Lord with greater devotion and holiness:

Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith... (Heb. 12:1-2).

The image of the Christian as a competitor in a race, with a set goal, striving to win and be crowned as victor at the end of the race, must have occurred to Paul while he was attending the Olympic or Isthmian games in Greece. Hence his remark to the Corinthians:

And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown*. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Cor. 9:25-27 NKJV).

It must have struck Paul that athletes not only commit themselves wholeheartedly to arduous fitness programmes, but also abstain from anything which might negatively influence their performance. This is also essentially what sanctification means – to lead a pure, disciplined life in which Christians abstain from all habits and activities that could damage their spiritual lives. Paul once again challenges the Corinthians in this regard in his second letter, indicating that both body *and* spirit must be cleansed while we strive to please the Lord in every aspect of our lives:

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

Sanctification implies more than Christians purifying their lives from outright sin and unrighteousness. It also means abandoning any activity or commitment which may not be sinful of itself, but which hinders us from serving the Lord wholeheartedly. The devotion of time, money and effort to earthly things not essential to our temporal needs (which include healthy exercise and modest holidays) and do not further the Lord's work, will stunt our spiritual growth or even completely ruin our witness for Him (see Phil. 3:17-19). We need to urgently identify and remove these hindrances.

It is only when Christians deny and crucify their old natures, which are focussed on earthly goals and pursuits, that they make a full surrender and pursue "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14):

As obedient children, not [conforming] yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all [your conduct] because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

The Lord wants to purify our whole life, to fill it with His Holy Spirit and set it apart for His service (Rom. 6:13). His desire is that even the most hidden thoughts of our hearts should be acceptable in His sight (Ps. 19:15), so that He can have full control of every facet of our lives and thought processes. Only then can we be transformed into examples of His holiness, and our lives be a positive witness so that we shine like stars in this dark world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Lev. 10:3; Phil. 2:14-15).

The wish of the apostle Paul for all true Christians is that they should conform to God's high standard in personal sanctification. He assures them that, even though God's command to holiness is far beyond the reach of the unregenerate to attain to, He will make it a reality in the lives of all Christians who are unconditionally committed to Him:

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful *is* He that calleth you, who also will do *it* (1 Thes. 5:23-24).

Only along the path of sanctification can Jesus Christ in all His excellence be manifested in the lives of His disciples. Having been conformed to the image of Christ, arrayed in bright and clean linen, without spot or blemish, renders them suitably adorned to form part of His bride at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-8).

U The crown of rejoicing for soul winners

World evangelisation is the most important task the Lord Jesus committed to His disciples and to us by extension:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15).

This commission applies to all Christians in all ages. Because the survival of the church on earth is so dependent on evangelisation and missionary work, it is expected of each member to be involved in this task in some capacity. It has never been easy to spread the message of Christ in a hostile world, therefore, the messengers need to be equipped with the necessary divine power:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Although other disciples had already moved into Samaria with the gospel message, Paul laid the foundation for the church among the Gentiles. He greatly rejoiced over the first people who repented and were saved on account of his preaching. To the congregations in Philippi and Thessalonica, respectively, he said:

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved (Phil. 4:1).

For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? (1 Thes. 2:19).

To everyone who leads lost souls to Jesus, the crown of rejoicing will be given at the judgement seat of Christ. This is a highly esteemed calling in the kingdom of heaven, which is why soul-winners are compared to shining stars – they have brought the light of the world, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, to a lost, dark world, so that others can find their way to Calvary and to a new life in Him:

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3).

U The crown of glory for faithful shepherds

The spiritual nurture and edification of the flock is a very important aspect of Christian service which was ordained by Christ Himself and will eventually be rewarded by Him:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for [dishonest gain], but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

The pastoral aspect is sometimes undervalued by evangelists and others who tend to measure the results of preaching only in terms of the number of decisions that were made for Christ. It is true that this first step of salvation is very important, but the Bible also teaches that second-

phase work demands even more time and commitment. While people are born again immediately upon receiving the Lord Jesus as Saviour, years of spiritual edification and development are needed before they would be able to become reliable members of the local assembly or teachers with a wider ministry. Spiritual edification is clearly an essential follow-on from first phase evangelism:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (Mt. 28:19-20).

Paul stayed in Corinth for eighteen months to provide new converts there with more advanced training in the Word of God (Acts 18:11). Peter, who received the emphatic order to tend the flock of the Lord (Jn. 21:15-17), devoted much time and care to the spiritual maintenance of converts by regular house visits and temple service (Acts 2:37-47).

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods (Mt. 24:45-47).

U The crown of righteousness for those who love Christ's appearing

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

It might appear strange that the Lord should reserve a distinctive crown as reward for a good work that seems no more than an attitude of mind and heart. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that not only does the Lord deeply value our love for Him, but especially the fact that we are eagerly looking out for His Second Coming! It is this which gives a special quality to all our work and witness for Him.

The eye should be kept steadfastly on Jesus who has promised to return soon and to reveal His heavenly kingdom in glory. Christians should be keenly aware of this fact to the extent that it continuously gives purpose and direction to their daily life and work. The concept of the Second Coming contains a special motivation to serve the Lord. It adds a dimension of urgency to evangelical and pastoral service. It is also a strong incentive towards sanctification because every believer who cherishes the hope of Christ's appearing "purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:3).

The example of the martyrs clearly illustrates that the Christian's expectation for the future provides a steady anchor for the soul as well as a conscious connection to the next life. In moments of deepest distress

and suffering, comfort and inspiration are derived from the knowledge that the way of the cross does not end at the grave, but leads to certain resurrection, a new heavenly body and eternal life:

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory... For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our [habitation] which is from heaven (2 Cor. 4:16-17; 5:2).

When born-again Christians backslide, their interest in spiritual things begins to fade and both earthly- and worldly- mindedness tends to take over. Their spiritual calling to world evangelisation and the edification of the church is abandoned and there is little to distinguish them from nominal, non-born-again Christians; indeed both tend to follow a socio-political philosophy. In this way many 21st century churches degenerate into secular do-goodism which shows little concern for the eternal salvation of the lost (Rev. 3:17).

The healthy interaction that should exist between our relationship with God and our relationship with other people becomes disrupted and distorted because of our loss of vision, and degenerates into a humanistic involvement in the secular misfortunes of the peoples and nations around us. This results in a search for political, economic and even military solutions, without recognising the spiritual dimension and the underlying moral causes of these problems.

The only solution to the serious and widespread problem of secularisation is found in a restored spiritual perspective. Prof. H. du Plessis says:

Only when the faith of the church is focused far above the horizon of the world, on the coming of the kingdom, on the Second Coming of Christ, only when the believer understands his purpose within the kingdom and is willing to be used in this regard, does the conviction exist that all our labour in this regard is not in vain, and are we safeguarded against a secularised life (*Science of Mission Today*, p. 89).

Christ crowned with glory

Paul could confidently write to the church in Philippi:

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:3-6).

So should it also be with us, because good works are what Christ, as head of the new creation, has prepared for us. He explained this principle to His disciples as follows: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5).

In true Christian service, there is no room for boasting or rejoicing in our own achievements. The crowns which will be awarded at the judgement seat of Christ, will eventually be laid down before the throne of the Lamb in acknowledgement and deep gratitude to Him (Rev. 4:9-11).

