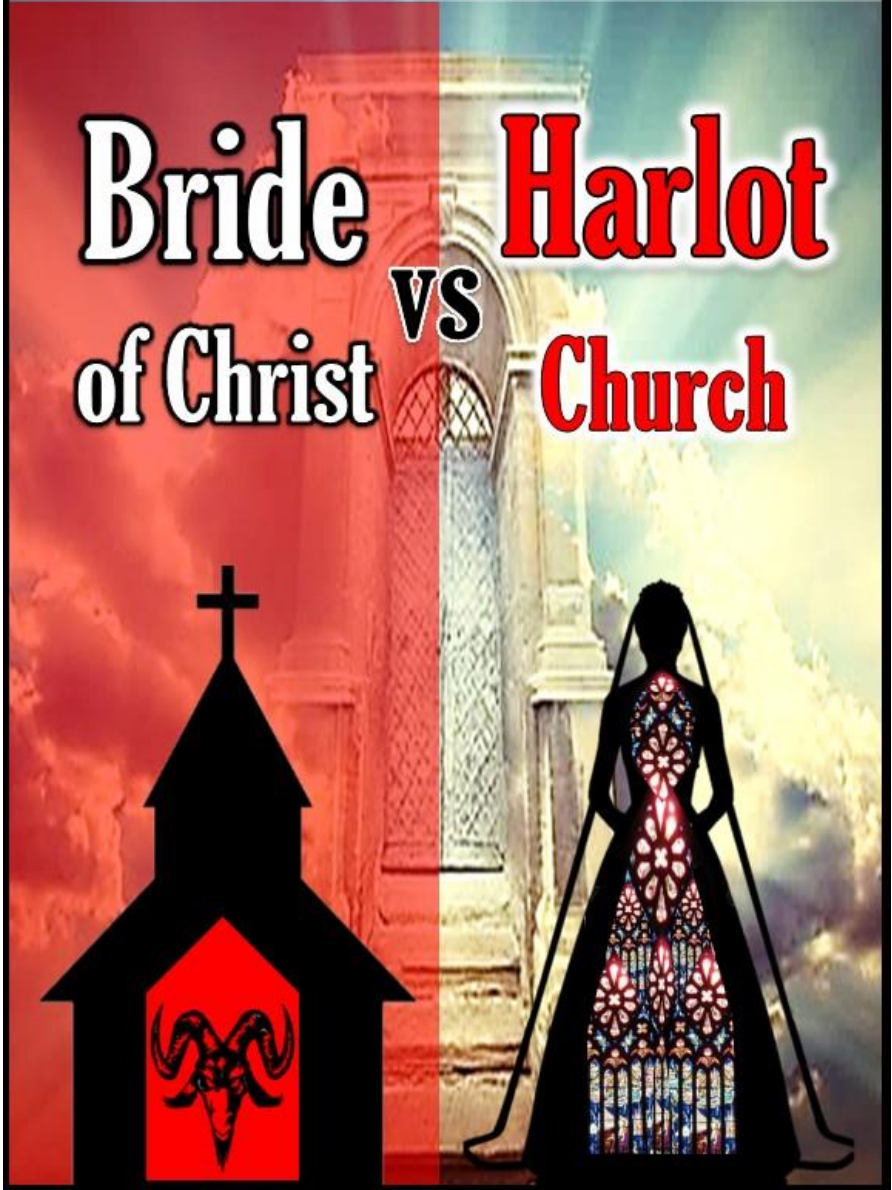


History, Theology, Prophecy

Bride **vs** **Harlot**
of Christ **Church**



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History, Theology, Prophecy

Bride vs Harlot

Introduction

Jesus said that one of the signs of the end times would be deception, which has never been more relevant than today. Just who can we trust these days? We cannot trust anything we hear on the news and media platforms with so much propaganda, fake news, and myriads of agendas, narratives, and algorithms creating so much confusion in the world. You would think the one place you are sure to find the truth would be the church, but sadly, more and more frequently, it is not. Multitudes have abandoned the church, but you can hardly blame them when you see the condition of many churches today. If Christians lose their saltiness, the presence, power, and testimony of Jesus in their lives, they are only good to be trodden underfoot. Many in the "church" need a come to Jesus' moment.

Our modern vocabulary has adopted a saying when presenting someone with two options, they ask them to choose between a red or a blue pill. The red pill has potentially unsettling or life-changing information that represents uncompromising truth. The blue pill is like a placebo that keeps a person in a familiar and comfortable place but has no basis in reality. Most religious people will take the blue pill, content to attend church and enjoy life with the status quo. The red pill people have plenty of questions and confront hypocrisy, unbiblical teachings, or vain traditions. They will not settle for religion and playing church. They are like the apostle Paul, who was unwilling to compromise, would pay any price, and go through any hardship to know Christ.

History ignores the blue pill people because they are sheepish followers without any impact. On the other hand, the red pill people are warriors who press the battle even to the gates of Hell, inspiring faith and courage in all who witness or follow their example. As we journey through history and see examples of different people and movements, we should understand that their fears, anguish, and pains lasted only for a moment, but their testimonies will live forever. We should direct our lives through the word of God, and our visions,

hopes, and dreams should focus on God's eternal purposes. There is a price to pay for the truth, not with dollars and cents but with time, dedication, and the consequences of how we live and serve Christ. The gospel is free, but it is not cheap. We will study the lives of those who paid the price, and because of them, we have Bibles, religious freedom, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The heroes of faith took the red pill. What is your choice, the blue pill of dead religion or the red pill of zeal and commitment to Christ alone?

*Proverbs 23:23 **Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.***

*John 7:17 [Jesus speaking] **If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.***

We will identify different groups, **Satan** with the secular **world**, the fake **harlot** religions, **Israel**, and the **bride** of Christ. The world, or worldliness, refers to everything under Satan's influence. That includes fallen angels, secular governments, rulers, and cultures. The Harlot masquerades as a holy church but is in bed with the Devil, the secular world, with degenerate appetites in unrepentant rebellion against God (*James 4:4*). The bride of Christ has been born again, loves Jesus, and lives for him and others.

Separating these groups sounds easy, but sometimes they get comingled together, making it hard to tell them apart. Satan can appear as an angel of light dressed in religious garb, with slick talk and centuries of religious traditions to give false ideas of salvation. We can learn from the patterns of church history to gain discernment to avoid dead religion and stay in a living relationship with Jesus.

We will begin in Genesis, in the garden of Eden, and right from the start, we can see the symbolism of the Bride of Christ, and Babylon, the mother of Harlots, and we will follow them from Genesis to Revelation and identify their parallel paths until they meet Christ on his return. The differences between the two are stark; the Harlot is a religious system that brings bondage and death, and the Bride of Christ is a relationship with freedom and rivers of life.

Bride introduction

The garden of Eden was the perfect paradise for Adam, except he was alone, so God put Adam into a deep sleep and removed a rib from Adam's side, from which he created Eve.

Genesis 2:21-24 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then **the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

When Paul quoted the previous passage, he revealed that it symbolized Christ and his church. Paul's insight into this verse revealed a mystery previously unknown before his time, regarding the church being the bride of Christ.



Ephesians 5:23-32 For the husband is head of the wife, as also **Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.** Therefore, just as **the church is subject to Christ,** so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.** So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as **the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery,**

but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

God created Adam and Eve and gave them dominion over the world; all the animals were friendly, the land was fruitful, and it was a beautiful paradise in a perfect world. They had absolute freedom to do whatever they wanted, with one exception. God gave one commandment, do not eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he warned them of the consequences if they did, which was immediate death.

Genesis 2:16-17 *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

The first sign of evil influence on the earth came through a talking serpent, aka Satan (*Rev 12:9, 2 Cor 11:3*). Even in a perfect, sinless world, God allowed temptation to exist to test and reveal character. Satan



began to plant thoughts into Eve's mind to question God. Notice how Satan knew God's words and used them to deceive Eve. Satan played on Eve's innocence and human weakness to tempt her into going against her conscience to do what she knew was wrong. Eve, the perfect sinless woman, contemplated the command, considered the facts, weighed the options, and deliberately chose to sin in rebellion against God. Sin is a choice. Satan first gets Eve to question God's words by saying, "Has God said?" Then he twists the word by switching from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" to "every tree of the garden."

Genesis 3:1 *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

Then Satan contradicts the word of God, saying you will not die, insinuating that God lied to her. Eve should have known to reject any attacks on God's character, but the seeds of doubt took root. Satan tempted Eve with the same sin that caused his fall, wanting equality with God, and she fell for it (*Isaiah 14:12-15*).

Genesis 3:4-5 Then the serpent said to the woman, "**You will not surely die.** "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, **and you will be like God,** knowing good and evil."

1 Timothy 2:13-14 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but **the woman being deceived,** fell into transgression.

Where was Adam? Satan tries to infiltrate God's family to divide and conquer. He also imitates God to deceive God's people. The apostle Paul tried to explain the tactics of Satan to the Corinthian church, saying he wanted to present the church as a bride to Christ but feared Satan would slither into the church to deceive them. Paul compared Eve's conversation with the serpent with modern preachers who preach a counterfeit Jesus from a demonic spirit and a twisted version of the gospel of Christ. Satan can make himself appear as an angel of light, and he has false apostles and fake ministers that appear legitimate, but they are the Devil's hirelings.

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For **I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.** For if he who comes preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or if you receive **a different spirit** which you have not received, or **a different gospel** which you have not accepted you may well put up with it!

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are **false apostles, deceitful workers,** transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For **Satan himself transforms himself into**

an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if **his ministers** also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Foreknowledge

God was not shocked or surprised by Adam's sin, and his response was not a spur-of-the-moment reaction but preplanned in eternity past before the creation of the world. God knew what Adam would do and was ready with the plan to redeem mankind from the fall. God did not preprogram Adam to sin. Adam sinned of his own will. God is God and knows what we will do before we do it. We can't comprehend God, and his ways are higher than ours. We only need to know that God has given us free will to make our choices, but he will hold us accountable for our actions.

*James 1:13-15 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For **God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire,** he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

So, God knowing all things, had a plan that began before he created the world. He wrote the names of those who would believe and get saved in the Book of Life, prophesied salvation to Adam and Eve, fulfilled the promise of salvation in Christ, and provided that salvation for all who would receive it by faith.

*Ephesians 1:4 ... just as He chose us in Him [Christ] **before the foundation of the world***

*1 Peter 1:18-20 ... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, **but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world***

First Gospel message

God passed judgment on the guilty trio, starting with the serpent, and cursed him more than all the animals making him crawl and eat dust. Then God promised redemption to mankind before passing judgment on Adam. God declared a prophecy saying that "her seed," a singular seed, one person, would crush the head of the serpent, Satan. That was the first gospel message, the good news of the promised coming Messiah, Christ.

Genesis 3:14-15 So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, **you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.**"

The prophecy mentioned two seeds, "your seed" speaking to Satan and "her seed" speaking of the woman. The theme of the two seeds runs through the Bible, generally speaking of a separation between Christ with his people from the Devil and his people. God separates the light from darkness (*Eph 5:8, 1 Thess 5:5*), wheat from tares (*Matt 13:24-30*), sheep from goats (*Matt 25:31-46*), believers from unbelievers, and the Bride of Christ from the Harlot church. The unusual thing about that prophecy is that women cannot produce seeds but have eggs. That points to the virgin birth of Christ. The Holy Spirit miraculously placed the promised "seed" of the woman in Mary to fulfill the prophecy to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: **Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel** [God with us].

The prophecy about the promised "seed" in the garden of Eden was not the only promise about that seed. God also promised Abraham's seed obtained by faith would make him the father of many nations, as numerous as the sand and the stars (*Genesis 22:17, Hebrews 11:12*). God promised King David that his seed would have an everlasting kingdom and would rule the nations with a rod of iron (*Psalms 2:6-12*).

Every time, and in each promise and prophecy, the "seed" spoke of the same person, Jesus. So, the seed will have a great nation (*Israel/sand, the church/stars*), a promised land (*land of Israel*), a kingdom (*Israel/millennial kingdom, church/kingdom of heaven*), and one eternal King over all, the King of kings, Christ.

Galatians 3:16, 29 Now to **Abraham and his Seed** were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 1:3-4 concerning His Son **Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David** according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

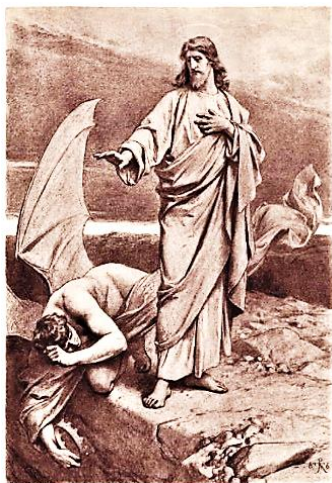
2 Timothy 2:8 Remember that **Jesus Christ, of the seed of David,** was raised from the dead according to my gospel,

Satan's world

On the day Adam and Eve disobeyed God and fell under the curse of sin and death, another earth-shattering change happened. Adam's dominion over the earth was lost and forfeited to the devil. The scriptures tell us that your master is who you obey (*Romans 6:16*), so when Adam and Eve obeyed Satan's voice, they forfeited earth's dominion over to him.

God rules everything, including Satan, but God has allowed Satan to have limited power over the world for a predetermined time. Satan is called the ruler or prince of this world, and he has a kingdom system with a hierarchy of fallen angelic powers, principalities, rulers, and demons. Jesus confirmed Satan's rulership over the world while tempted by Satan, who offered to give Jesus all the "kingdoms of the world," Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim of rulership. Also, when Jesus spoke of a divided kingdom, he referred to Satan's kingdom.

Matthew 4:8-9 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him **all the kingdoms of the**



world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

Mark 3:23-24 So He [Jesus] called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "**How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.**"

John 12:31 [Jesus' speaking] "Now is the judgment of this world; now **the ruler of this world** [Satan] will be cast out.