Still, the promises of reward for our labour serve a positive purpose in motivating us towards dedicated action. The Lord has a glorious plan for world evangelisation which He has entrusted to His church, and He is counting on us to accomplish it. It would have been very easy for God to bring His works to pass in a direct and spectacular way, but He chooses to do it by means of His church, thus perfecting His power in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

It is the desire of the Father that every Christian be involved in the furtherance of His kingdom on earth, hence the many and urgent challenges towards a life of dedication.

The way to spiritual maturity

Since sanctification is such a crucial concept in preparing ourselves to appear before the judgement seat of Christ, a closer examination of this doctrine is necessary.

Already in the first five books of the Bible we find the basic guidelines for the process of sanctification, where the people of God are led step by step from the slavery of Egypt into the freedom of the Promised Land. In 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13, Paul clearly explains that the people of Israel's journey to the Promised Land does not only have historical value, because "all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11 NKJV). We can, therefore, expect to find in the early history of Israel a clear type of the Christian's pilgrimage to the heavenly land.

Egypt – enslaved to sin

The sojourn in Egypt is a typical portrayal of ungodly people who are spiritually dead and in bondage to sin. They are captives of Satan and the world and driven to certain ruin by merciless slave-drivers. They cannot free themselves from the power and domination of the enemy and are therefore driven to cry out to God in their desperate plight:

And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage (Ex. 2:23).

Salvation – a miracle of God

Because of their groanings, God took pity on the people and sent Moses as a deliverer to free them from the bondage of slavery. All who were liberated to begin the journey to the Promised Land, experienced the

miracle of the wonderful salvation of God. They were amazed to behold the mighty deeds of His salvation which allowed them to pass through the Red Sea without even wetting their feet!

I *am* the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their [slaves]; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright (Lev. 26:13).

In New Testament terms, this dramatic exodus from Egypt can be compared to the salvation or new birth of a sinner. The lamb without blemish which was to be sacrificed by the children of Israel on the night before the exodus is a type of Jesus, the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for us and “bare our sins in His own body” at Calvary (1 Pet. 2:24). His sacrifice provides the only ransom for sins:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain [conduct] *received* by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

This once-for-ever sacrifice by Christ (Heb. 10:12) during Passover, made possible the offer of a new, eternal life to myriads from every nation, tongue and tribe – and the start of a spiritual pilgrimage to our eternal, heavenly home.

The wilderness journey – conflict between the Spirit and the old nature

In the wilderness, the redeemed Israelites experienced a mighty inner conflict between the sentiments of the old life in Egypt and those of a new life as the people of God in a barren wilderness. On the one hand they were committed to a life of faith and sanctification by trusting God and living to His honour and glory all the days of their lives:

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a [special] treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth *is* Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Ex. 19:4-6).

On the other hand there was the harking back to Egypt (Ex. 16:3; 17:3), as well as the doubt as to whether God would really supply all their needs in that barren, inhospitable wilderness. Dissatisfaction and rebellion were often evident in the conduct of the Israelites, even idolatry in one instance. They soon started rebelling and murmuring against God, and in this way backslid into sensual craving:

They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but

sent leanness into their soul (Ps. 106:13-15).

In the same way half-hearted Christians who still battle with inner conflicts after their salvation often cling to a life of sensual pleasure. This can be compared to the process in which a new shoot is grafted into a tree without the old branches being pruned away. The new and the old life are now competing with each other to extract the maximum amount of sap from the plant. Eventually the old, established shoots deprive the younger branch, causing it to be unfruitful and wither away. In the same way the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, also the pride of life, can cause conflict and decline in the Christian life (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Gal. 5:16-17).

The same was true of Israel in the wilderness. A life of divided loyalties snuffed out the spiritual motivation of the people and stimulated sensual and sinful tendencies to such an extent that the latter eventually got the upper hand. The result was an unsatisfactory spiritual experience, with little or no progress on the path of sanctification. This is evidenced by the forty years of aimless wanderings before the people were ready to enter into the Promised Land.

God's miracles and disciplinary dealings with them in the wilderness should have strengthened their faith, but the effect on them was short-lived and their commitment to Him was fickle. Like the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1), the Israelites suffered from the prolonged effect of spiritual immaturity, so not surprisingly they acted irresponsibly.

On the whole, the wilderness journey did indeed serve a very important purpose in revealing to the people the latent unbelief in their hearts, and in this way precipitate a crisis intended to lead them to make a full surrender:

All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy [garments did not wear out on] thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee (Deut. 8:1-5).

The same principle applies in the New Testament where the Lord subjects His children to a process of purification in order that they might enter into His holiness (Heb. 12:3-14). Peter also confirms this truth:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of

Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

The River Jordan – a full surrender

This is the point at which the life of self-seeking and sinfulness is finally discarded and the believer commits himself totally to the Lord to be filled with and guided by His Spirit. With brokenness of heart he humbles himself before the Lord and confesses his flawed and unfruitful spiritual life. Only then can the Lord take full control and equip this person with power from on high to play a constructive part in extending His kingdom.

Israel's struggles during their wilderness journey came to an end at the Jordan River. The people were commanded to move through and take possession of their inheritance:

Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged (Deut. 1:21).

In addition to the promised land of milk and honey, this change would also bring them into intensified conflict with the enemies of God. Israel is assured, however, that the Lord is fighting for them and He will certainly lead them to victory in their battles against the heathen nations:

Hear, O Israel: Thou *art* to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven... Understand therefore this day that the LORD thy God *is* He which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire He shall destroy them, and He shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee (Deut. 9:1,3).

The Promised Land – on the way to victory

A spiritual transformation took place. On the other side of the River Jordan the nostalgic yearning for Egypt and the inner conflicts engendered by this longing, were soon overcome and forgotten. The struggle against an enemy from within (the old sinful nature) was replaced by a fierce struggle against an external, evil power. Because the people were no longer their own worst enemies, they could become partakers in the battle to which the Lord calls all believers, namely to be a real *Israelite*, or *Warrior for God*.

Although the people were going to enter into a land of milk and honey, they would first have to drive out a mighty foe and take possession of the fortified cities. The apostle Paul challenges Christians to engage in a similar warfare against formidable and wicked *spiritual* enemies:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:10-13).

This struggle must continue and the enemy driven back so that we can possess our spiritual inheritance which the Lord has given us. As Christian warriors we cannot afford to be passive in confronting the increasing global threat of evil, amorality, atheism, satanism and militant false religions.

A fierce onslaught is being directed against Christians on various fronts. Any who do not make a definite stand against Satan's attacks, will be robbed of their spiritual inheritance. Those who move forward in full assurance of faith and in obedience to the Holy Spirit, however, receive the assurance that they are on the winning side and will be more than conquerors through Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:35-39).

Holy to the Lord

The key word with regard to the victorious life to which we all aspire is *sanctification*.

For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee (Deut. 23:14).

This principle is just as valid in the dispensation of grace, hence the fact that the commandment to be holy which was given in Leviticus 11:44 is repeated word for word in 1 Peter 1:15-16. This clearly implies that a believer must be sanctified and purified at every level of his existence. This renewal starts in the heart and mind from where the causes of sin must be removed. Inner conflicts and tensions are often caused by sinful desires, wrong motives, worldly friendships, a guilt complex, etc., and call for self-examination, confession, a full surrender to the Lord, and asking Him to show us our secret sins and to cleanse us from them:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if *there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting* (Ps. 139:23-24).