John 14:30 "I will no longer talk much with you, for **the ruler of this world** [Satan] is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

2 Corinthians 4:3,4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom **the god of this world** [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.

Satan assumed rulership over a spiritual kingdom ruling over the earth by influencing governments, cultures, morals, philosophies, and individuals. The Bible calls this "the world" or "worldliness," which are the spiritual and secular forces that influence us to do evil.

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you **once walked according to the course of this world**, according to [Satan] **the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit who now works in the **sons of disobedience**.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the **rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this [present] darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) places.** (Amplified Version)

James 4:4 *Adulterers and adulteresses!* Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

The Devil's way of gaining access to people is by appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life to create a craving for sin and a mindset that opposes and undermines everything that honors God or his kingdom.

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love **the world** nor the things in **the world**. If anyone loves **the world**, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in **the world**, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the **boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from **the world**. **The world** is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Romans 12:2 *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Previously we saw the two seeds mentioned in the prophecy, and we focused on the promise of Christ, the Messiah. Now we will look at Satan's seed that rejects God and rebels against him, called the children of the Devil, or children of wrath and disobedience. The children's paternity is recognizable by their resemblance to their father. Spiritually speaking, the father's likeness is recognizable by the fruit of their character, whether it reflects the nature of God or the Devil.

John 8:44 "You are of **your father the devil**, and the desires of **your father** you want to do. **He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.**

*Hebrews 12:6-8, 11 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, **God deals with you as with sons**; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? **But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards and not sons.** ... Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; **nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.***

Free will & faith

Adam and Eve's sons Cain and Abel understood the principle of a sacrificial offering for sin. Sacrificing an animal for sins would symbolically transfer the sin to the animal, and the animal would take the punishment instead of the sinner. The sacrifice was an act of repentance, an appeal to God for forgiveness, and a clear conscience. So, Abel sacrificed an animal, and God was pleased with the sacrifice. But Cain gave an offering with some plants, a bloodless, painless offering, which was not acceptable to God.

*Genesis 4:3-5 And in the process of time it came to pass that **Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground** to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And **the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.** **And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.***

*Hebrews 11:4 By faith **Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain**, through which he obtained witness that **he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts**; and through it he being dead still speaks.*

God warned Cain to master his anger, or it would master him. Sin is a choice. Our master is who we obey through our conscience and actions, either God or sin. God gave his advice, and it was up to Cain to choose what he would do.

Genesis 4:6-7 So, the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."**

Romans 6:16-18 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, **you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?** But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And **having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**

Cain and Abel represent the world's first two religions; one produced a murderer, and the other a martyr. They were from the same parents, but one was of God, and the other was of the Devil. It was the first in-house theological debate, and Cain's religion motivated his jealousy, anger, and the murder of his righteous brother. This pattern repeats throughout history, demonstrating a spiritual principle that there is a perpetual war between those after the flesh and those after the Spirit.



Genesis 4:8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that **Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.**

Galatians 4:29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

The Apostle John confirmed Cain was a child of the Devil and explained the differences between the children of God and the Devil.

*1 John 3:8-14. **He who sins is of the devil**, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been **born of God** does not sin, for **His seed** remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been **born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest**: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who ... does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, **not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother**. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brothers righteous. ... **We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.***

Harlot intro

We need to start with the book of Revelation to understand the Harlot church. The setting for these verses is in the end times during the great tribulation. The woman represents a global religious system, and the beast she is riding is the antichrist. He is a tyrant possessed by Satan, who controls and terrorizes the world.

***Revelation 17:3-6** So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. **And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast** which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. **The woman** was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH** I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.*

This woman's name is Mystery, Babylon, the Great, Mother of Harlots; she is throughout the Bible. This religious system powerfully impacts mankind from the flood in Genesis to the second coming

of Christ in the book of Revelation. She is like the evil Eve that gave birth to all the world's false and demonic religions, and she is the Harlot bride of the antichrist. Now that we established that, let's return to where it all started in Babylon.

So going back to Genesis, we see Nimrod, whose name means "he rebelled." Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord, or more accurately, "against" the Lord. So, this Nimrod was a leader who rebelled against the Lord and was the world's first dictator and pagan religious leader. Nimrod had a vast empire, and two of his nations, **Assyria** and **Babylon**, centuries later would conquer Israel and Judah. Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and intermarried them with pagans, destroying their bloodline as Jews. The Babylonians would lay siege to Jerusalem, burn and pillage the temple of God, and take the Jewish people into bondage to Babylon. Nimrod is the prototype of the antichrist.

Genesis 10:8-12 Cush begot **Nimrod**; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore, it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." And the beginning of his kingdom was **Babel [Babylon]**, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land **he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).**

Next, we see the Tower of Babel building project, and we assume Nimrod's in charge because Babylon is one of his cities.

Genesis 11:1-4 Now **the whole earth had one language and one speech.** And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar [Babylon], and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, **"Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."**

Nimrod looks at people like bricks; he creates a system to mass produce them, each fitting a corporate mold, without individuality or identity, only to vanish into a sea of nameless faceless bricks. It's all about the numbers, so more bricks mean a higher tower, up to heaven, and more glory and fame to make a name for themselves. But the only name we know is Nimrod's. The tower of Babel was man's attempt to build a celestial city from bricks manufactured with human efforts, human resources, and human wisdom.

The book of Revelation ends with a city whose builder and maker is God, made with 12 foundations of precious jewels, 12 gates of pearls, and streets of gold. God builds with living stones formed by his hand. God transforms raw minerals into jewels and new creations in Christ, each with different gifts, callings, and fruit of the Spirit, and each one is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a sanctuary for the presence of God.

1 Peter 2:4-5** Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, **you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:6** Do you not know that **you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Hebrews 11:8-10** By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and **he went out, not knowing whither he went.... For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Nimrod built the tower in rebellion against God, and the height was to survive another flood. The top was in the heavens for religious reasons because the Babylonians were into astrology and astronomy and worshipped the Sun, moon, and stars. Building a tower to ascend to heaven was also inspired by Lucifer, the Devil, who rebelled against God by saying "I will" five times regarding how he would sit above the stars of God and be like God. Those were his famous last words before being cast down.

Genesis 11:1-4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves,

Isaiah 14:12-14 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

Nimrod expressly wanted to centralize power and the population, saying lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the earth. He controlled the resources from one location, in direct rebellion with the specific command of God to Noah to fill the world with people (*Genesis 9:1*).

Genesis 11:1-4 lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Genesis 11:8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.

When God came down to the tower of Babel, he confused them with different languages (Babel means confusion), so they could not communicate. Then he separated them into people groups by language and scattered them over the earth by regions. Those regions became various nations that remained separated because of the language barriers, conflicts, and wars.

The tower of Babel is the anti-type of what happened in the first church in Jerusalem. The apostles gathered in one place, in one accord, in Jerusalem. Then God came down and filled 120 disciples with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke supernaturally in languages they did not know. At the same time, foreigners listening to them understood their language without interpreters, and they believed the

message and converted to Christ. That act of God unified a multitude of people from different language groups to be one in Christ. Then God sent persecution that scattered them back to their homes to make disciples in every nation and language, where they remained in unity with all their brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

*Acts 2:3-6 Then there appeared to them divided **tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.***

*Acts 8:3-4 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore, **those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.***

Babylon mystery

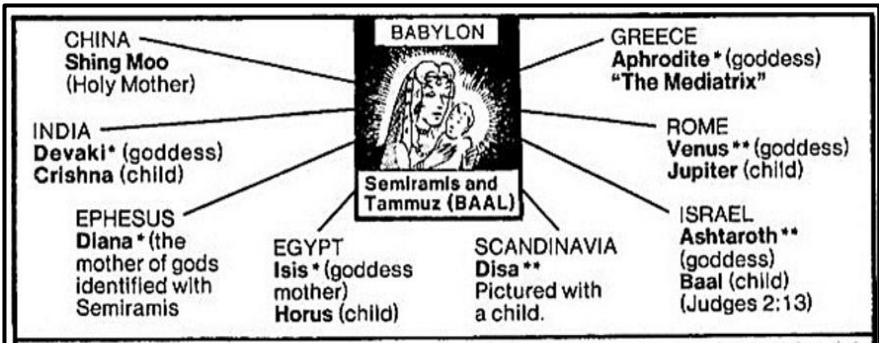
Except for King Jesus in Jerusalem, whenever all power is in the hands of one person, it does not turn out well, whether a Nimrod, a king, a dictator, a Pope, a pastor, or the antichrist. Nimrod was a dictator and became a deity in Babylonian mythology setting the pattern for following cultures. Without going too far into Babylonian mythology, here is a brief outline of what the legends say.

The story goes that after Nimrod's death, his wife, Semiramis gave birth to a son, and she claimed that Nimrod became the **sun god**, the lord of heaven, and then he reincarnated as her son, who she named Tammuz. That's the mythology of the Babylonian false trinity, with Nimrod, the father; Sun, Lord of Heaven, with Semiramis as the **Queen of Heaven**; and **Tammuz**, the reincarnated son, usually seen as an infant. Semiramis and Tammuz became a mother and infant cult. It is possible that Semiramis knew the prophecy to Adam and Eve about the seed of the woman and imitated it. When God confused the languages and scattered the people from the tower of Babel, they spread the Babylonian false gospel to every part of the world with all

its myths, astrology, idolatry, witchcraft, and occult practices. And since God confused their languages, the Babylonian names were changed into different languages in different countries. That is how Babylon became the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, and Semiramis and Tammuz took on new names.

Genesis 11:8-9 So **the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth**, and they ceased building the city. Therefore, its name is called **Babel [confusion]**, because there **the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.**

The Babylonian religion came to Israel as **Baal** and **Astaroth**, which plagued Israel throughout its history. The Bible records a few passages with Tammuz and the Queen of Heaven, the pagan roots for Catholics to worship the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus.



Ezekiel 8:14 So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the **LORD'S house**; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for **Tammuz**. (Vision about temple desecration)

Jeremiah 7:17-18 "Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? "The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make **cakes for the queen of heaven**; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger.

Jeremiah 44:16-19 "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you! "But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to **the queen of heaven** and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. "But since we stopped burning incense to the **queen of heaven** and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine." The women also said, "And when we burned incense to the **queen of heaven** and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands' permission?"

Believer's Priesthood

As we go through the Old Testament, remember that although they are great heroes of the faith, they will not be part of the Bride of Christ. God, in his mercy, has provided something better for the Spirit-filled believers in the New Testament. But we can learn from their lives; their examples can inspire our faith and growth, plus help us discern right from wrong.

1 Peter 1:10-12 **Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you**, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories

that would follow. **To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things which angels desire to look into.**

Hebrews 11:35-40 [Old Testament] Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Moving forward to when Israel came out of Egypt, a great nation of around 2.5 million people. They had lived as slaves for 430 years (*Exodus 12:40-41*), and they left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea and found themselves in a desert wilderness with only what they could carry. They had been institutional slaves, property of Egypt, and the Pharaoh completely controlled them. Generation after generation had become comfortable in their bondage because they had leeks, onions, and fish and felt some kind of stability (*Numbers 11:5*). And suddenly, Israel got thrown into the fiery wilderness with no government, infrastructure, laws, or leaders, and dependent on God for food and water. Coming from a strict, institutional mindset, they were still bound in their minds and didn't know how to function as free men. Moses was the sole authority for direction from God and was shouldering the responsibility alone, and he was overwhelmed. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, a Midianite Priest, saw the situation and offered his advice to Moses. Jethro suggested the Moabite type of secular government, with levels of rulership like a pyramid system, with Moses at the pyramid's pinnacle.

Exodus 18:17-22 So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "**The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover, you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.**" And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So, it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.

Jethro's advice sounded reasonable; they would distribute the responsibilities of rulership in a secular style hierarchy system. But Moses was getting his advice from Jethro, the pagan priest from Midian and Moab. Sometime later, the same Moabites hired Balaam to curse Israel (*Deut. 22-24*). Moses ended up dying in Moab in the same area from where Balaam cursed Israel (*Duet 34:1-6*). And regarding Gentile types of government, Jesus warned his disciples not to use secular power structures to rule over the church but encouraged servant leadership.

Matthew 20:25-27 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "**You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.**"

After Moses met with Jethro, God met with Moses to give His plan for governing Israel, and God called all of Israel to the base of Mt. Sinai to speak to them. God's plan was the covenant of the law, with 613 laws that governed every aspect of life. The people were to be

governed by God's word, so they needed to learn, live, and teach it to their children and have it guide every aspect of their life. God was their king, and they were a kingdom of priests governed by the rule of law in God's word. Jesus simplified the law by saying to love God and others as yourself is the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets.

Exodus 19:4-6 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. **'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'** These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, "that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ... **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"** You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. **"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.** ... "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

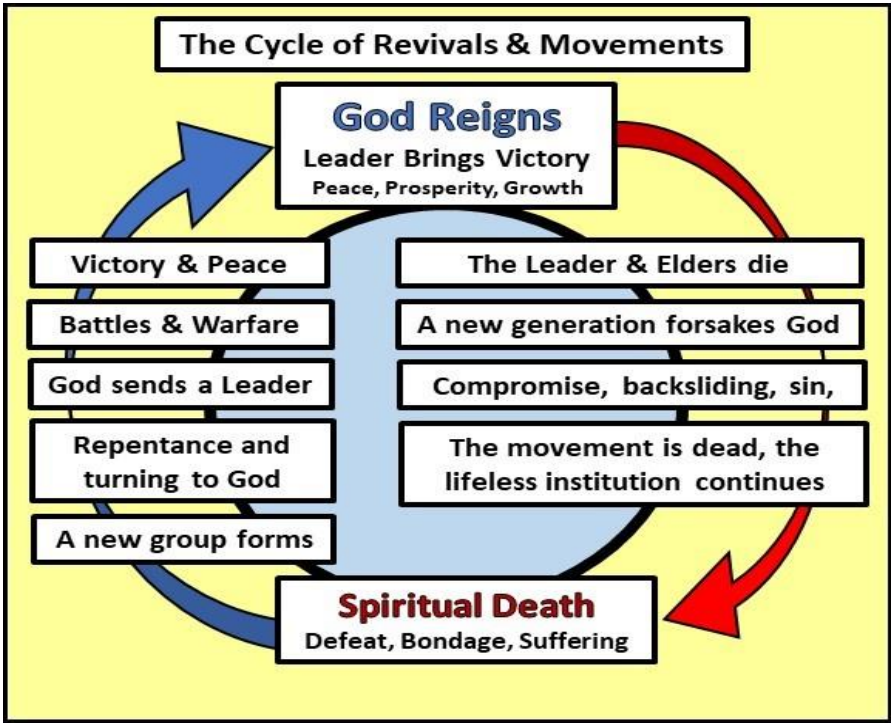
Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." **"This is the first and great commandment. "And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** **"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."**

So, God gave Moses the ten commandments, but before Moses finished receiving them, the children of Israel had made the golden calf and broke the covenant. The law was perfect, but the people were flawed. After the death of Moses and Joshua, for about 450 years, the children of Israel were ruled by judges and the Law (*Acts 13:20-21*).



During that time, they repeated a cycle when Israel was under oppression, they would seek God, and God would send a deliverer who would lead them to victory. The leader would die, and then they would backslide and start the cycle over again. That cycle repeats perpetually for Israel and nations, denominations, and religious movements throughout history. We also go through cycles in our personal spiritual lives and do well to realize the way out of a spiritual decline or crash is to seek the Lord, and Jesus will lead us into his victory (*2 Corinthians 2:14*).

Judges 2:10-19 *When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ... And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.*



At the end of 450 years, under judges, Israel saw the threat of war, wanted a king to fight their battles for them, and asked for a king. God said He was their king, and Israel had rejected Him as their king, but He gave them their request. Be careful what you ask for; Samuel warned them of the consequences of having a king. You could summarize the king's behavior by saying he will take, take, take, and you will give, give, give.

*1 Samuel 8:5-7 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. **Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.**" But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So, Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; **for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.**"*

1 Samuel 8:11-20 And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. " And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. "And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. "And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day." Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

Unfortunately, earthly Kings and Emperors, with few exceptions, are ruthless tyrants who rule by force, smashing all opposition and dissent. Kings, as dictators, lead the church by default, and all the kings of Israel and Judah set the spiritual tone of the nation. Power corrupts, and we see the character flaws and cruelty of Kings, Popes, and religious leaders throughout history. Bad leaders are domineering and demanding dictators, and good leaders are inspirational and humble servants of God.

Israel's harlotry

King David reigned over the kingdom of Israel, making it strong, wealthy, and secure against all its enemies. David amassed great treasures and resources and commissioned his son Solomon to build a temple for the God of Israel in Jerusalem. God blessed Solomon, and when he inaugurated the temple, the glory of God filled the temple, and God's blessings came over all of Israel. But over time, Solomon married one thousand pagan women, and when he was old, his wives

turned his heart away from God, and Solomon sinned greatly by idolatry.

1 Kings 11:4-9 For it was so, **when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods;** and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after **Ashtoreth** the goddess of the Sidonians, and after **Milcom** the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for **Chemosh** the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for **Molech** the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. So, **the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God** of Israel

God was angry with Solomon and pronounced judgment by taking ten of the twelve tribes from his kingdom but postponed the sentence until his son Rehoboam assumed power. When Rehoboam came to power, Jeroboam led a revolt and took ten tribes of Israel in the northern territory (*1 Kings 11:31*), and Rehoboam held on to the tribe of Judah in the south. The Levitical priests and all those who feared God went to the southern kingdom of Judah to worship in Jerusalem according to the Law of Moses.

When Rehoboam took the northern tribes, they forsook the God of Israel, God's temple in Jerusalem, and the covenant of the Law. Jeroboam feared that all the people from the northern kingdom would return to Jerusalem to the temple of God to worship.

1 Kings 12:26-27 And Jeroboam said in his heart, **"Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: "If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."**

So, Jeroboam hatched a plan to create a pagan alternative to worshipping God in Jerusalem. He built temples to Baal, ordained pagan priests, and held feasts to pagan gods. And he celebrated feasts on the same days as the feast in Jerusalem, and he made two golden calves and many pagan idols. The pagan feasts meant lots of food, music, alcohol, drugs, sex, and killing babies for Molech (and maybe fog machines, big screens, and motivational speakers). Jeroboam's plan worked, and he kept the people in the northern kingdom. (Do whatever it takes to fill the seats, right?).

1 Kings 12:28-33 Therefore the king asked advice, **made two calves of gold**, and said to the people, **"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!"** And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. ... He made shrines on the high places [to Ashtaroth], **and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.** Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, **like the feast that was in Judah**, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So, he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. So, he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month **which he had devised in his own heart**



2 Kings 17:16-17 So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and **worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.** And they **caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil** in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

Jeroboam built his worship centers in Dan at the northern extreme of Israel and Bethel in the south bordering Judah, just twelve miles from Jerusalem. He said it was too far to go the extra twelve miles past Bethel to Jerusalem to worship, and he lured them into a counterfeit religion that was an abomination to God. Jeroboam established a dynasty where he was the king and the high priest of a pagan religion that he invented by mixing Baal and Ashtaroath worship with Jewish religious holidays and worship. Every one of the kings in the northern kingdom of Israel did evil because they continued Jeroboam's sin of idolatry with the golden calves,



On the contrary, the kingdom of Judah in the south preserved the Messianic line, the seed of David, for their kings. Their priests were Levites, the sons of Aaron, and they had Solomon's temple. They were not perfect saints by any measure, but they were children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God used them to preserve a remnant to honor his covenants and promises to the patriarchs and David.

The northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were fighting each other in a family feud that ended badly with a split. They both claimed to be the people of God, but the northern kingdom forsook God. Their worship looked the same outwardly because both had temples, priests, sacrifices, and feasts. In the beginning, they were one family, but separated over religion. Judah worshipped according to the word of God at God's temple in Jerusalem, and the northern kingdom of Israel became a Harlot going after other gods, and worshipped demons at the temple of Baal.

Jeroboam's tactics of mixing religions would backfire against Israel when they got conquered by the **Assyrians**. The Assyrians laid siege to **Samaria**, the capital of Israel, deported a large segment of the Jewish population, and replaced them with people from different

nations (*2 Kings 17:24-41*). The remaining Israelis intermarried with the implanted foreign immigrants and adopted their pagan culture and gods. From that time, the **Samaritans** lost their lineage as Jews, were considered a mixed breed, became hated by the Jews with pure bloodlines, and got rejected from the genealogy of Israel (*Ezra 2:62*). The tactic of conquering then mixing cultures and religions was an effective way to subdue people throughout the ancient world, the **Romans** also used it (as we will see), and it still works today.

Jezebel

The Northern Kingdom of Israel did evil, and they rejected the royal line of David, so they were ruled by tyrants who ascended the throne by sedition and murder. They had bloody takeovers and power struggles amidst continuous moral decay and cultural rot. That led to Ahab, an incredibly evil King, and his wife Jezebel, one of the most wicked and vile persons in the history of Israel.

1 Kings 16:30-33** Now **Ahab** the son of Omri **did evil** in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, **as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal,** which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. **Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

Ahab walked in the sins of Jeroboam and was the king, but his wife was the religious ruler. Ahab married a pagan high priestess of the cult of Baal, Jezebel. The name of Jezebel means: Baal exalts; Baal is husband to or unchaste. So, the literal meaning of her name is the harlot wife of Baal. Also, Baal means lord, but he is a fake lord, not the LORD God. So, people thought they were serving the LORD, but it was a demonic impostor. And Jezebel is a type of the Harlot church, the unchaste priestess wife of the Devil; she killed the true prophets of God, had 400 false prophets on her paid staff, and ruled Israel with an iron fist.

The narrative of Jezebel and Elijah runs parallel with the accounts in the book of Revelation. Jesus said Elijah would be a forerunner to prepare the way of the Lord, and some believe he could be one of the two witnesses during the tribulation. But even the mighty Elijah ran when Jezebel threatened to kill him, and likewise, the harlot in the book of Revelation gets drunk with the blood of the saints. Elijah prophesied Jezebel's death, which Jehu fulfilled when he trampled her to death with his horses. In the book of Revelation, Jesus revealed himself as having feet of brass [for trampling] and threatened Jezebel and her children with great tribulation if they failed to repent.

2 Kings 9:30-33 Now when **Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window.** Then, as Jehu entered at the gate, she said, "Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?" And he looked up at the window, and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" So, two or three eunuchs looked out at him. Then he said, **"Throw her down."** So, they threw her down, and some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses; and he trampled her underfoot.

There is much more to say about Jezebel, and we will cover more about her later. God judged the northern kingdom of Israel for all the sins of Jeroboam, Ahab, Jezebel, and others, and they were conquered and destroyed.

Beginning with Solomon (*1 Kings 11:4-9*), Judah was involved with idolatry and the same perversity and wickedness as Israel, so God judged them. Then God used the **Babylonians** to punish Judah by laying siege to Jerusalem, destroying the city and the temple, and carrying the people captive in Babylon for seventy years (*Jeremiah 29:10*). before returning to Jerusalem. There was a four-hundred-year gap of silence between the last Old Testament prophet and John the Baptist. During that time, the Jewish leaders added multitudes of traditions of men on top of the 613 laws of Moses, so the religious leaders became their oppressors.

Jesus' ministry

Usually, people begin the story of Jesus' life as a babe in the manger or with miracles. But we will highlight Jesus from a different angle that most people ignore. We will focus on the persecution against Jesus and consider how he led an underground movement and trained his disciples to imitate his ministry. Jesus and his disciples continuously moved about in a rigorous outreach of teaching and healing while simultaneously being challenged and threatened by the religious establishment.

From the moment Jesus started his ministry, there was trouble. He went into his hometown synagogue and announced that he had fulfilled a Messianic prophecy, which may have raised some eyebrows. Then Jesus inflamed the anger of the locals by speaking about how Elijah and Elisha blessed two Gentiles (non-Jews). Hearing that, the Jews took Jesus outside, intending to kill him, but he just walked away.

***Luke 4:28-30** So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.*

Jesus began to travel from place to place doing great miracles, walking on water, raising the dead, healing the blind, feeding multitudes, and casting out demons. And all those signs proved he was the promised Jewish Messiah, the Christ. Jesus' miracles and teachings turned the Jewish religious community upside down because he did not fit into their religious mold. Jesus denounced their non-Biblical traditions, lack of mercy and compassion, blind legalism, and hypocrisy. Jesus did not submit to their distorted interpretations of the scriptures and arrogant routines and even broke with accepted cultural norms by reaching out to sinners and the outcast of society. He went from place to place, with nowhere to lay his head, no buildings, no musicians, and no offering plates. Jesus had no formal education, a poor carpenter from a no-good city. Yet he was Immanuel, God with us, the Son of God, in human form.

The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead because of their arrogance and jealousy. His anointing with supernatural abilities to teach and perform miracles exposed their hypocrisy and threatened their religious control over the people. The Greek word Christ means anointed one; in Hebrew, it is Messiah. Jesus was the seed promised to Eve in the garden. For that reason, Satan continuously tried to destroy him and used religious and political rulers to attack him.

Psalms 2:1-2** Why do the **nations rage**, and the **people plot** a vain thing? The **kings** of the earth set themselves, and the **rulers** take counsel together, **against the LORD and against His Anointed.

We will list some examples of Jesus' zeal and fearlessness in opposing religious oppression and hypocrisy from just a few chapters in the book of John. First, we see that Jesus healed on the Sabbath, which infuriated the Jews, and rather than appeasing them, he inflamed them by referring to God as his Father, so they wanted to kill him even more. Later he called them children of the Devil, which threw more gas on the fire, then they picked up rocks to stone him to death. But again, Jesus miraculously just walked away without being apprehended. Jesus knew the set time, Passover, when he would offer himself as a sacrifice. He was untouchable before the Passover, but he still used wisdom, discretion, and concern for his followers, going underground and resurfacing to preach.

John 5:16-18** For this reason the Jews **persecuted Jesus**, and **sought to kill Him**, because **He had done these things on the Sabbath**. But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Therefore, **the Jews sought all the more to kill Him**, because **He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 7:1** After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; **for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

John 7:5-13 For even His brothers did not believe in Him. Then Jesus said to them, "**My time has not yet come**, but your time is always ready. ... When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee. **But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.** Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, "**Where is He?**" And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, **He deceives the people.**" However, **no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews.** Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

John 7:19-20 "Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? **Why do you seek to kill Me?**" The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?"

John 8:40-44 "**But now you seek to kill Me**, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. **"You do the deeds of your father."** Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father God." ... "**You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.**

John 8:58-59 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." **Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.**

John 11:7-8 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "**Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?**"

John 11:54 Therefore **Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews,** but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

John 11:57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, **that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.**

John 12:36 "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." **These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.**

The danger level was getting very high, and the religious establishment sought to kill Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. The chief priest and Pharisees considered Jesus and his followers deceived, and they pronounced curses on them. They also threatened to ex-communicate anyone who believed in Jesus from the synagogue, which would have severe consequences for Jewish people.

John 7:45-49 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, **"Why have you not brought Him?"** The officers answered, **"No man ever spoke like this Man!"** Then the Pharisees answered them, **"Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."**

John 9:22 His [healed blind man's] parents said these things because they feared the Jews, **for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue** [excommunicated].

John 9:33-34 [healed blind man] "If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" **And they cast him out** [excommunicated from synagogue].

John 10:39 ¶ **Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.**

John 12:10 But **the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also,** because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

After performing miraculous healings, Jesus would often sternly warn the people, DO NOT tell anyone about it. Proclaiming a media ban at the height of your ministry would be unthinkable for a YouTube prophet or multimedia pastor whose greatest fear is getting demonetized. Also, how could anyone pass up all those likes, hits, and shares, for all those miracles you post? But not so with Jesus.