The process of sanctification must be clearly evident in a person's conversation: "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Ps. 34:13). This is in accordance with the stern warning issued in James 3:1-12. We need to ask the Lord daily to set a watch before our mouths and keep the door of our lips (Ps. 141:3). Apart from abstaining from malice, guile and idle gossip in our conversation, there is a clear stimulus towards good: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

The process of sanctification can be broken down into two clear

phases. The first phase consists of a thorough-going crucifixion of the old nature (Gal. 5:24) which is utterly depraved due to the Fall. An incomplete crucifixion results in a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. Such people pretend that everything is well, when it is not. Condoning secret sin in oneself will keep the flesh alive. Solomon's warning in this regard is very relevant: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

Christians who keep certain sins in their lives hidden and attempt to build a life of holiness on the half-crucified remains of the old life, will find that they are leading a hypocritical and unfruitful spiritual life. A prerequisite for a life of spiritual prosperity is a total purification and abandonment of sin and worldly-mindedness. Often there remains a single obstacle that stands in the way of a Spirit-filled life. Will you confess it to the Lord? Jesus said to a rich but God-fearing man: "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast... and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me" (Lk. 18:22). This man was not prepared to sacrifice his materialism, so went away sorrowful.

The second phase of sanctification is the systematic building up of the new life, after the foundation has been laid in Jesus Christ. For this, growing faith, whole-hearted commitment to Christ and firm self-discipline are required. Faithfulness in Bible-study and prayer are essential, as is an active witness to the outside world and commitment to a Christ-centred fellowship. In the busy and rushed life of our day and age it has become increasingly important to redeem the time because the days are evil. Only in this way is the inner man nourished and enabled to unfold in continuous growth. Without all these building-blocks, spiritual stagnation and backsliding would be inevitable.

The solution to spiritual problems of this nature are not unknown to us. Every Christian knows about the stream of living waters which flows from the Rock that was cleft for us (Christ). Everyone who is willing to kneel down and drink from this stream *daily*, will not thirst in all eternity. Christians who have discovered the secret of the revival of their souls will never want to leave this Source of cleansing, nourishing, and strength again. Every Christian should be like a tree which is planted by the streams of water which gives its fruit in season; and prosper in everything he does (Ps. 1:3).

Are you ready for this final moment of truth?

After referring to that fixed appointment we must all keep – i.e. to appear before Christ at His judgement seat – it is significant that Paul also refers to "the terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:10-11). It will be a truly awesome experience, indeed *the* final 'moment of truth', for which we would be wise to prepare *now!* Paul urges us all, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in

the faith; prove your own selves... this also we wish, *even your perfection*" (2 Cor. 13:5-9). "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:16).

Are we quite sure the doctrines we hold on the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and other fundamental doctrines have not been inherited unreformed and uncritically from Rome but are true to Scripture? Do we spiritualise Scripture, so robbing it of its literal meaning and distorting doctrine, e.g. by misinterpreting end-time prophecies, or throwing doubt on the inspired creation account in Genesis by capitulating to the false claims of the unproven evolution theory?

Do we compromise on biblical truths in our desire to achieve outward unity among believers? Do leaders in the church put personal popularity and career prospects before faithfulness to Christ and Scripture? Do we go beyond the teaching of Scripture in too readily accepting dubious new teachings and bizarre practices? Are we conformed to "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4) by being too easily influenced by the media, entertainment, trends in music, dress and conduct, or becoming "enemies of the cross of Christ" by earthly-mindedness? (Phil. 3:18,19)? We can be sure such things will come up for review at Christ's judgement seat.

As we have seen, the latter is not punitive, but for Christ to assess our lives, test our deeds by fire, and reward faithful servants. Surely, we would not wish to be ashamed or stand empty-handed there, but rather to deserve our Lord's "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt. 25:23). Referring to this awesome occasion, Paul adds that he was "manifest unto God" (2 Cor. 5:11) – i.e. he was unaware of anything in his life which God would not approve of, so could truly say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:7,8), and urges us to "imitate" him (1 Cor. 4:16; NKJV). Christ's coming is clearly imminent, and "judgement must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17), when "many... first shall be last" (Mt. 19:30). May we search our hearts in the light of God's Word to ensure we know of nothing of which we would be ashamed when we stand before the judgement seat of the Lord we love!

10. The Millennium

The Bible clearly teaches a future, one thousand-year reign of Christ from the restored throne of David in Jerusalem. This coming dispensation is referred to as the **Millennium**. It will be the sixth dispensation in the divine history of humanity, to be followed by eternity in the completely new heaven and new earth, which will be created after the Millennium.

Dispensations in the Bible

In the Bible, the divine history of humanity is ordered within the framework of seven dispensations. It commences with the creation of Adam and Eve in Eden and culminates in the new heaven and new earth where an eternal, perfect existence will prevail. The seven dispensations are:

1. The dispensation of innocence in Eden.
2. The dispensation of the conscience after the Fall.
3. The dispensation of the law in the Old Testament.
4. The dispensation of grace in the church age.
5. The dispensation of the Antichrist's reign.
6. The dispensation of Christ's millennial kingdom.
7. The dispensation of perfection in eternity.

The beginning and end of a dispensation are always marked by dramatic events associated with the unfolding of a new aspect of God's plan for the ages. They are also accompanied by intensified demonic activities as Satan then tries everything in his power to disrupt God's plan. The main characteristics of the seven dispensations are as follows:

1. The dispensation of innocence

The very first dispensation in which Adam and Eve found themselves was that of innocence in Eden. God had forbidden them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and warned that they would surely die should they eat of its fruit (Gen. 2:17). They were innocent, as they had no knowledge of good and evil and were not ashamed of their nakedness (Gen. 2:25). With great cunning Satan deceived Adam and Eve into rebelling against God by disobeying Him. They foolishly heeded Satan's advice and yielded to his evil influence, thus becoming sinners. Spiritual death immediately set in, while they also physically became mortal. The dispensation of innocence ended with the Fall, which was the result of Satan's deception.

2. The dispensation of the conscience

For a long time after the Fall humanity had no law and could only

distinguish between good and evil by way of the voice of conscience. Various people pursued righteousness in accordance with their inner convictions and whatever personal revelations God gave them. Some of them, like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph became preachers of righteousness. At times during this dispensation evil was so intense and pervasive that God's anger was kindled against humankind. During the Flood all but eight people were destroyed. Through the calling of Abraham, God started to prepare a special people of His own, the nation of Israel, to live in accordance with His laws.

At the end of the dispensation of the conscience, when Israel were about to receive the law of God and move into a new dispensation, Satan launched an incredible attack against them from the kingdom of darkness. He employed all his powers of deception to avert the next unfolding of God's divine plan for humanity. While Moses was with God on Mt. Sinai to receive the law, Israel were deceived into rebelling against Him by practising idolatry, thereby rendering them unfit to receive His law. God said He would destroy them, but Moses interceded for them. He was so shocked at the sight of the golden calf that he broke the tablets on which the law was written, but God graciously wrote them again.