There was a reason for Jesus to ban advertising his healings and miracles. Anonymity gave Jesus more freedom to preach and move about without being apprehended. Think of a pastor in a Muslim country like Iran, and if God used that underground pastor to perform a notable miracle, and someone recorded it and posted it online, what would happen? Chances are, within a few days, everyone in the post would get apprehended, tortured, and sent to prison or killed. The more they published Jesus' healing ministry, the less he could be in public.

Mark 1:43-45 **And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places;** and they came to Him from every direction.

Mark 3:10-12 **For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.**

Mark 7:35-36 **Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it.**

Even when Jesus was doing public ministry, he sometimes spoke in parables like a coded language that even his disciples didn't understand. After the parable of the Sower, the disciples came to Jesus and asked him to explain what it meant. Jesus explained that the kingdom's mysteries were only for those God granted spiritual perception. The natural mind, human reasoning, cannot understand spiritual truth.

Matthew 13:10-13 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "**Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ... "Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.**

1 Corinthians 2:13-14 **This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

Jesus used parables to teach his followers about coming judgment while denouncing the religious leaders without directly confronting them to avoid causing riots or physical confrontations.

Mark 12:1-12 "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. **Haven't you read this scripture: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" "Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.**

After Jesus angered the religious establishment with that parable, they sent people to catch him in his words. They asked Jesus about Caesar pitting him between the Roman occupiers and the Jewish establishment. Jesus answered with a question. Jesus used questions over and over again to control the conversation. No matter who asked Jesus questions, whether the religious leaders or the Roman governors, Jesus was always in charge, and he was the one asking the questions, and they had to answer him.

Mark 12:13-16 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus **to catch him in his words. ... Should we pay or shouldn't we?"** But **Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?"** he asked. **"Bring me a denarius and let me look at it."** They brought the coin, and he asked them, **"Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"** **"Caesar's," they replied.** Then Jesus said to them, **"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."** **And they were amazed at him.**

Matthew 12:10-12 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. **And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" that they might accuse Him.** Then He said to them, **"What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? "Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep?"** Therefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Matthew 21:23-27 Now when He came into the temple, **the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"** But Jesus answered and said to them, **"I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: "The baptism of John where was it from? From heaven or from men?"** And they reasoned among themselves, saying, **"If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet."**

So, they answered Jesus and said, **"We do not know."** And He said to them, **"Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."**

John 18:33-38 Then **Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"** Jesus answered him, **"Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"**

Membership or tenure in the religious establishment does not give spiritual understanding, which is why Jesus called the religious leaders the blind who are leading the blind.

Matthew 15:10-20 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." Then His disciples came and said to Him, **"Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"** But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. **"Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."** Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." So, Jesus said, **"Are you also still without understanding?"** "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. **"These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."**

Jesus was always moving, traveling from place to place, so much so that he said he had nowhere to lay his head. Maybe it was partially because of persecution, but also to seek and save the lost. Jesus didn't rent a meeting hall or stay in the temple but preached from boats, mountainsides, and many houses. Throughout history, that has been the pattern for the underground church. Making disciples is a priority, so Jesus traveled to different areas and trained his disciples to do the

same. The disciples needed supernatural strength and endurance to keep up with Jesus as he made a circuit teaching from village to village, daily, morning to night, relentlessly.

Mark 6:6 *And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then **He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.***

Jesus' - Meeting Places	
Luke 5:3	Preached from a boat , miracle of great catch
Matt 5,	Preached on a hillside , Sermon on the mount
Matt 24,	Mount of Olives , prophesied about 2 nd Coming
Matt 26:6	Simon the lepers house , heals, eats & teaches
Matt 8:14	Peter's house , heals mother-in-law & teaches
Luke 19:5	Zacchaeus house , gets saved, stays at for a day
Luke 14:1	Pharisees house , Meeting, teaching & Meal
Matt 9:9	Matthew's house , leaves taxes, meal, meeting
Luke 11:37	Pharisees house , eats, condemns Pharisees
Lk 10:38	Lazarus, Martha, Mary house , Eats, meeting
Mk 14:12	Upper room of house Passover (last Supper)
At a well, a funeral, synagogues, at the temple, in homes, hillsides, water's edge, middle of the sea in a storm, walking town to town, everywhere Jesus went he had encounters that became teachable moments, healing campaigns, meals, miracles, answering questions, continuously every day, all day, Jesus ministered everywhere he went during his three and a half years of ministry.	

After watching how he ministered, Jesus sent the disciples on a missionary trip without home church support, no special offerings, or car wash fundraisers, trusting God to provide for their needs. So, they went out by faith, just like they had done with Jesus many times.

Mark 6:7-13 *And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over*

unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also, He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.

When the disciples returned from their missionary trip, they were excited to tell Jesus about it. They had been so busy they didn't even have time to eat and were exhausted, so Jesus suggested they find a place to rest. But the crowd saw where they were going and beat them to the spot. About five thousand men greeted them; if you include women and children, they may have numbered above fifteen to twenty thousand people.

Mark 6:30 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So, they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.

Jesus taught them until it was getting late, and since this was a deserted place where they wanted to escape for rest, there were no McDonald's, Taco Bell, or any stores, so nobody had eaten, and they were hungry. The disciples asked Jesus to send the people away to find food for themselves. Jesus used this moment to test and train his disciples, and he replied, "you give them something to eat." They had watched Jesus perform miracles, and now he offered them an opportunity to step up to the plate. Their faith wasn't there yet, so Jesus took over, and the rest is history.

Mark 6:35-37 When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, "This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. "Send them away, that they may go into the

surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat." But He answered and said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?"

Immediately after feeding the multitudes, Jesus commanded his disciples to get in the boat and cross the Sea of Galilee to the other side while he found a place to pray. As you can imagine, they were already exhausted, had no time to eat, and spent the entire day ministering to multitudes, then late at night, all they wanted to do was collapse and fall asleep somewhere. Instead, they row across the turbulent seas in the dark of the night.



Mark 6:44-45 Now those who had eaten the loaves were **about five thousand men.**

Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.

Now Jesus comes walking across the water at the fourth watch of the night, which is between 3 am and 6 am, and the disciples are straining at rowing.

Mark 6:46-48 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. **Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea;** and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them **straining at rowing,** for the wind was against them. Now about **the fourth watch of the night** He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.

Rowing is strenuous exercise anytime, but after nearly 24 hours of going nonstop, they must have been beyond exhaustion. And guess

what? The multitudes were waiting for them when they reached the other side of the sea, and as morning breaks, a new day of ministry begins with no sleep.

Mark 6:53-56 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. **And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was.** Wherever He entered into **villages, cities, or in the country,** they laid the sick in the **marketplaces,** and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

That is a tribute to God's grace and the disciple's dedication to Jesus. Let's ask the question, have you ever seen any discipleship program that would put such strenuous demands on its followers? Jesus did, Paul did, and that's why their disciples turned the world upside down.

As Jesus moved about, he knew he had to be in Jerusalem for the Passover but needed to avoid being apprehended by the religious leaders before his time. So, where and when Jesus and the disciples met was kept private. When Jesus sent his disciples to prepare a place for the Passover meal, it sounded like instructions for a covert underground operation. Even when the religious leaders wanted to apprehend Jesus, they needed Judas Iscariot to guide them to where Jesus was because Judas knew where the disciples would frequent. Also, Judas gave a greeting kiss to identify Jesus because he blended into the crowd, unlike the movies where Jesus is wearing a glowing white gown, and everyone else is in brown burlap.

Luke 22:8-13 And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." So, they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" And He said to them, **"Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'"**

"Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." So, they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.

John 18:2-3 And **Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.** Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.

Luke 22:1-4 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. And **the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people.** **Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So, he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them.**

We all know what happened at this juncture. Jesus fulfilled his mission; he was crucified, died, and rose from the dead after three days. But where did he find his disciples after the resurrection? They were hiding for fear in a locked room. Why? It was dangerous to be associated with Jesus.

John 20:19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, **when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."**

Jesus chose a group of lowly fishermen, tax collectors, and ordinary people who had been in fear and hiding together in a locked room. His last words to them were to wait in Jerusalem to receive power, and you will be my witnesses. The Greek word for witness is *martus*, or martyr. Jesus told them they would be his martyrs in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the world.

Acts 1:4-8 And being assembled together with them, **He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have**

*heard from Me; "for John truly baptized with water, **but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**" ... "**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses** [martyrs] **to Me** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Jesus had challenged the status quo, flipped over the tables of the moneychangers, gave fiery rebukes to the religious hypocrites, expounded the mysteries of the kingdom of God, turned water into wine, healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, walked on water, calmed the seas, fed multitudes, but tolerated persecution with self-control and patience, and was faithful unto death. He left an example and pattern for all his disciples to follow in his steps because they would also do miracles, teach and travel in circuits, be persecuted, and die as martyrs.

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

The church

On the day of Pentecost, the 50th day after the Passover, and the crucifixion of Jesus, 120 disciples prayed in the **upper room of a house**, waiting as Jesus instructed them to do. Suddenly the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, and they began to speak in tongues (unlearned foreign languages). There were multitudes in Jerusalem for the feasts from around the world, and people from at least 16 different countries heard them speaking in the local dialect of their country. Most of the disciples were uneducated and illiterate and had never traveled to foreign countries, so the ability to speak unlearned dialects was a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

A large crowd gathered to see what was happening, and Peter stood up to preach. But this was a different Peter, not the one who denied Jesus three times. The new, powerful, Spirit-filled Peter was bold and

fearless, brazenly confronting the same crowd that 50 days before had shouted for Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus. And Peter held them to account for their part in getting Jesus crucified.

Acts 2:22-24 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know. "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;" whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Acts 2:36-37 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

That day 3,000 people came to faith in Christ, got baptized, and then met daily in the temple and shared meals from house to house, and every day, new people were getting saved and added to the church.

Acts 2:41, 46-47 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls ... So, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.



Shortly after that, while John and Peter were walking in the temple, they saw a crippled man on the ground, and Peter commanded him to walk. The man jumped up and went running, leaping, and praising God. All the commotion drew a large crowd, and Peter stood up to preach.

Acts 3:13-20 "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, **whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.**" And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. **"Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ... "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,**

Among the crowd in the temple were the same religious leaders who crucified Christ, and they got greatly upset by Peter's preaching. They apprehended Peter and John and put them in jail. Nevertheless, 5,000 people came to faith in Christ that day.

Acts 4:1-4 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. **And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.**

The next day the religious establishment held a council and brought Peter and John before them to answer for themselves. Peter gave all the glory to God for healing the man but was extremely bold and he

confronted the very people who were responsible for having Christ killed and charged them with Jesus' death.

Acts 4:9-12 "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.** "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The religious council decided to threaten them and command them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. Peter vehemently refused to comply with their demands, saying they could not and would not stop preaching about what they had seen and heard regarding Jesus.

Acts 4:18-21 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." So, when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

The religious establishment just poured gas on the fire of the radical followers of Jesus because persecution purifies, removes hypocrisy, and causes the multiplication of true disciples. After the disciples prayed, the place shook, and God gave them a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit and boldness.

Acts 4:29-31 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they were

assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness

The number of believers continued to multiply, healings and miracles were happening, and people from the areas around Jerusalem were bringing the sick for healing. That outraged the religious leaders who put the apostles in prison.

Acts 5:17-18 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

During the night, an angel released the apostles from the prison and told them to go and preach in the temple. So, in the morning, the religious leaders came to the prison to find the apostles were gone. Then they heard they were preaching in the temple, so they brought them in for questioning. Peter stood boldly, proclaimed they would not cease preaching Christ, and confronted them again for murdering Christ.

Ac 5:28-33 ... saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

After a brief consultation, the religious leaders commanded the apostles to be beaten and let them go. The apostles endured a beating, and upon their release, they rejoiced for being counted worthy to suffer for Christ.

Acts 5:40-42 ... and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

After the threats and beatings, the church gave birth to its first martyr. **Stephen** was highly regarded and chosen by the church as a deacon (table waiter), And when the religious leaders questioned him, he preached Christ to them. Like Peter, he was extremely bold and rebuked them for killing Christ. The religious leaders gnashed their teeth angrily and stoned Stephen to death. A young man named Saul, an ultra-zealous Jew, was in the crowd; he persecuted the followers of Jesus, and later, he encountered Christ and became a follower himself and changed his name to Paul.

Acts 7:57-59 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Stephen's death was like the breaking of a dam, and extreme persecution got unleashed upon the church. The most vicious attacker of the church was Saul, who made havoc entering the houses and dragging believers to prison. And the believers were scattered abroad, preaching as they went.

Acts 8:1-4 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore, those who

were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Jesus had prepared the apostles and disciples to preach the gospel and go to the world, houses, synagogues, markets, boats, fields, and squares wherever they went, trusting in God and doing miracles. So, they were ready to lead and lay a foundation for the church.

Church hierarchy

In the church's first 8-10 years, they were all Jewish believers in Christ, with generations of traditions and culture in their background. Still, they had to get the mind of Christ on how to function under the new covenant. Like Israel leaving Egypt, the apostles only knew the Law of Moses, traditions, and oppressive religious leaders. Now they were on their own to get the mind of the Spirit for direction. What to do about the Law, circumcision, and kosher foods? It was a new covenant and a new world that they were unfamiliar with.

They also had to adapt to the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit to guide, teach, and equip them for worship and service. They had apostles and elders with recognized spiritual authority. But they were not controlled or managed by one leader who told everybody else what to do. And when they called an assembly, they included the whole church in the decision-making process. They functioned as "the priesthood of all believers," with the Holy Spirit indwelling each believer, writing the Law of the Spirit on their hearts and minds, so each one knew the Lord.

*Hebrews 8:8-12 For **this is the covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.** "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

When church issues surfaced, the apostles held community meetings and included the multitude of disciples in the discussions and

decision-making process.

Acts 6:1-5 Now in those days, **when the number of the disciples was multiplying**, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. **Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said**, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." Therefore, **brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation**, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And **the saying pleased the whole multitude.**

Then Peter created a big scandal in the church by going to the house of an unclean Gentile (non-Jew). On top of that, these Gentiles converted to Christ and got filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and Peter water baptized them! When Peter returned to Jerusalem, he had to explain why he defiled himself with Gentile sinners. The apostles and brethren questioned Peter, who testified about what happened, which ended with the Gentiles getting accepted into the church.

Acts 11:1-3 Now the **apostles** and **brethren** who were in Judea heard that the **Gentiles** had also received the word of God. And when **Peter** came up to Jerusalem, **those of the circumcision** contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "**Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.**"

Regarding the Gentiles

After Gentiles got accepted into the church, the question arose of what requirements to put on them regarding circumcision and the law. They gathered the apostles, elders, and the whole church. From what we see, no moderator controlled the meeting; different ones spoke as led by the Spirit, and the others listened. At times the conversation went

from heated to silent, but there was order and respect. The final decision came from a group consensus. They agreed to four requirements for the Gentiles and wrote a letter to send out to all the churches.

Acts 15:6-22 Now the **apostles** and **elders** came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, **Peter** rose up ... Then all **the multitude** kept silent and listened to **Barnabas** and **Paul** declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, **James** answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: ... Then it pleased the **apostles** and **elders**, with **the whole church**, to send **chosen men** of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, **Judas** who was also named **Barsabas**, and **Silas**, **leading men among the brethren**.

Regarding revival in Samaria

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about revival in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to investigate what was happening. You would think that Peter and John would be the big bosses and calling all the shots, but they submitted to a consensus of all the apostles and got sent by the group.

Acts 8:14 Now when **the apostles** who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, **they sent Peter and John to them**,

The Corinthian church had a problem with believers taking each other to secular courts. Paul rebuked them and suggested they go to a respected believer to be a mediator to resolve the issue. So, the local problems got handled by local elders who had personal knowledge of those involved and would be there for any follow-up on the situation. As opposed to having some overseer from a district office at a distant headquarters take the oversight, or go to secular courts.

1 Corinthians 6:1-7 **Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?** Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?

And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

In the book of Acts, God used different means to speak to his people, not from a denominational headquarters, church board, or an institutional playbook. God sometimes spoke with directions from Jesus, the Holy Spirit, angels, or with a vision. These divine interventions required immediate obedience, no time to call a board meeting, have a vote, or get approval from a Pope, Bishop, or Pastor in charge. In Antioch, the church had prophets and teachers, but the Holy Spirit gave the marching orders.

Acts 13:1-4 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Here are a few examples of divine directions given to individuals.

- Acts 8:26 Now an **angel** of the Lord spoke to Philip,
- Acts 8:29 the **Spirit** said to Philip, "Go near this chariot."
- Acts 9:10 Ananias; **the Lord said in a vision**, "Ananias."
- Acts 9:11 **the Lord said** for one called Saul of Tarsus,
- Acts 10:3 he in **a vision an angel of God** saying, "Cornelius!"
- Acts 10:9 Peter went on the housetop to pray, **fell into a trance**

All participate

Paul gave instructions to all the churches he started, and judging by the letters he wrote, their form of meetings and fellowship were much different than today. For the first 300 years, they were a persecuted underground movement with very close relationships. Their meetings

were for brothers and sisters in Christ that they knew personally or brought by invitation from someone in the group. They met in home churches and had safety concerns during times of persecution. They required letters or someone to vouch for a newcomer to the fellowship, as Barnabas did for Paul or as Paul discussed with the Corinthians.

Acts 9:26-27 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

There were no church buildings or signs, and meeting times and places were not on social media or anywhere else, so information was by word of mouth. The meetings were primarily to build up the faith of believers, but it was possible unbelievers could attend. In that case, they would be mindful not to use the gift of tongues if there was no interpretation (*1 Corinthians 14*).

Right after Pentecost, they met in and around the Temple, but that diminished after the persecution began and after Gentiles became part of the church. The accusation that got Paul arrested and eventually martyred was that he defiled the Temple by bringing a Gentile there (*Acts 21:28*). They met from house to house or wherever possible. Early Roman believers met in the catacombs and tombs of the graveyards. They met in smaller groups or would have gatherings where the whole church came together on special occasions.

Apostles & Disciples Meeting Places	
Matt 10:5	Any town, village find worthy person stay at their house
Lk 10:4-8,	When entering a house , stay there eat what they give
Acts 1:13	120 meet, upper room of a house on day of Pentecost
Acts 2:46	3,000 daily in the temple , break bread, house to house
Acts 3:1	Peter, John go into the temple at the hour of prayer
Acts 3:11	Peter, John Solomon's porch healing, preaching
Acts 5:12	Apostles, Solomon's porch signs, wonders, multitudes
Acts 5:18	Peter in prison Angel releases, preaches in the temple
Acts 5:42	Apostles daily in temple, every house preached Christ
Acts 8:3	Saul (Paul) persecuted the church, entered every house
Acts 9:43	Peter, Joppa in Simon's house met Cornelius' servants
Acts 10:48	Peter preaches to Cornelius household stays few days
Rom 16:5	Priscilla & Aquila, greet the church meet their house
Col 4:15	Nymphas and the church which is in his house
Phm 1:2	Apphia & Archippus the church meeting in your home

1 Corinthians 14:23 Therefore **if the whole church comes together in one place**, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

In Jerusalem, there were thousands of believers, and they were continuously meeting at different places, public squares, around the temple, and house to house with common meals.

Acts 2:42-47 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and **fellowship**, in the **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who

believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

The apostles transitioned from the Old Testament prophets and priests to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church. The Holy Spirit especially equipped leaders to train the entire assembly to do the work of the ministry. The job of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers is to be an example, give hands-on training and instruction, and incorporate the disciples into the ministry or send them out to disciple others. This process produces growth, unity, and stability in the entire assembly.

*Ephesians 4:11-16 It was he who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors and teachers**, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach **unity in the faith** and in the **knowledge** of the Son of God and become **mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be **infants**, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things **grow up into him** who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him **the whole body**, joined and held together by **every supporting ligament**, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

The Apostles used letters to coordinate between disciples and different churches. Paul wrote some letters explicitly for his disciples, like Timothy and Titus, with instructions for their ministry and the church. Other letters were general letters (like the one regarding Gentiles) with teachings and exhortations that would get circulated to all the churches.

1 Thessalonians 5:27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

Acts 15:30-31 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

Colossians 4:16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

When reading Paul's letters, if you pay attention to the salutations and greetings, it is obvious how integrated all the churches were with each other; they were family. Paul was like a father to his spiritual children and knew every detail of all their lives. Paul had never been to Rome (*Romans 1:13*), but when he wrote the letter to them, note how many people he greeted and what he knew about them.

Romans 16: 1-15, 21-23. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another

woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives. I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.**

In the first church, The Holy Spirit had anointed everyone to participate, sons, daughters, young, old, servants, and maids, and everyone was Spirit-filled. Paul emphasized that everyone has some spiritual gift or function to contribute when the church meets. Paul mentions areas of participation, apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helps, administrations, tongues, exhortations, giving, leading, and showing mercy. The wide variety of giftings and abilities only enforces the premise of the whole church participating (as opposed to a separation between the congregation and ministers).

*Acts 2:17-18 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That **I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh**; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days; **And they shall prophesy.***

*1 Corinthians 12:28-31 And God has appointed these in the church: first **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, after that **miracles** then **gifts of healings, helps, administrations**, varieties of **tongues**. **Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. (We could cynically add to that list, Are all spectators?)***

Romans 12:4-8 For as we have many members in one body, but **all the members do not have the same function**, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:** if **prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or **ministry**, let us use it in our ministering; he who **teaches**, in teaching; he who **exhorts**, in exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

The meetings in the first church were drastically different than what we see in churches today. We have Americanized the church, which runs like a business, school, or theatre; in other words, an institution. If a sinner walks into a church today, they would fill out a visitor's card, get a new member's package, sign up for baptism class, and get plugged in and processed into something inside the building. In the first church, they got saved, water baptized, filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke in tongues on the same day. On day one, new converts would invite people to their houses for home meetings, and their friends and family would come and get saved.

Acts 16:30-33 [Paul & Silas with Philippian jailor at midnight] And he brought them out and said, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" So, they said, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.**" Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. **And immediately he and all his family were baptized.**

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.** And ... **the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.** Then Peter answered, "**Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?**" **And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.**

The way they taught and learned was different than ours. We have a teacher, classroom, and open a textbook and study to learn. They first dealt with attitudes and mindsets, changing the way people think. When Jesus told a parable, he spoke the truth like a riddle that had to be solved, forcing people to think and see things from different perspectives. Paul's teaching targeted the thought life of his disciples, transforming them from the inside out. Paul taught his disciples to train their minds to control every thought to be Spiritually minded.

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

2 Corinthians 4:16** Therefore we do not lose heart. **Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Romans 8:5-7** Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. **The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

2 Corinthians 10:4-6** The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. **We are destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted and proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought and purpose captive to the obedience of Christ,

Rather than learning denominational or church rules and regulations, the apostles taught about the law of the Spirit that brings freedom. They did not promote allegiance to a building or institution. They taught that we are God's temple, and the kingdom of God is inside us,

a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. If we are good citizens in that kingdom, we will produce the fruit of the Spirit, or character that reflects that Christ is living inside us.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Jesus and the apostles emphasized discipleship teaching, converting the lost, then the elders mentoring the younger. We see that with how Paul mentored Timothy and Titus; first, he taught them by his example as they traveled with him, then sent them out to minister and duplicated the process.

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

Philippians 4:9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

The early church provided hands-on experience serving, breaking bread together, and using spiritual gifts. Everyone participated in their meetings, not like a one-man show, it was more like a spiritual pot-

luck dinner, and everybody brought something to the table. There was no institutionally sanctioned format; they would all participate two or three would speak in tongues, others would interpret, two or three would give a prophecy, and the others would use discernment to teach and encourage growth in the group. Someone could lead out with singing, teaching, testimonies, or whatever God put on their hearts as the Holy Spirit led them. They met in home churches, so maintaining order would have been much more manageable than in a large sanctuary. Many of their churches were breaking ground in new areas that had never heard the gospel of Christ and started small; when Paul first went to Ephesus, there were only 12 men in the church (*Acts 19:7*).

1 Corinthians 14:26-33 How is it then, brethren? **Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.** Let all things be done for edification. **If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.** But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. **Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.** For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Colossians 3:15-16 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you **teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.**

It is clear from the following verse that all the gifts must get distributed throughout the church. Nobody has sole possession of all the gifts, fulfills every function, and does all ministry alone. That approach kills discipleship, stunts spiritual growth, and quenches the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 There are **diversities of gifts**, but the same Spirit. There are **differences of ministries**, but the same Lord. And there are **diversities of activities**, but it is the same God who works all in all. But **the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all**: for to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, to another the **word of knowledge** through the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healings** by the same Spirit, to another the **working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another different kinds of **tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and **he gives them to each one, just as he determines**.

In small churches, the Pastor does everything, and in larger churches, the Pastor may delegate some things, but he does all the pulpit preaching and teaching ministry. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit has to be funneled through the Pastor for everything in a church service so that the Pastor replaces the Holy Spirit in guidance, direction, and control. In those situations, the verses we just read would more accurately portray today's churches if we read them by inserting a title like Pastor, Priest, Prophet, Bishop, or whatever fits your situation:

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 There are **diversities of gifts**, but the same **Pastor**. There are **differences of ministries**, but the same **Pastor**. And there are **diversities of activities**, but it is the same **Pastor** who works all. But the **manifestation of the Pastor is for the profit of all**: for to the **Pastor** is given the word of wisdom, to **Pastor** the word of knowledge through the same **Pastor**, **faith** by the same **Pastor**, **gifts of healings** by the same **Pastor**, **working of miracles**, **prophecy**, **discerning of spirits**, **different kinds of tongues**, **the interpretation of tongues**. All these are the work of **one and the same Pastor**, and **the Pastor gives them just as he determines**.

There were times when they had visits from ministers passing through their area, and the visiting minister would be the only speaker. Obviously, a visit from the apostle Paul would supersede all the church's plans, and everyone would come together to get as much

from him as possible. God gave Paul supernatural strength in Troas; he taught from morning until midnight, talked until daybreak, and left the next day without any sleep to walk twenty miles to Assos to meet the brethren.

Acts 20:7, 11 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, **Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.** ... Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, **and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.**

Family of believers

Another analogy of the church is that of a family, especially the love, concern, compassion, hospitality, and care that family demonstrates towards each other. Just like Israel began with one man, Abraham, and his 12 great-grandsons, the church started with the 12 apostles, and the early church was like a family. They referred to each other as brothers and sisters and ate meals together from house to house. When Paul started churches, he said he was like their father and cared for them like a mother.

1 Corinthians 4:14-17 I do not write these things to shame you, but **as my beloved children** I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, **yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel.** Therefore, I urge you, imitate me. For this reason, I have sent **Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord,** who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 But we were gentle among you, **just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.** So, **affectionately longing for you,** we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

They operated as a family and recognized spiritual authority like parents with the children, and elders helped the younger ones to grow into spiritual maturity and develop their gifts. Discipleship and mentoring were one on one, like a father with a son, as with Paul and Timothy. Paul and John used examples of how to treat widows, older men, older women, fathers, younger men, younger women, little children, and spiritual babies. They spoke in terms of the family with love.

*1 Timothy 1:2 [Paul] **Unto Timothy, my own son** in the faith:*

*1 Timothy 5:1-3 Do not rebuke an **older man**, but exhort him as a father, **younger men** as brothers, **older women** as mothers, **younger as sisters**, with all purity. Honor **widows** who are really widows.*

*1 Corinthians 3:1-2 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to **spiritual people** but as to **carnal** (worldly, fleshly minded), as to **babes in Christ**. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;*

*1 John 2:12-14 I write to you, **little children**, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, **fathers**, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, **little children**, because you have known **the Father**. I have written to you, **fathers**, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.*

Humble servants

The example of a family structure in leadership recognizes, acknowledges, and submits to leaders' spiritual authority based on their character, maturity, gifts, and wisdom. And submission is voluntary based on love and respect. In families, the parents work hard to provide and care for the kids until they become mature and

responsible adults. The great leaders in the Bible were like fathers with humility and the attitude of a servant like Jesus, Moses, and Paul.