3. The dispensation of the law

With the introduction of the dispensation of the law a much clearer distinction was made between good and evil. Not only in the Ten Commandments, but through a great number of other laws and decrees, God defined righteousness and sin. Satan concentrated on Israel to induce them to sin, in an effort to subvert and nullify their calling as a special people of God. His efforts were greatly intensified when the time came for the Messiah to be born. Satan must have been extremely infuriated with the announcement from heaven that the Messiah's Name would be Jesus and that He would save His people from their sins (Mt. 1:21). Satan then took possession of Herod and incited him to massacre all male children under the age of two years in an effort to destroy Jesus. When this evil plan failed Satan then tried to tempt Jesus to sin in the wilderness and afterwards relentlessly attacked Him through the hostile leaders of Israel. He wanted to eliminate Jesus and obliterate the gospel of the kingdom of God. But the devil's plans backfired on himself because, through His death, Jesus destroyed "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14 NKJV). God's divine plan proceeded unaltered.

4. The dispensation of the church

With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the church age was ushered in. The Holy Spirit was given to guide people into all truth, to convict them of sin and righteousness, to regenerate them, and also to endue them with power from on high to serve Christ in a spiritually dark world. The knowl-

edge of good and evil was increased through spiritual discernment (we have enlightened eyes of the mind), but still not to its fullest extent: “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor. 13:9). Despite Christians now having a strong weapon against Satan, his efforts to thwart God’s plan intensified as, for many centuries, he has conducted an all-out war against Christ’s church using Roman emperors, the medieval Roman Catholic Church and, later, secular humanism, communism, the interfaith and new age movements, in an attempt to destroy it – which has also failed.

We are at the very end of the church dispensation and it is once again a time of increased demonic activity with a great falling away in many churches: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1). Satan intends to pervert the church of Christ, tries to prevent the virgins getting oil (type of the Holy Spirit) in their lamps and lulls them to sleep before the Bridegroom comes at midnight (Mt. 25:1-13). By establishing a false church (an ecumenical alliance of degenerate Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches with the non-Christian religions), and the promotion of a culture of sin (i.e. amorality of all kinds, e.g. promiscuity, homosexuality, abortion and crime) a climate is created which is conducive to the advent, acceptance and worship of the Antichrist as universal messiah and “man of sin” (2 Thes. 2:3).

5. The dispensation of the Antichrist’s reign

When the one who withholds – i.e. the Holy Spirit indwelling the true church – has been taken out of the way during the rapture, the Antichrist will be revealed (2 Thes. 2:6-12). Strong delusion will prevail on earth and the masses will blindly believe the lies of the Antichrist. Evil will develop to its fullest extent and there will be no limits to blasphemous and sinful conduct. The second half of the Antichrist’s reign of seven years will be a time of unprecedented demonic activity: “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Rev. 12:12 NKJV). Towards the end of the seven years of tribulation the Antichrist and the false prophet will, under the instigation of Satan (Rev. 16:13-14), muster a great multinational force to fight against Christ when He descends to Jerusalem to defend and rescue Israel at His Second Coming. This battle will not be a long one as the Antichrist and the false prophet will be captured and cast alive into the lake of fire. The devil will be chained and confined to a bottomless pit for one thousand years (Rev. 19:19–20:3).

6. The dispensation of the millennial kingdom

During the Millennium the glorified believers will rule with Christ. They will have perfect, immortal bodies, perfect joy and perfect knowledge. But the

end of this dispensation will also be characterised by tremendous demonic activity. Satan will be let out of prison to make a last desperate attempt to thwart the completion of God's master plan. He will then act as a catalyst to the rebellious, unsaved people (and there will be many) living during the Millennium, whom he will deceive into joining him in his final battle against the kingdom of light. This vain effort will lead to the final doom of Satan, his hordes and all unsaved people of all dispensations on the Day of Judgement (Rev. 20:7-15).

7. The dispensation of eternity

This dispensation will be endless. In the new heaven and on the new earth "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of life" (Rev. 21: 27 NKJV). The lake of fire where Satan, his demons and all lost people will be confined, will also exist for all eternity.

Methods of interpretation

The prevailing confusion among many Christians about biblical dispensations results from using wrong methods of interpreting Scripture, which often do not recognise the true meaning of the prophetic word. By so doing, they relegate many of the clear pronouncements about the future to the status of mere symbols and abstract concepts with no literal meaning, so spiritualising *literal* prophecies.

The thousand-year reign of peace that will, according to Revelation 20, be inaugurated after the Second Coming of Christ is, despite the evidence that has been cited, still a subject of great controversy. In terms of their divergent views, Christians are grouped into different doctrinal schools. Those who interpret the book of Revelation in a literal, dispensational way, are called **millennialists**. This term is derived from the Latin word for *thousand* which is *mille*. It refers to Christians who believe that there will be a *literal* thousand-year reign of peace on earth after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. A synonym for the term **millennialist** is **chiliast**, which is derived from the Greek word for a thousand, *chilios*. People who do not believe in a literal thousand-year reign are called **amillennialists** or **antichiliasts**. They are also inclined to change the meanings of many other biblical statements and concepts by spiritualising what is clearly meant to be taken *literally*.

Because of these controversies a number of different principles of exegesis (interpretation) are applied in regard to the book of Revelation. Some of them deviate so far from the basic meaning of the text that it seriously compromises the divine inspiration of the book. The following are the four most common ways of interpreting the book:

1. Historic Premillennialism (AD 33 – 400)

Until about the end of the 4th century, this was virtually the only view of end-time events. It held that a literal Antichrist would emerge in the end-time and that the church would go through the tribulation period. This would end with Christ's Second Coming to raise believers who have died and catch them up with living believers, in glorified bodies, to meet Him in the air. He then immediately returns to earth with them to rescue the remnant of Israel who receive Him as their Messiah, destroy the Antichrist and his armies and establish His kingdom to rule from Jerusalem for 1 000 years. All but one church father who wrote on prophecy held this premillennial view; indeed Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) even stated that to teach otherwise was heretical!

2. Amillennialism (AD 400 to date)

This is the practice of extensive spiritualisation of biblical statements using a method of interpretation devised by the Alexandrian school of theology, led by Origen, in the third to fourth centuries. It regarded the entire Bible as an allegory to be interpreted non-literally, but Augustine (AD 354-430) restricted this method to the end-time prophecies only, Revelation being interpreted as a chronicle of the spiritual conflict between God and Satan during the present church age. A current liberal variation of this view considers Revelation as merely a symbolic representation of the concept of God's ultimate victory over Satan, evil and human sin.

Amillennialists do not believe in a literal Millennium but spiritualise biblical statements, deny their literal meanings and replace them with other meanings. This is also called *replacement theology* in terms of which Israel can be taken to mean the church (a claim made by many churches), Jerusalem can become anyone's home-town, Babylon can be applied to America or Rome, the 144 000 saved Jews of the tribulation can be applied to the millions of Christians of all ages, while the thousand-year reign of Christ, with the seven-year tribulation period, is equated with the entire church dispensation of almost two thousand years. In this way, vital Scriptural truths are often argued away to fit in with amillennialist concepts.

3. Postmillennialism (mid AD 1600's to date)

According to this school, the world will progressively become a better place through Christianisation, thereby ushering in the Millennium of the church age. At the end of this 'golden age' of the Christianised world, Christ will return for the final judgement, thus closing world history. According to postmillennialists there will be no 1000-year reign of Christ on earth as King of kings, with Jerusalem as His world capital.