Numbers 12:3 (Now the man **Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.**)

Matthew 11:28-29 (Jesus) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, **for I am gentle and humble in heart,** and you will find rest for your souls.

Philippians 2:2-9 fulfill my joy by **being like-minded**, having the **same love**, being of **one accord**, of **one mind**. **Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but **made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant**, and coming in the likeness of men, **He humbled Himself** and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

On the contrary, institutionally run churches demand submission to leadership based on hierarchy status or titles. In some orthodox churches, the relationships are more like employer, employee, business, and customer. And some churches have Nimrods who are out to build their world empire and control everyone.

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that **the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave "**just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to

give His life a ransom for many."

Matthew 23:8-12 *But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.* And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. *Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

Paul's ministry

In the first part of the book of Acts, God used Peter to bring Gentiles into the church then the narrative shifted from Peter to Paul. Paul was so zealous as a Jew that he persecuted the church, and after his conversion to Christ, he was the most zealous preacher to the Gentiles. Paul's burning zeal made him an unstoppable missionary, blazing trails, starting many new churches, and training many young missionaries to carry the gospel torch after he was gone. Paul always went to the Jews first, so he would preach in the synagogues, which almost always stirred up persecution. Nobody suffered like Paul, but he embraced suffering as a form of fellowship with Christ.

Philippians 3:8-11 *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

Paul has a very long resume of suffering, which he used as validation of his ministry. What proof do current pastors give of their ministries? Paul didn't count all the churches he planted, how many souls got saved, how many books of the Bible he wrote, or how many mysteries the Holy Spirit revealed through him as a means to prove the legitimacy of his ministry, though he could have. Paul pointed to his suffering as validation of Christ working through him and said I bear in my body the marks, scars, and bruises of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's look at some of Paul's self-described temporary light afflictions.

*1 Corinthians 4:10-13 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but **we are dishonored!** To the present hour we both **hunger and thirst**, and we are **poorly clothed**, and **beaten**, and **homeless**. And we **labor**, working with our own hands. Being **reviled**, we bless; being **persecuted**, we endure; being **defamed**, we entreat. We have been made as **the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.***

*2 Corinthians 11:19-33 Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews **five times I received forty stripes [lashes] minus one.** Three times I was **beaten with rods**; once I was **stoned**; three times I was **shipwrecked**; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in **journeys** often, in **perils** of waters, in **perils** of robbers, in **perils** of my own countrymen, in **perils** of the Gentiles, in **perils** in the city, in **perils** in the wilderness, in **perils** in the sea, in **perils** among **false brethren**; in **weariness** and **toil**, in **sleeplessness** often, in **hunger and thirst**, in **fastings** often, in **cold and nakedness** besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my **deep concern for all the churches.***

Paul also employed the missionary example given by Jesus, going out by faith, healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching in synagogues, houses, rivers, and Mars Hill, prophesying on a boat, and 2 years confronting religious leaders and Roman rulers he was unstoppable until he finished his race and received a martyr's crown.

Paul's Meeting Places	
Acts 9:19	Saul (Paul) in Damascus days with disciples
Acts 16:14	Paul & Silas in Thyatira , stay at Lydia house
Acts 16:40	Paul & Silas Thyatira from prison, meet at Lydia's house
Acts 19:9	Paul in Corinth , taught daily rented lecture hall 2 years
Acts 20:4	Paul & eight co-workers, Troas , stay with believers 7 days
Acts 20:17	Paul tells Ephesians he taught publicly & house to house
Acts 21:3	Paul, co-workers Tyre finds & stays with disciples 7 days
Acts 21:7	Paul, co-workers Ptolemais , find disciples stayed a day
Acts 21:8	Paul, co-workers Caesarea stay evangelist's Philip home
Acts 21:16	Paul & co-workers in Jerusalem stay at home of Mnason ,
Acts 27:3	Paul a prisoner in Sidon meeting friends met his needs
Acts 28:13	Paul in Puteoli finds brothers stays a week with them , other brothers travel from Rome meet with him

As the persecution increased, they were scattered, preached the gospel everywhere they went, and changed the world for about 300 years. Then the church was hijacked, taken hostage, and mixed with Roman paganism, destroying it from within. The divine pattern of the first church was lost, and every consecutive generation of believers has had a remnant that has suffered and fought to restore the church, back to the book of Acts. The person who hijacked, corrupted, and defiled the church with paganism was Constantine, the Roman Emperor.

Catholicism

The Roman Emperor Constantine rose to power in 306 AD legend says that before a major battle in 312, he looked at the sun and saw a cross of lights above it with the Greek words saying, by this conquer. Afterward, Constantine painted crosses on the shields of his soldiers, and they went out and won the battle. Many believe that Constantine's supposed conversion was a cunning political and military strategy to unite the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. Regardless of motives, Constantine became the leader of a divided empire. As a result, in 313 A.D., he made the Edict of Milan and granted tolerance to Christians, ending their persecution. In 325 A.D., Constantine ordered the Council of Nicaea to establish state-approved teachings to keep unity in the empire. That ultimately reinstated persecution against any Christian who disagreed with the state-approved doctrine, and opposition voices were silenced or deemed heretical.

The Roman government began paganizing the church, mixing it with Roman mythology, idolatry, and perverting the scriptures. Constantine incorporated the Roman secular government into the church, and the church became corrupted by selling leadership positions for bribes to ungodly men and politicizing church positions. Pagan temples became churches, statues of pagan gods got renamed after Biblical saints, and they incorporated the Roman calendar over the Jewish calendar and holidays. The Romans did to the church what the Assyrians did to the Samaritans in Israel.

Augustine

The Christianization of the Roman Empire forced the conversion of many people to be Christian in name only to appease the government. One of those converts had been a devotee to Manicheism and Gnosticism. He went directly from Eastern mysticism to join the newly forming Catholic priesthood and quickly rose through the ranks to become one of the most influential voices for a thousand years. That man was Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430). Augustine came from a background of Manicheism, a Persian cult that taught that the physical world is evil and spirituality derives from abstinence or self-debasement. Augustine was also into Gnosticism, a Greek cult that believed all physical matter is evil and that emancipation or salvation

comes through gnosis, knowing, or hidden wisdom. Augustine filled the church with his gnostic philosophy and pagan practices. Bibles were rare and written in Latin and not available in the language spoken by ordinary people. Also, most people were poor peasants, uneducated, illiterate, and dependent on priests to tell them what was in the Bible, so the Catholic Church weaponized Biblical information to keep the people ignorant, superstitious, and submissive. Anyone who translated the Bible into the spoken languages of the people or taught without authorization was deemed a heretic, silenced, or killed. The result is known as the dark ages, which plunged the world into spiritual darkness under the stranglehold of Catholicism for about one thousand years. We will review some of their errors.

Depravity of man

Adam committed the original sin that brought a curse on mankind. Augustine taught that after the fall, man became hopelessly depraved and incapable of not sinning while in the mortal body. His philosophy came from Gnosticism, where everything physical is evil. The Catholic solution is a works-based salvation with a list of religious rituals to be self-absolved of sin under the supervision of the church. But in fact, we are helpless to save ourselves and need Jesus to save us from our sins (Jn 8:36). (We will look at this issue in more detail later in the study).

Predestination

Augustine taught that God's sovereignty supersedes man's free will and forces him into compliance with God's preordained plan. They call this predestination and claim that God predetermines who will be saved or damned without giving men a choice. Those predestined for salvation are called the elect. That theory slanders God as the author of evil and strips man of the conscious ability to choose right from wrong or between faith and unbelief. (We will look at this issue in more detail later in the study).

Eternal security

According to Augustinian thought, because God has predestined you to salvation, you can't lose salvation. They call that eternal security, or once saved, always saved. We would respond that, without a doubt, God has the power to keep us eternally secure on his part. But on our

part, we can choose to be faithful to God after receiving the gift of salvation, or we can choose to renounce and reject Christ after being born again; we have free will to choose. (We will look at this issue in more detail later in the study).

Mary & idolatry

The Roman Catholic church idolizes Mary as the mother of God, often shown holding the infant baby Jesus. Without realizing it, they perpetuate the ancient Babylonian mother-infant cult, which is still pagan, even if we use the name of Mary and Jesus. Yes, Mary was highly honored by God to give birth to Christ, so she is respected, but she is not a god or God's mother, but a sinner who needed to receive salvation by faith, just like everyone else. The Catholics worship Mary, light candles, and direct prayers to her, asking her to intercede for them, making her equal to God, which is idolatry. We should not pray to Mary or dead saints, or use pagan prayer rituals like burning candles and incense, or count repetitious prayers with rosary beads. Each person should pray in secret directly to the Father in Jesus' name (*Matt 6:4-6*).



Popes

Romans worshipped their Emperors as gods, and failure to acknowledge the deity of the emperor could result in death. The Popes were dictators, called the Vicars of Christ, meaning the representative of God on earth. Also, the Popes had nothing to do with Peter except that the Romans killed him. Over time the Roman Emperors faded, but the Popes became more powerful than kings, and noncompliance with the Pope's mandates could result in death. Popes had battles, power struggles, and corruption surrounding their ascension to power. The entire power structure of the Catholic Church comes from the Roman government, including the colorful priestly robes. Colored clothing like red and purple was expensive in Rome, so only high government officials or the wealthy could afford it. Someone wearing red would be immediately recognized as a politician or very rich, which is why Catholic Cardinals wear red.

Celibacy

As a result of the influence of Gnosticism on Augustine, he viewed the physical world as fallen and wicked, so to obtain the highest levels of spirituality in Gnosticism, their priest would abstain from sex. Augustine even viewed sex within marriage as sinful and depraved. Therefore, Catholic Priests were required to take vows of celibacy, which served to separate and elevate the clergy above the laity, reinforcing institutional restrictions on who could be a minister. Celibacy was supposed to make the priests more holy than the laity. But history has proved the reverse, with priests, pastors, deacons, and bishops having a long track record of sexual perversion and abuse that proves them to be hypocrites. Peter and all the apostles were married, except for Paul and Barnabas. Paul described the qualifications for church leadership as being the husband of one wife with his children and house in order (*1 Timothy 3:2*). So, celibacy as a mode of superior spirituality is a farce and not a requirement for ministry.

Buildings & idolatry

Christian buildings did not exist for the first three hundred years of the church until the Romans converted their pagan temples into churches and built massive cathedrals. The Romans took their pagan statues of Jupiter, Apollo, and Mercury and gave them Biblical names like Peter, John, and Paul but continued to burn candles, incense, and pray to them. And as time passed, they added to this sin by honoring people who died, making them saints, and praying to them. Speaking to the dead is an abomination to God, and burning incense or candles before a statue, a cross, or a picture is idolatry and strictly forbidden in the scriptures.



Purgatory

In Catholic teaching, there is a place called purgatory, defined as a state of punishment where the souls that die in God's grace pass through a refining fire to purify them from past sins to become fit to

enter heaven. Purgatory is not in the Bible but has roots in many ancient pagan mythologies, like with the Egyptians and Greeks. Catholics claim the way to get out of purgatory is to pay indulgences, meaning giving money to the church. People could donate money in a pay-for-play scheme to have pre-forgiveness of their sins or for their dead loved ones to get out of purgatory. But without donating money, the dead will remain in the fires of purification until their sins become purged and they are ready to go to heaven.

The official sanitized definition of an indulgence is something like this; the recipient of an indulgence must perform works to receive it, like repeating a prayer a set number of times, making a pilgrimage, or doing some other good work. But purgatory was just a money-raising gimmick. The system was corrupt, a big scam, and a cash cow for the Catholic church. The truth is when you die, it's either heaven or hell, and that's it. Also, the sins of mankind were paid for once by Jesus on the cross, and there is nothing we can do to add to his sacrifice or take away from it. When Jesus hung on the cross and said, "it is finished," the penalty of sin got paid in full for all people for all time. (We will look at this issue in more detail later in the study).

Transubstantiation

According to Catholic doctrine, transubstantiation is the transformation that happens when the priests bless the bread and wine at communion, and (according to them) it becomes the literal body and blood of Jesus. They also believe that the blessed bread, or the eucharist, is necessary for salvation. Anyone who disagreed with the teaching of transubstantiation during the inquisitions could be labeled a heretic, imprisoned, tortured, or killed. When Jesus conducted the last supper, or Passover meal, with his disciples, and they shared the bread and the wine, Jesus said, do this in remembrance of me. Communion is symbolic as a memorial to remember when Jesus shed his blood to enact the new covenant, and Jesus symbolically became our Passover lamb. (*1 Corinthians 11:24-25*).

Infant baptism

According to Catholic doctrine, the sprinkling of babies is necessary for salvation, and Baptism records became a form of legal identification or citizenship. Adult baptism was considered heresy and

punishable by death. Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize as part of the Gospel, and baptism is only for those who repent and believe in Jesus. Children below the age of accountability cannot understand repentance and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. So infant baptism or sprinkling is not a legitimate Biblical practice. Also, the word baptize means to submerge, so baptism is by total submersion in water, not sprinkling a few drops on the forehead. (We will look at this issue in more detail later in the study).

Pagan holidays

For the first three hundred years of the church, the only celebrations acknowledged by the disciples of Jesus were the Jewish Feasts, especially the Passover, as that marked the remembrance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But Constantine hated the Jews and replaced the Jewish Passover with Easter, a celebration for a pagan sex goddess. Sadly, the King James Bible translators continued to use the word Easter instead of Passover, propagating the pagan influence to future generations (*Acts 12:4*). At the spring equinox, the pagans held a festival celebrating the goddess of sex and fertility, who dates back to Babylon. Through the centuries, the spring worship of the fertility goddess continued with different names in many cultures, having names like Semiramis, Ashtar, Astarte, Artemis, or Diana, with symbols of fertility like eggs and rabbits going back 2500 years in different cultures.

The American use of the Easter egg first appeared in 1825, the Easter bunnies in 1888, and current traditions gained popularity in the 1900s. German immigrants in Dutch Pennsylvania would have their children make boxes with straw and grass for rabbits to nest



in, and they picked colorful flowers to feed the rabbits so they would produce colored Easter eggs. So that is how baskets with plastic grass filled with colored eggs and chocolate bunnies have overshadowed the Passover that remembers the death and resurrection of Christ. It is regrettable how multitudes of churches put on a giant Easter egg hunt for the public, ignoring the pagan roots of that holiday.

Christ-mass

Adding another tradition, they took Nicholas of Myra (270 – 343 A.D.), made him a saint, embellished his story, and mingled it with pagan mythology to make Santa Claus and Christmas traditions. The German pagans would celebrate the Yule winter festivals, and in the 1100s, the English had replaced it with the word Christmas. The Protestants and Puritans in the early 1600s were against the Romish, Popery, and pagan roots of Christmas, but as time passed, it became more widely accepted. Then American businesses secularized those traditions to make Christmas the most popular holiday season and the most profitable for business. And just for the record, the actual date of Jesus' birth is unknown, but there is clear evidence that it was not the 25th day of December. But admittedly, Christmas is a precious time of year for families and people worldwide, even though many governments and businesses have removed Jesus from the holiday.



Halloween

Another holiday originating from the pagan world is Halloween, which started as All Hallows Eve, or the eve of All Saints Day. It began in Ireland and Britain with the Celtic Druids, who celebrated the festival of Samhain before Christianity reached that land. The Catholics started celebrating the Christian martyrs around the fourth century, and ironically the Romans were most responsible for killing those martyrs. Pope Boniface IV ordered an anniversary of a feast for the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Martyrs on May 13th, 609, or 610 A.D., to coincide with the Roman pagan festival of Lemuria, where they appeased restless evil spirits to regain favor with angry gods. By

the year 800 A.D., the churches of Ireland, England, and Germany started celebrating All Saints Day on November 1st to coincide with or replace the festival of Samhain. The evening, or eve before All Saints Day, was spent in fear of the dead. They believed that the ghost of the dead would return to their former homes, so they disguised themselves with masks so the spirits from their area wouldn't recognize them. We won't go into details about the roots of all our Halloween traditions but only observe that it began with Roman and Celtic pagan festivals, which became adopted by the Catholic Church and were Christianized and then commercialized. So, the holiday that started in panic for fear of evil spirits became Christianized to idolize the dead and then descended into dressing up like demons to celebrate evil.

Apocrypha

The Catholic Douay version of the Bible has seven more books than the protestant Bibles, including Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch. The reformers rejected those books, but the Roman Catholic Church in 1546 accepted them officially as inspired by God. Here is a list of a few errors promoted in these books: Healing and deliverance of demons by the smoke of a burning fish, giving money to forgive the sins of the dead in purgatory, and praying for the dead, incorrect historical accounts, or false prophecy, encourages praying for the dead, and so forth. The Apocrypha is full of errors and deception and is not the word of God. Trusting in the Apocrypha is very dangerous because it adds to or takes away from the word of God and is full of lies and deception.

Revelation 22:18-19** I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Antisemitism

The Romans burned down the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Constantine, the Roman Emperor, continued the hatred of Jews in the

Catholic Church. The roots of antisemitism have led to theological errors like **replacement theology**, where they say the church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people. And **amillennialism is a heresy** that says the antichrist was Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. The abomination of desolation has already happened, and we live in the millennium now with Christ ruling from heaven until the end of the church age. The 1,000-year time frame given by scripture was only symbolic. Augustine believed in amillennialism, and Calvin and Luther followed his beliefs. But we take a literal interpretation of the Bible that Jesus first raptures the church, afterward will be seven years of tribulation, the antichrist will commit the abomination of desolation in the middle of the tribulation, and Christ returns at the end of the tribulation. At the second coming, the first resurrection occurs, and Christ establishes his kingdom reign on the earth for 1,000 years from Jerusalem, with a restored nation of Israel.

Jesus was not a Christian, never quoted from the New Testament, and never went to church. Jesus was Jewish and is the Jewish Messiah, and all the apostles, Old Testament prophets, covenants, promises, patriarchs, and writers of the Old and the New Testaments were Jewish. The church consisted of 100% Jewish believers until Peter went to Cornelius' house 8-10 years after Pentecost. Paul compared the Gentiles to a wild olive branch grafted onto the Jewish olive tree (*Romans 11:17-21*). Israel is irreplaceable in God's plan and at the center of everything God does. However, the Gentiles have a set time in God's plan, called the dispensation of grace, times of the Gentiles, or the church age, marked by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer. The times of the Gentiles are from Pentecost until the second coming of Christ. All the Jews who survive the great tribulation get saved by faith in Christ and will remain God's chosen people throughout the Millennial kingdom.

Heretics

After the Council of Nicaea, the official teachings of the Catholic Church became enforced by government powers, and dissenters became enemies of the state. The Catholic theologians held counsels or issued Papal decrees to justify violence in making their opposition recant and renounce their beliefs, accept Catholic dogma, or be tortured and put to death. Since they held all secular and church

power, they kept the people captive and deprived them of independent thought. The Popes and priests did horrendous acts of cruelty in the name of God during the inquisitions of Christians while forcing conversions of Jews and Muslims.

The Catholic priests, Jesuits in particular, were responsible for hundreds of thousands of people being severely tortured or killed, especially from the 1100s to the 1600s. In those dark ages or medieval times, anyone who disagreed with Catholic teachings became labeled a heretic. The charge of heresy evoked an inquiry (torture), no trial, no jury, in a cruel dungeon with torturers as judges. The purpose of the inquisitions was to cause a heretic to recant and renounce their heretical beliefs or suffer a slow, painful death. Maybe the cruelest tortures ever invented happened to believers of Jesus who refused to compromise the truth in those dungeons. The Spanish inquisition was most infamous for its cruelty. Recommended reading free book: (click) [Foxes Book of Martyrs](#), or [YouTube video](#)



Roman Catholic Inquisitions

Catholic Heresies	
Mary Worship	Virgin & Child, mother infant cult, Mary not god, not the mother of God, not intercessor
Papal Succession	Roman Emperor Nero had Peter crucified upside down, Peter had no successors
Infallibility of Popes	Claims by any human to be god on earth, sinless, incapable of error are blasphemous and antichrist
Priestly Orders	Separation of priest from laity (church congregation) was for power and control and unbiblical
Celibacy of Priest	All the Apostles were married but Paul, Paul said Bishops, Pastors should be husbands of one wife
Purgatory	Invented in 12 th Century, a place of cleansing of sin, scam, pay church money to get out of Hellish place
The Inquisitions	Protesters against Catholic teaching were labeled heretics, forced to recant or be tortured & killed
Jesuit Priests	The priest who conducted the inquisitions, torturers, killers of the opposition voices
Latin Bibles	Language and literacy were weaponized to keep uneducated ignorant, Bible translators were killed
Transubstantiation	Transubstantiation, belief that blessed communion bread & wine become literal body & blood of Jesus
Confessionals	1700s French – worthless, empowers priests, should confess directly to God and the person offended
Indulgences	Pay to play, prepay for forgiveness before sinning, fundraising fraud built St. Peters Basilica
Penance	Acts of attrition to pay for sin by afflicting yourself, useless, salvation by works, Jesus death alone forgives
Idolatry	No idols, statues or images of saints, Mary or Jesus, one of the 10 commandments, God is Spirit no image
The Rosary	Pagan prayer beads a ritual to count prayers, mindless repetitions, scripted prayers are dead religion
Prayers to dead saints	Jesus is the only mediator we can pray to; it is a sin to talk to the dead
Prayers for the Dead	The dead are either in heaven or hell, there is nothing that can change that
Baptism	Prerequisites repentance & faith, baptism represents burying the old life, by immersion not sprinkling
Infant Baptism	Age requirement, old enough to repent & belief in Christ, worthless tradition, only baptize after salvation
Last Rites	Person who is dying must repent & believe in Christ for forgiveness to be saved, rituals cannot save souls

Reformers

The Catholic church paganized Christianity like the Assyrians paganized the northern kingdom of Israel. Many original truths given by Jesus and the apostles got corrupted, tainted, or replaced with traditions taken from pagan religions and canonized over time. In the heart of every reformer was a desire to return to the practices and teachings of the first church in the book of Acts. Bringing back the buried truth cost the lives of many courageous believers. Like peeling the layers of an onion, every layer of truth brought new tears and more struggles.



Sadly, what remains of the reformers' sacrifice are the ashes of a fire that existed long ago; the movements that bear their names have long since become cold and dead. In many cases, the institutions they left behind have become the same Harlot religion they fought against. As we see the roots of our modern church hierarchy, rituals, holidays, and traditions, we can free ourselves from having institutional thinking and habits and return to the book of Acts, lest we also practice dead religion.

Waldesians

The early history of the Waldesians is unknown, but some speculate they may have had roots going back to the Apostle Paul's visit to Spain. It seems they went undetected by the Roman Church until they chose to come out from the underground. The first records begin with Peter Waldo (Valdo, Valdes), around 1170 AD, in Lyon, France. Waldo was a layman, and he used a non-Latin Bible so the people could understand, and he disagreed with many teachings of the Roman Church. Waldo was wealthy but took a vow of poverty (*forsaking all, Luke 14:33*), so he gave his money to the poor to follow Jesus. Waldo made a profession of faith that has survived time and includes some of the following:

- Confession of sin does not require a priest
- He rejected the use of indulgences



Images depicting
Waldesians as
witches 1451

- Baptism is by total immersion in water, and not for infants
- The communion bread and wine are symbolic only
- He denied the doctrine of transubstantiation
- He rejected the doctrine of purgatory and prayers for the dead
- The Bible is the sole and total authority of all doctrine.
- A formal building is unnecessary to worship God; the Waldenses met in homes, stables, or elsewhere.

The Catholic Church excommunicated the Waldensians in 1184, and in the year 1211 in Strasbourg, **80 Waldensians got burned as heretics**, and in the year 1251, they became officially denounced as heretics. In 1487, **the Pope issued a bull for the extermination of the Waldensians**. In 1545 the King of France sent his army to attack the village of **Merindol**, and there was a great massacre, and the estimated deaths were in the thousands.



In January 1655, the Duke of Savoy commanded the Waldensians to attend the Catholic mass or move, forsaking their lands and properties. That forced the old, the sick, little children, and women to wade through icy waters and climb frozen peaks to seek shelter with brethren of the upper valleys. Later he required the Waldensians of the upper valleys to quarter troops in their homes, and they submitted to his orders. **Then on April 24, 1655, at 4:00 a.m., the order was sent to massacre the population**. The troops looted, raped, tortured, and murdered without mercy. The following is a description of the slaughter:

Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, clasped by their tiny feet, and their heads dashed against the rocks; or were held between two soldiers and their quivering limbs torn up by main force. Their mangled bodies were then thrown on the highways or fields, to be devoured by beasts. The sick and the aged were burned alive in their dwellings. Some had their hands and arms and legs lopped off, and fire applied to the severed parts to staunch the bleeding and prolong their suffering. Some were flayed alive, some were

roasted alive, some disemboweled; or tied to trees in their own orchards, and their hearts cut out. Some were horribly mutilated, and of others the brains were boiled and eaten by these cannibals. Some were fastened down into the furrows of their own fields, and ploughed into the soil as men plough manure into it. Others were buried alive. Fathers were marched to death with the heads of their sons suspended round their necks. Parents were compelled to look on while their children were first outraged [raped], then massacred, before being themselves permitted to die

The persecution of the Waldensians continued until 1689, and they barely escaped being exterminated. The political situation changed, and they gained their freedom. They still exist today and are followers of the Reformed tradition of Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin. They came to America in colonial times as early as 1670, and among their current names is Waldensian Presbyterian.

John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe (1324 -1384), Lived during a time of great upheaval, surviving the black death, a bubonic plague pandemic of 1346-1353, with estimated deaths between 75 to 200 million, the most fatal in human history. Then there was the Western schism from 1378 – 1417, where two Popes were competing for power, one in Rome and another in Avignon, France. There was rampant financial and immoral corruption in the Papacy and priesthood. All the church services were conducted in Latin and not in the spoken languages of the people. Also, most people were illiterate and depended on priests to understand the things of God and spirituality. Wycliffe was an Oxford-educated theologian and a prolific writer, writing against the corruption in the Roman church system and the priesthood. At that time, the Popes and priests exercised control over the politics of many countries. Wycliffe stood for the English government against Roman church rulership. Wycliffe took a courageous stand with influential supporters in the state who protected him for a time and later abandoned him.



Wycliffe translated the first English Bible from the Latin Vulgate (translation by Jerome in 382), so he translated a translation of a translation, not from the original Greek and Hebrew. That was 100 years before the printing press. His message and teachings were spread abroad by his followers, whom they called **Lollards**, who also helped translate the Bible. The following list summarizes some of his teachings:

- Christ as the only head of the one universal church
- He taught the predestination of the elect [Invisible Church] contrasted by the visible church [Institutions, buildings].
- The Holy Bible is the sole authority for the Christian faith, not the church.
- The Bible should be in the mother tongue of ordinary people.
- He promoted the idea that secular governance [British] is superior to the spiritual authorities of the [Catholic] church.
- He insisted the church should be poor as in the time of the apostles.
- He denounced the Papacy, selling of church offices, and selling indulgences, and described Popes as antichrists.
- He said God's grace is available to every person without the need to believe in any ecclesiastical leader.
- He refuted the idea that the sacraments are a means of salvation. He renounced the teaching of transubstantiation that believes that after the blessing, the communion bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Christ.
- He promoted the removal of statues, idols, images, and icons.
- He denounced the veneration of the dead and angels and doing mass for the dead.