4. Modern dispensational premillennialism (early AD 1800's to date)

J.N. Darby (born London, 1800), an eminent British theologian, is credited with re-establishing dispensationalism in the church. In *When the Trumpet Sounds* (pp. 127-8), Prof. Floyd Elmore of Ohio, USA, says that John Darby had the greatest influence on the study of biblical prophecy during the last 150 years, and was a choice servant whom God used to make a profound impact upon the church's understanding of biblical prophecy. He adds: "Darby is the acknowledged father of systematised dispensationalism and a key modern developer of the pretribulational rapture."

This approach is followed by conservative scholars who hold that, except for the first three chapters, Revelation describes *future events*. Chapters 4-18 deal with the events of the last seven years preceding Christ's Second Coming and particularly emphasise the great tribulation of the last 3½ years prior to it. Subsequent to that momentous event, Satan will be bound and the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ will be established upon earth.

Since Christ returns *before* the Millennium, this view of prophecy is termed "premillennialism." Clearly, we are not now in the Millennium and Satan is, quite evidently, not yet confined to a sealed pit – not even in a symbolic sense! Premillennialism honours the literal meaning of Scripture, except when the context clearly shows that a particular concept must be interpreted symbolically. An example of symbolism is the red dragon with seven heads, which the Bible itself identifies as the Devil. But when Scripture speaks of Israel, the great tribulation, the Antichrist, the false prophet, the battle of Armageddon, and the binding and incarceration of Satan after the Second Coming, there is no justification whatsoever for trying to explain away their obviously literal meanings by allegorising or spiritualising them. The golden rule is: *When the plain sense of the word makes common sense, then seek no other sense.*

Evaluation of the various millennial views

To amillennialists and postmillennialists the prophetic message of Revelation has largely lost its literal meaning and relevance due to spiritualising it. Its chronology is disregarded, as Christ's reign of 1000 years in chapter 20 is viewed as symbolic of the entire church age of about 2000 years between His first and second coming! During this period Satan is bound, but his influence is limited so he cannot stop the spread of the gospel or eliminate the church.

To amillennialists the Millennium is Christ reigning in heaven with glorified deceased believers during the church age. But to most postmillennialists the spread of the gospel will Christianise the whole world, and the Millennium is the resulting golden age of righteousness and peace on

earth with Christ reigning from heaven. Amillennialists say the Millennium coincides with continuous tribulation during the church age, that it intensified for Jews in AD 70-145, and will greatly intensify prior to the return of Christ. To postmillennialists the tribulation of Matthew 24 and the apostasy of 2 Thessalonians 2 are already past, so Revelation is largely irrelevant to our generation. They argue that all the judgements have already occurred – we should only look forward to blessings.

Neither amillennialists nor postmillennialists believe in the physical or spiritual restoration of Israel as a nation in accordance with Old *and* New Testament prophecies since they allege the church has replaced Israel, but Jews can be saved by becoming Christians. The significance of important signs of the times, such as Israel's partial re-gathering in its ancient, promised land, Jerusalem no longer being trampled by the Gentiles, trends towards a globalised, cashless monetary system, a one-world government and a multi-faith, one-world religious body as precursors for the Antichrist's bid for global political and religious power are played down. As a result even otherwise sound, exemplary Christians fail to recognise these signs and, lacking a biblical perspective on the unfolding fulfilment of end-time prophecy, they follow only a secular assessment of current events. So, their expectation of Christ's imminent return as the heavenly Bridegroom and their spiritual vision of Him as "the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16) is often dimmed or lacking.

The premillennialist view places strong emphasis on the reliability of the inspired Scriptures as revealing God's plan for the future of the world. Christians who hold this view interpret world affairs in the light of prophetic Scriptures, and seek to have spiritual discernment to understand the signs of the times in the unfolding of current events. They avoid the complacency resulting from assuming that the devil is either partly or fully bound, or the disillusionment that will inevitably follow the pursuit of the unrealistic view that they can succeed in Christianising the world before Christ's coming, or that Christ's coming to judge the nations is only a far distant event. Instead, they see themselves as strangers and pilgrims in a world that "lies *under the sway of the wicked one*" (1 Jn. 5:19 NKJV), and therefore expect the struggle between the powers of light and darkness to intensify as Christ's imminent coming draws ever nearer.

Premillennialists are aware of the extreme solemnity of the times in which they live and convinced that the church age is rapidly drawing to a close, so opportunities to fulfil the Great Commission are running out. This knowledge, and the awareness that the awesome events and judgements of the tribulation are imminent, gives real urgency and zeal to their evangelism, as they warn others of "the wrath to come" and the need to repent and believe the Gospel. They also seek to be ready to meet the Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom, when He comes to take them to His Father's

house, by seeking to live by biblical standards of holiness and by total commitment to serving Him faithfully.

Views of the church fathers

To confirm that the Millennium is not merely symbolic, but a *literal* period of future history, it may be helpful to establish what John the Apostle taught about the Revelation during his ministry in Asia Minor after his release from Patmos. The writings of various early church fathers who were his students throw light on this subject and confirm that it was often discussed. The following are statements made by some of them on the Millennium and related matters:

Papias, the bishop of Smyrna, was a student of John and learned firsthand about the author's own interpretation of the book of Revelation. The teaching of this church father is very important as he is the link between the millennialist view and the apostles. Papias taught that after the resurrection of the dead there will be a reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years when He will personally sit on the throne. The earth will experience a time of unprecedented fertility and there will be great prosperity under Christ's beneficent rule with His saints. Early in the second century, Justin Martyr wrote: "A certain man among us, whose name is John, one of the apostles of Jesus, prophesied in a revelation that he had that those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ will be in Jerusalem for a thousand years."

Another church father, Polycarp, who was one of the youngest students of the apostle John, was a very devoted Christian who also died as a martyr. On the authority of John he taught that the earth will be very fertile during the Millennium and yield abundant crops. Another view of significance is that of Irenaeus who was a student of Polycarp. He said that the reward of the just would be that they will be resurrected from among the dead when the world is renewed and made fertile. His view was that each of the six days of creation indicates a thousand year period, and that after six thousand years of world history have expired it would be followed by the seventh day, which would also be a thousand years.

This last-mentioned view was entertained by various church fathers, among them Cyprian, Barnabas and Lactantius. In this regard, the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia says that the general view of the fathers was that the Lord will appear at the end of the sixth millennium to establish His kingdom on earth. The general view was that this kingdom, which correlates with the Sabbath of Creation, will continue for one thousand years.

Persistence of the allegorical interpretation

Despite the clear testimonies of the apostle John, the early church fathers and the Bible's own, very obvious message, the allegorical interpretation of biblical prophecies has permeated virtually the entire church. Theolo-

gians have deprived churches of the literal message of the Bible by wrongly interpreting it. Hamilton, an amillennialist himself, admits this problem in his book, *The Basis of Millennial Faith*: “Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialists picture.” The critical question is not whether the Bible teaches such an earthly kingdom – because it clearly does – but how the relevant prophecies should be interpreted.

McDonald (*Dictionary of the Christian Church*) defines an allegory as follows: “The use of language to convey a deeper and a different meaning from that which appears on the surface.” An allegorical interpretation must be clearly distinguished from a symbolic interpretation. The Bible often makes use of symbolic language, including in prophecy. A symbol always has a literal anti-type as it is used to explain something about a specific person or event. From the way in which it is used, it is clear that a symbol means something else. Examples of symbols to describe certain characteristics of Christ are the lamb, the lion, the light of the world, the bright and morning star, the true vine, etc.

In cases of allegorical interpretation, the relevant Scripture has a clear and obvious meaning, but for ulterior reasons the reader feels he must read something else into it, thereby assigning a figurative meaning to the Scripture. The allegorical interpretation, therefore, does not subject itself to the authority of the Bible by deriving its meaning *from* it, but approaches Scripture with a preconceived idea by reading that meaning *into* the Bible.

Angus & Green (*The Bible Handbook*) also refer to this danger when they say: “There is an unlimited scope for fancy, if once the principle be admitted, and the only basis of the exposition is found in the mind of the expositor. The scheme can yield no interpretation, properly so called, although possibly some valuable truths may be illustrated.”

Bernard Ramm (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*) adds to this caution: “To state that the principal meaning of the Bible is a second-sense meaning, and that the principal method of interpretation is spiritualising, is to open the door to almost uncontrolled speculation and imagination. For this reason we have insisted that the control in interpretation is the literal method.”

O.T. Allis, who himself spiritualises the Bible, is keenly aware of the negative results that it may yield when he says: “Whether the figurative or spiritual interpretation of a given passage is justified or not, depends solely on whether it gives the true meaning. If it is used to empty words of their plain and obvious meaning, to read out of them what is clearly intended by them, the allegorising or spiritualising is a term of reproach which is well merited.”

One of the great proponents of allegorical interpretation was Origen (AD 185-254). He was strongly influenced by the Greek philosophy of Plato and tried to synthesise the Bible with abstract philosophical thinking. He identified the following three levels of Bible interpretation: (1) The somatic or literal interpretation, which is sufficient for the simple-minded. (2) The psychological or moral interpretation for the more advanced. (3) The pneumatic or allegorical interpretation for those who have wisdom. Such people should be able to find their way through all the symbols and ascend to the level of the mysterious. It is not difficult to see how this approach paved the way for various kinds of deception and metaphysical speculation. For example, Origen taught that “in the end not only will all human beings be saved but even the devil and his demons” (A.A. Hoekema: *The Bible and the Future*). It is obvious why he did not believe in a literal kingdom on earth and became the founder of allegorical exegesis and amillennial thinking. Like Augustine almost two centuries later, he regarded the church age as the dispensation of the kingdom.

Augustine (AD 354 to 430) perpetuated the serious exegetical and amillennial errors of Origen in his *Confessiones* and his book on the kingdom of God – *De Civitate Dei*. He also studied and accepted neo-Platonist thought. Augustine has the doubtful honour of having been highly regarded by prominent reformers such as Calvin and Luther, while also being venerated as the most eminent Christian scholar by the Vatican. The latter celebrates a feast to his honour on 28th August every year!

The modern church is still profoundly influenced by the heathen (Platonist) philosophy of the inter-testamental period and also by its similarly mistaken interpretational methods of spiritualising and allegorising the Bible.

The literal method of interpretation

Fortunately, there is a growing group of evangelical scholars in modern times who are reverting to sound principles of interpreting the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Dwight Pentecost (*Things to Come*) gives the following definition of the literal method of interpretation:

The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same basic meaning it would have in normal ordinary customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. It is called the grammatical-historical method to emphasise the fact that the meaning is to be determined by both grammatical and historical considerations.

The strongest proof of the literal interpretation is the way in which the New Testament makes use of the Old Testament. Good examples are the many prophecies about the birth, life, work, death and resurrection of Christ that were all *literally* fulfilled in the New Testament.

Despite this overwhelming evidence about Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Pharisees and scribes decided to suppress the truth and lie to the people. Why did they do that? Hal Lindsey says that any person who does not realise that his most important problem is an inward, spiritual problem, prefers a political above a spiritual saviour.

It is still the same today. Many churches openly disregard the Bible's literal message and engage in an ecumenical process of uniting church to society – inadvertently preparing for the world's false political 'saviour', the Antichrist. The spiritualisation of biblical prophecies is clearly a trick by Satan to prevent people from being aware that the return to earth of the great spiritual Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ (Jn. 4:42), to defeat God's enemies, save the remnant of Israel and establish His millennial reign is now imminent!

At Christ's *first* coming most Jews, especially the hierarchy, ignored the many prophecies about Him, so failed to recognise their true Messiah. Israel paid dearly for their neglect of prophecy: "For *the* days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Lk. 19:43-44 NKJV). Christ's prophecies have and will all come true – *literally!*

A similar situation prevails concerning His *Second* Coming. Literal prophecies of His coming are either ignored or wrongly interpreted, thus depriving Christians of their proper future expectation – often leading to some focusing attention on political and social ideals. Jesus Himself said it will be as in the days of Noah and Lot. Those not truly born again will pay a very heavy price in tribulation and divine wrath by being left behind to endure the Antichrist's reign of terror after Christ comes to take away the saints at the rapture.

To those who remain true to the Lord Jesus and expect His coming imminently, there is the real hope of returning to this troubled world with Christ when He establishes His millennial reign on earth after the tribulation period.

Prophecies about the Millennium

In Revelation 20 there are various references to the one thousand-year reign of Christ when Satan will be bound:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison... (Rev. 20:1-7).

When the Lord Jesus comes back to earth it will be as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16). He will set up His one-world government with Jerusalem as capital:

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

In a major end-time prophecy Daniel likened Christ’s Second Coming to the effect of a great stone smiting the kingdoms of the world, pulverising them to chaff carried on the wind, then becoming a great mountain filling the whole earth, replacing them with His kingdom (Dan. 2:34-35; 44-45), so “the LORD shall be King over all the earth” (Zech. 14:9). This is similar to the prophecy about the Lord Jesus reigning as King, which was given to Mary before His birth:

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David (Lk. 1:31-32).

The throne of David is not in heaven but on earth. Jesus does not now reign in a literal sense from the throne of David as this throne has, since the Babylonian captivity, been temporarily in suspension. Christ will restore this throne at His Second Coming and then reign from it:

After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things (Acts 15:16-17 NKJV).

The elders in heaven (representing redeemed Jews and Gentiles) are aware they will return with Christ and reign with Him in His earthly kingdom, since they explicitly sing:

Thou... wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10; cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).

It is therefore clearly evident that the events of Revelation coincide

with a strong proclamation of the Kingship of Jesus Christ:

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down... he knoweth that he hath but a short time (Rev. 12:10,12).

When Jesus, our High Priest who now intercedes for us at the throne of the Father, returns to earth, the power and influence of Satan here will be broken and the kingdom of Christ established. The devil will then no longer be the **ruler** and **god** of this present evil world (Jn. 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4; 1 Jn. 5:19), but Christ as “king shall reign in righteousness” as “Ruler in Israel”, and “have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Is. 32:1; Mic. 5:2; Ps. 72:8).

A further proof that the millennial reign is not in heaven is that in this dispensation there will still be inherent carnality and disorderliness among the nations, which will necessitate that they be ruled with a strong hand. Although Satan will be bound and prohibited from deceiving the nations into committing rebellious deeds, they will still have fallen natures that need to be disciplined. In Revelation 12:5 and 19:15 it is plainly stated that Christ will rule the nations “with a rod of iron.” His faithful servants will also share in this rule:

But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father (Rev. 2:25-27).

The Lord (Yahweh) declares in Psalm 2:6: “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” During the Messianic reign the throne of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem will represent heavenly rule and therefore be a centre of divine wisdom, power, authority and righteousness. Micah says:

But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into [ploughshares], and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Mic. 4:1-3; cf. Is. 24:23).

Beating “swords into ploughshares” means re-using the *same* metal, which can only refer to *earth* – there are no swords in heaven, nor ploughs needed there! A complete absence of weapons, military training and war is unprecedented in history and can *only* refer to God’s kingdom coming and His will being “done in earth, as *it is* in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). The devil will, at last, be securely bound and unable to deceive, and sin

will be restrained during Christ's thousand year "rod of iron" rule. Even the animal creation will benefit and predation will cease:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Is. 11:9).

Jerusalem will spontaneously be recognised by all peoples as world capital and no hostility or political tension will exist between individual nations:

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the [stubbornness] of their evil heart (Jer. 3:17).

Laxity will be the only form of misconduct, as some nations will neglect their duty to go up to Jerusalem to worship the King. It may still be a matter of the spirit being willing but the flesh weak (Mt. 26:41). Their neglect will provoke a rebuke and disciplinary measures from the King:

And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, *that* whoso will not come up of *all* the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain (Zech. 14:16-17).

At the beginning of the Millennium, the remnant of the nations who survived the great tribulation and the battle of Armageddon will honour the Lord (Zech. 14:16). However, the upcoming generations will increasingly manifest their fallen nature which they will inherit from their first ancestor, Adam. These peoples will be evangelised by Israel, who will all serve the Lord with one accord, and many will be saved:

[The LORD] shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Is. 27:6; cf. Zech. 8:23).

The doctrine of the two resurrections is also clearly related to the Millennium. Only those who have part in the first resurrection (Lk. 14:14; 1 Thes. 4:16), including O.T. believers and those saved during the tribulation, will rule with Christ. We should "examine" ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5) and ask God to "search" us (Ps. 139:23-24) to be quite sure we are born-again so as to qualify for the first resurrection:

Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Rev. 20:6).

The rest of the dead are the unsaved multitude of all centuries, and they will not be resurrected until the thousand years have ended (Rev. 20:5). They will then appear before the great white throne to be judged and condemned to the eternal lake of fire (Jude v. 7).

Characteristics of the millennial reign

Remembering the words of the prayer the Lord Jesus taught us, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven” (Mt. 6:10), the following are the most important characteristics of the future reign of peace on earth:

- † God will rule on earth through His King of kings, Jesus Christ. A theocratic world government will, therefore, be established (Lk. 1:31-33; Rev. 19:15; Dan. 7:13-14).
- † Christ will reign on David’s restored throne in Jerusalem and Israel will be the hub of the world (Ps. 2:6-12; Zech. 8:22; Is. 2:2-3; 24:23; 33:17,20-22; Dan. 7:27). His government will be characterised by righteousness and equity (Is. 1:26-27; 32:1-2; 16-17; Jer. 23:5-6).
- † Israel’s capital, Jerusalem, “the city of our God”, “the city of the great King”, will be the centre of worship for the whole world and all nations will converge there to worship God through Christ the King of kings (Ps. 48; Zech. 14:16-20; Is. 66:18-23; Rev. 19:16).
- † The saved remnant of Israel will rejoice in the Lord and evangelise the entire world (Is. 12:3-6; 27:6; 40:9; 51:11). They will make the world fruitful (Is. 27:6) and God will be honoured (Is. 28:5; Zech. 8:20-23).
- † Satan will be securely bound so that he cannot deceive the nations (Rev. 20:1-4).
- † Peace will prevail everywhere. There will be no more war or military training and weapons will be recycled for peaceful uses (Is. 2:4; 9:7; Mic. 5:4-5; Hos. 2:18).
- † The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Is. 11:9-10; Hab. 2:14).
- † There will be no disease (Mal. 4:2; Is. 33:24).
- † People will live healthily and actively to a great age – like the antediluvians. A 100 year-old person will be regarded as a child (Is. 65:20-23).
- † Nature will greatly benefit since the curse of Genesis 3:17-19 will be lifted and the whole of creation, which since then has been groaning, will be set free from the bondage of corruption into glorious liberty (Rom. 8:19-22; Is. 55:12-13; Joel 3:18).
- † An agricultural or horticultural way of life is indicated and the earth will produce food so prolifically that planting the next crop will take place before the previous one has been fully harvested! (Mic. 4:3-4; Amos 9:13-15; Is. 65: 21-23; Ps. 65:9-13).
- † Harmony will prevail in the animal kingdom. The wolf will lie down with

the lamb and the lion will eat straw like an ox – they will “not hurt nor destroy” each other – because the Lord will make a new covenant with the animals that will change the physiology and aggressive nature of the carnivorous predators into the physiology and gentle nature of herbivores (Is. 11:6-9; 65:25; Hos. 2:18).

Israel’s position in the Millennium

Israel’s position during the coming Messianic era is frequently described in the Old Testament where it is specifically related to **the day of the Lord**. It will be a time of great blessing, abundance, joy in the Lord and peace on earth. Israel will fulfil its original destiny and potential as a people of God and be a nation through whom He will bless the whole earth. Paul says of them:

Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! ... For if their being cast away *is* the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead? (Rom. 11:12,15 NKJV).

Through Israel’s fall, by rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, the gospel of reconciliation with God has been offered not only to Jews but to Gentiles also. What a tremendous blessing that is to the Gentiles! How much more will Israel be a blessing to the world in the Millennium as they proclaim the Messiah’s praises among all nations! This will be the long-delayed, but grand consummation of this unique nation’s destiny and calling as the chosen people of God. The following are examples of promises about Israel’s restoration and glory in the coming Messianic era:

And I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*... And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them... (Amos 9:14-15).

Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city... (Is. 52:1).

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising (Is. 60:1-3).

And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner *shall* be your ploughmen and your vine-dressers. But you shall be named the Priests of the LORD, *men* shall call you the Servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast. Instead of your shame *you shall have* double *honour*, and *instead of* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, and will make

with them an everlasting covenant. Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they *are* the posterity *whom* the LORD has blessed (Is. 61:4-9 NKJV).

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:34).

And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and My servant David *shall be* their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the [nations] shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore (Ezek. 37:24-28).

And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth (Zech. 14:8-9).

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment (Is. 32:1).

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon (Hos. 14:4-6).

For there shall be a day, *that* the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: [proclaim] ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel... Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ...this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days... I will put My law in their [minds], and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people (Jer. 31:6-7,31,33).

Behold, I will bring [the city] health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them; and they shall

fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it (Jer. 33:6-9).

...ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Is. 62:6-7).

These and many other blessings will be characteristic of the Millennium when the Messiah reigns from the throne of David in Jerusalem. His glorified saints will rule with Him and righteousness and equity will prevail on earth (Is. 32:1; Ps. 98:9; Is. 11:4; Rev. 20:6b). Israel will play a leading part in world affairs and will be God's special representative nation among all the nations of the world.

Proofs that the Millennium is future

Irrefutable evidence that the millennial dispensation is still future is provided by the following very distinctive features of the Millennium which still await literal fulfilment:

Prophecies of Israel's blessings not yet fulfilled!

Divine prophecies of Israel being re-gathered to their land, spiritually revived, elevated above all nations and abundantly blessed (Deut. 28:1-14; 30:1-4; Ezek. 36:24-28; Is. 60:1-22; Hos. 14:5-8; Rom. 11:26-27) have *never* been fulfilled. On the contrary, no nation has suffered and survived anything like the prolonged world-wide dispersion, disdain, persecution, hatred and genocide which the people of Israel have during the past two millennia. God's promises never fail – they will be honoured in the Millennium.

A literal 1000 years!

The amillennialist claim that the six-fold mention in Revelation 20 of "a thousand years" represents the Christian era of circa 2000 years is untenable. Without doubt it is still future and will be *literally* fulfilled, just as the prophecy of the Babylonian captivity of 70 years was *literally* fulfilled (Jer. 25: 11-12). A thousand-year reign of Christ would have ended circa AD 1033, followed by Judgement day!

The binding of Satan

At Christ's appearance the devil will be bound so "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (Rev. 20:3). We know from Job 2:1-6 that Satan is ultimately limited by the supreme authority of God and can only act within the restrictions imposed on him. According to amillennialists Satan is bound and Messiah has been reigning as Prince of Peace for the past 2000 years! If those years have been peaceful we may well ask, what on earth will happen after Satan's release? If Satan is indeed bound in prison why are we warned against his devices (2 Cor. 2:11), subtle deception (2 Cor. 11:3), wiles (Eph. 6: 11),

fiery darts (Eph. 6:16), temptation (1 Cor. 7:5), snares (1 Tim. 3:7), power (Acts 26:18), persecution (Rev. 2:10) and efforts to devour us (1 Pet. 5:8)?

Kingdom theology

One of the major reasons for the theological confusion and apostasy in the end-time church is its lack of dispensational discernment. Prophecies about a future kingdom on earth are allegorised, or spiritualised, and applied to the church. In that way, the Millennium is equated with the church age and some Christians feel justified in developing and practising *kingdom theology*. The door has thereby been opened for the following false doctrines to be brought into the church:

Dominion theology

It is asserted that we should rule as kings, even as little gods, and take control over the world *now*. Because of the authority vested in us we have the power to change things in the material *and* spiritual realms by our words – called *positive confession* or *word of faith*. Christians will soon occupy leadership positions in politics and other areas of public life, thereby obtaining the authority to legislate for society in accordance with Christian principles.

Comment: Dominion theology is derived from the promise that we will rule with Christ in the Millennium (Rev. 5:10; 20: 1-6). Those who wrongly assume that we are in the Millennium *now*, mistakenly try to live up to their claim to be *kings*.

The binding of Satan

It is claimed that the authority vested in us in this *kingdom* era, empowers Christians to engage in strategic spiritual warfare against the kingdom of darkness, pulling down evil strongholds, binding Satan and stripping him of his power. Peter Wagner, George Otis, *Marches for Jesus*, etc., promote this practice globally, claiming to liberate cities, regions and even entire countries from demonic bondage.

Comment: The devil will only be bound at the Second Coming of Christ when the millennial age begins. It is highly presumptuous to argue that we can bind the devil now and deprive him of his territory in this present evil age of which he is “the god” (2 Cor. 4:4). Demons can only be cast out of *individuals* now, not from geographical areas!

Christian reconstruction of the world

Proponents of *kingdom theology* have a vision to reconstruct, or transform, the world in accordance with Christian principles. They are advocating a process of social, political, moral and religious transformation aimed at creating a peaceful and just Christian world. They argue that when they have achieved this vision by preaching a mixture of the true

gospel with politico-social reform, then the kingdom will have come – even before the King comes!

Comment: In the Millennium, spiritual deception, war, violence, injustice and immorality will indeed vanish from the scene (Jer. 3:17). However, we are not in the Millennium *now*, but in an evil world which is strongly influenced by Satan (Acts 26:18; Eph. 6:12). Sadly, most people are on the broad way to hell and prefer darkness to light (Jn. 3:19).

Prosperity gospel

Many Christians get carried away by the promises of economic abundance during the Millennium and jump to the unfounded conclusion that these promises are intended for the church age. They proclaim a prosperity gospel of *name it and claim it*, and suggest that all who have a strong faith should be very prosperous and free of any problems or hardships in life. If you are sick, bed-ridden, poor, unemployed and without a big house and large car of your own, your faith must be very weak!

Comment: Economic abundance will indeed characterise the Millennium (Amos 9:13-14). However, in the present age we have to be content with what we have (1 Tim. 6:8), not strive for material riches (Lk. 12:15) but prepared to be poor (2 Cor. 6:10; Jas. 2:5) and to suffer for Christ (Phil. 1:29).

Signs and wonders

The advocates of *kingdom theology* say that we should demonstrate our superior spiritual powers by performing great signs and wonders – including sensational healing miracles. Even the most weird, mystical manifestations such as hysterical laughter, jerking, falling down when “zapped”, making animal noises, and being “drunk in the Spirit”, are irreverently ascribed to the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Comment: The signs and wonders of the last days are explicitly associated with false prophets (Mt. 24:11,24). They are paving the way for the appearance of the Antichrist, whose coming will be “after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thes. 2:9). Biblical truth is not the norm, but new and dramatic experiences.

Uniting the world

Kingdom theology is aimed at the ecumenical unification of the world church in preparation for the coming of the King. Theologians and church leaders with this mindset advocate a global new world order of unity and peace. This a human-centred theology of creating a humanistic kingdom on earth before the coming of Christ. Ecumenicalists are devoted to social, political and economic change in the world, working hand-in-hand with New Age leaders.

Comment: The united world church mentioned in the Bible is described

as an apostate organisation representing all the false religions. This body is identified as “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5). The true church of Christ cannot enter into association with non-Christian religions – nor with false teachers within the professing church.

The true Millennium

Let us eagerly expect the true Millennium that will commence **after** the coming of the King, Jesus Christ. Only He can save the remnant of Israel and of the nations (Zech. 12:10; Mt. 24:30-31), bind and incarcerate the devil (Rev. 20:1-3), restore the throne of David (Acts 2:29-30) and change everything on earth for the better. If we are prepared to suffer now and serve the Lord in the face of much opposition (Acts 14: 22), we will accompany Him during His triumphant return (Zech. 14:4-5) and reign with Him on earth (2 Tim. 2:12).

The deceivers and false prophets who are striving to establish a humanistic Utopia on earth *before* the coming of the King, are exerting themselves in a futile effort to achieve an unattainable humanist dream. There are conditions on earth that we simply cannot change before Jesus comes again! Instead we have a thrilling expectation for the future at His coming – we will not only escape the great tribulation (Rev. 3:10) by the rapture, but return seven years later to rule with Him during His millennial reign (Rev. 5:9-10)!

Above all, the most important thing about the millennial reign is that our Lord Jesus will be completely vindicated and glorified on this very earth where He “went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38), yet was so disgracefully humiliated, despised, rejected, cruelly cast out as worthless and crucified by the fallen creatures that He, as Creator, had made. God’s answer to this is that at the name of Jesus *every* knee shall bow, and *every* tongue confess Him as Lord (Phil. 2:6-11).

Jesus will also be vindicated in the eyes of that very nation which was so very honoured by His first coming, yet so dismally failed and sinned in that they did not recognise Him as their true Messiah, despite His clear fulfilment of their Scriptures. Pilate’s inscription above the cross *will* be vindicated and fulfilled in that Jesus will reign not only as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16) universally, but also as “KING OF THE JEWS” (Mk. 15:26) in Jerusalem!