John Wycliffe died on December 28, 1384, from a stroke. Around 31 years after his death, in 1415, the Catholic church declared that all his writings and books be confiscated and burned. Again in 1428, **44 years after his death, they desecrated his grave by digging up his bones and burning them, casting the ashes in the river Swift.** Wycliffe's writings profoundly impacted the reformers who followed him, like William Tyndale, John Huss, and Martin Luther.

John Huss

John Huss was greatly influenced by John Wycliffe's writing, although he did not agree with all his teachings. On June 24, 1405, the Pope banned Wycliffe's teachings, and in 1406 Huss read one of Wycliffe's documents from the pulpit. The news reached the Popes, who ordered all of Wycliffe's writings surrendered. Huss obeyed and declared he didn't agree with some points. At that time, two Popes were competing for power, and Huss stood alone. A third Pope entered the fray, assumed control, then gave the command to burn Wycliffe's writings, and then went after his followers, including Huss. Huss began to speak out against the worst abuses of the Roman Church of his day, and his primary teachings were as follows:

- Popes have no right to declare war but should pray for their enemies and bless those who curse you.
- He preached against the priesthood's corruption: financial abuses, sexual immorality, and drunkenness.
- Preached, Bible reading and hymns in the common language
- He denied the infallibility of an immoral pope, asserting the authority of the scripture over the church leaders and councils.
- He preached for all Christians to receive full communion (at that time, only priests were allowed wine from the communion cup).
- He opposed indulgences, or documents of forgiveness sold to raise money for the church (at that time, it was fundraising for the crusades).
- Man obtains forgiveness by repenting, not paying money.

Huss was deemed a heretic and sentenced to death, and these are his final words according to Foxe's Book of Martyrs: Some of the followers of Huss went out and burned the Papal decrees saying they would follow Huss rather than a bunch of corrupt men. As a result, three of Huss's followers got beheaded. The situation became more heated, and Huss moved to the countryside to avoid trouble and worked on his writings. In 1414 the Holy Roman Emperor called Huss to report before the Council of Constance and promised safe conduct, which was a lie. When Huss arrived, he was arrested, deemed a heretic, and sentenced to death by being burned alive.

Accordingly, the bishops appointed by the Council stripped him of his priestly garments, degraded him, and put a paper miter on his head, on which were painted devils, with this inscription, “A ringleader of heretics.” When he saw, he said: “My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, did wear a crown of thorns; why should not I then, for His sake, again wear this light crown, be it ever so



ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly.” When it was set upon his head, the bishop said: “Now we commit thy soul unto the devil.” “But I,” said John Huss, lifting his eyes towards the heaven, “do commend into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ! my spirit which Thou has redeemed.” When the chain was put about him at the stake, he said, with a smiling countenance, “My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this for my sake, and why then should I be ashamed of this rusty one?” When the wood was piled up to his very neck, the duke of Bavaria was so officious as to desire him to abjure. “No, (said Huss;) I never preached any doctrine of an evil tendency, and what I taught with my lips, I now seal with my blood.” He said to the executioner, “You are now going to burn a goose (Huss signifying goose in the Bohemian language:) but in a century, you will have a swan which you can neither roast nor boil.” If he were prophetic, he must have meant Martin Luther, who shone about a hundred years after and who had a swan for his coat of arms.

Martin Luther

In the early 1500s in Germany, an Augustinian Friar was frustrated by his struggle with sin and systemic corruption that dominated the Roman Catholic churches. He strived for years to earn salvation by doing religious works until the day he read, "The just shall live by his faith." When he realized that salvation was a gift and not by his works, Martin Luther became transformed, and on October 31, 1517, he wrote his 95 theses, or arguments against the Catholic church, and nailed it to the door of his Wittenburg church. That sent shockwaves worldwide and became a catalyst for the reformation movement.



Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; **But the just shall live by his faith.**

Galatians 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for **"the just shall live by faith."**

One of Luther's most despised foes was a priest named Johann Tetzel, who was like a traveling snake oil salesman taking advantage of ignorant, superstitious, and degenerate people. His job was to raise money to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome by traveling around and selling indulgences. He had a coffin as an offering box with a slot to drop offerings into. He even coined a jingle as part of his sales pitch, saying as soon as the gold in the casket rings, the rescued soul to heaven springs.

Pope Leo X demanded that Luther renounce his writings and opposition, but he refused, and by 1521 he was excommunicated from the Catholic church. Most historians and theologians place this as the beginning point or the spark that ignited the true believers to reform the church called the reformation. Martin Luther was not the only reformer but was probably the most influential, and the theological divide and power struggle between the Catholics and the Reformers became bitter and bloody.

With the invention of the printing press in 1440 by Johannes Guttenberg, the floodgates opened to produce Bibles and other books. In 1450 it was estimated that there was a total of thirty thousand books in Europe. Fifty years later, there were printing presses in over 200 cities and over twelve million books, and by the 1600s, there were over 200 million books. The cat was out of the bag and couldn't be put back in. The tide was turning with Bible translations and the reformer's writings became accessible, and the movement gained momentum far and wide.

The reformers had to face correcting centuries of error and attempting to realign the church with scriptural precepts. Martin Luther and others translated the Bible from Greek, Hebrew, and Latin into

German, English, and other common languages. The leaders of the reformation came to the forefront and became movements. So, the followers of Luther became Lutherans, the followers of Calvin were called Calvinists, and so forth. In 1525, only eight years after Luther nailed his 95 Thesis to the church, there arose a split between factions of the reformers. In Zurich, Sweden, the reformation leader was an ex-Catholic priest named Ulrich Zwingli. As with all the reformation movements, there were questions about how far to go with making changes in the church.

There were many disagreements over the government's control over the church with scripted, highly orthodox, and ritualized services filled with traditions versus the Biblical model of the first church. Zwingli also fought against tithes as a Catholic doctrine. For every issue, Zwingli stood between the radical reformers who contended that the reforms did not go far enough on one side. And on the other side, the city council of Zurich opposed sweeping changes. Zwingli compromised with the Zurich city council by changing only the most blatant Catholic heresies. But they kept the power structure, the sanctimonious orthodox services, and traditions, like observing All Saints Day idolizing the dead, and continued serving Catholic mass until they modified it.

The radicals wanted to follow the pattern in the book of Acts, which they called the believers' church. They sought the restoration of the spiritual gifts to the whole church. They preferred informal and spontaneous meetings led by the Spirit and not following a preapproved script out of an orthodox book detailing every word, prayer, and song. They called themselves the brotherhood or the brethren. They believed in the priesthood of all believers, seeing everyone on the same level as brothers and doing away with the partition between priesthood and laity.

But the nail in the coffin regarding their disputes came over water baptism. Infant baptism was the law of the land, basically the equivalent of a birth certificate. The radicals believed that a person must be of an age to understand repentance and salvation before being baptized, and baptism is by being fully submerged in water, not sprinkled. They called it adult baptism or the believers' baptism. They

believed that only "adult baptism" was legitimate, thus validating re-baptism for those baptized as infants. Their enemies called them "Anabaptists." meaning re-baptizers, a derogatory label that stuck to them.

On August 15, 1524, the Zurich city council insisted on the obligation to baptize all newborns. Again, on January 17, 1525, Zwingli and the city council met and announced that anyone refusing to have their children baptized would have to leave Zurich. Then on January 21, 1525, some radicals, Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock, met and baptized each other and were the first recorded Anabaptists to perform adult baptisms. The news spread quickly and became debated in different cities, and then on **March 7, 1526, a mandate was released that announced that no one shall be re-baptized under the penalty of death.** One of the first three to be re-baptized, Felix Manz, continued baptizing and was arrested on January 5, 1527. His execution was by drowning, making him the first Anabaptist martyr. **Only ten years after Luther's 95 theses, Protestants joined the Catholics to persecute and kill the Anabaptists.**



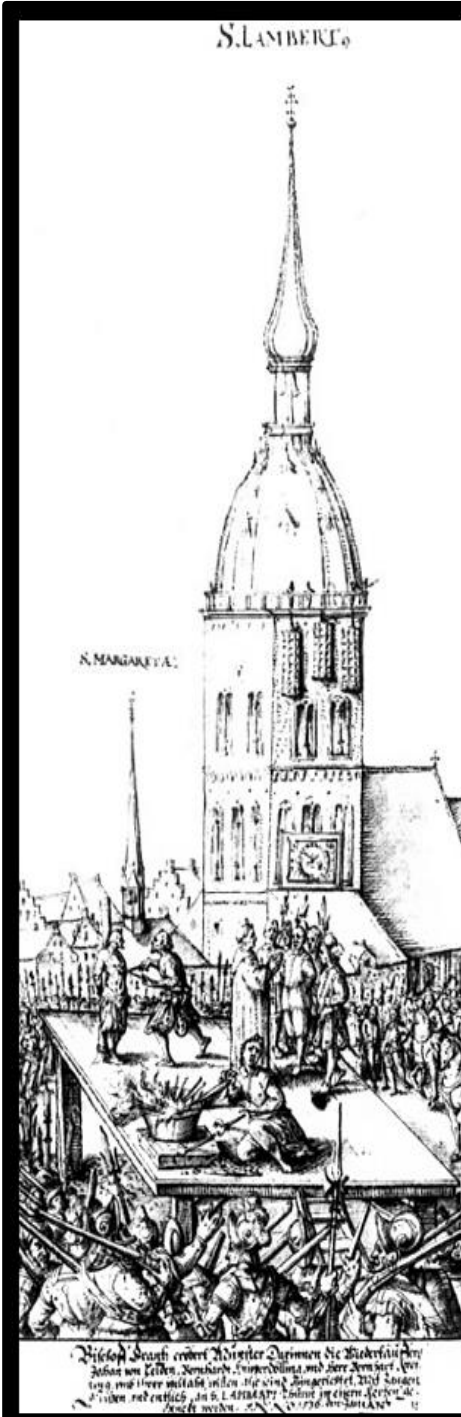
1529 A.D. Alzey Germany, 350 Anabaptists refused to recant from their faith, and as pacifists, they offered no resistance but sang joyful songs heading to their executions as martyrs.

Many who chose adult baptism got forced to relocate to areas friendly to them. Others died as martyrs at the hands of the Reformers and the Catholics because they deemed the Anabaptists too radical and dangerous for religious stability. King Ferdinand declared that drowning was the best antidote for Anabaptists, calling it the third baptism. By one estimate, over 10,000 died as martyrs in just one of the three original branches of the Anabaptists, 350 in one city, and thirty percent were women. Another report claims that more Anabaptists died at the hands of other Christians in the 1500s than Christians killed by the Romans in the first 300 years of the church. They were tortured, burned alive on the stake, or tied inside burlap bags and dumped in the river to drown in their "third baptism."



Here is a brief biography of one of the more notable examples of an Anabaptist martyr, Hans Bret, who was an outspoken leader in Antwerp, Netherlands. Hans was arrested on May 6, 1576, at 9:00 pm, and charged with being re-baptized and sentenced to death. January 4, 1577, was the day of Hans' execution. But before leading him to his death, his executioners decided to prevent him from speaking to his followers. Hans was a pacifist (as most Anabaptists were) and did not resist when they pulled his tongue outside his mouth and clamped it with a tongue screw. He could not pull his tongue back inside his mouth, and they took a hot firebrand and burned the end of his tongue. The tongue swelled up so badly they could not remove the tongue screw. Then they led him to the stake, chained him to it, and burned him alive. They kept the fires burning until nothing remained but the tongue screw. His Pastor, Hans de Ries, waited for the crowd to disperse and took the tongue screw. Later, Pastor Reis married Han's mother, and they kept the tongue screw and passed it down as part of Hans Bret's legacy to future generations.





In 1536 after giving adult baptism to 1000 people and taking over the city of Münster, Germany, three of Anabaptist leaders were captured, tortured publicly and killed. Their bodies were put in cages and hung from the St. Lambert's church. The cages remain on the church to this day. Historical depiction from the time on left, current picture above.

The persecution forced the Anabaptists to move in search of religious freedom, several branches have survived, and their descendants are with us today. Some stayed in Europe, and others sailed across the ocean to settle in America, looking to escape persecution and find religious freedom. They are the Mennonites and Amish, which would later split into all the various Baptist denominations.



St. Bartholomew's Day massacre

The Huguenots were French reformed Calvinists; some believe their name came from their practice of home worship. In 1562, they had 2 million people with 2,000 churches. The French Queen Catherine de Medici, who was Catholic, arranged the marriage of her niece to a Protestant noble under the guise of creating peace. The wedding occurred in Paris, a Catholic stronghold, and many of the wealthiest and most prominent Huguenots attended. And on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 1572, King Charles IX, a Catholic, had the exits of Paris blocked and ordered the execution of all the Protestant Huguenots. A great massacre happened over several weeks, and estimates of those murdered reached up to 30,000. Because of the persecution, the Huguenots either went underground or immigrated elsewhere.

Calvin vs Arminius

Martin Luther was the most influential reformer, but **John Calvin** (1509 -1564) was right behind him, whose teachings are the foundation for some of the largest Christian denominations today. Calvin was an attorney, a former Catholic, and a devout follower of Augustine's teachings. Calvin did not accept idolatry, purgatory, or salvation by works, but his version of reformed theology has been a source of debate and division since the 1500s.

Jacobus Arminius (1560 – 1609) was a Dutch pastor and theologian who studied under Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor, but after examination of the scriptures, he rejected Calvin's theology. Arminius is not the only one who opposed the premises of Calvin's teachings. The Waldensians did not accept Augustine's teachings before the reformation, and the Anabaptists, Mennonites, and others rejected Calvin's teachings. Arminius became the chief opponent of Calvin's teaching and laid out arguments refuting it. Arminius was scheduled to have an official debate with the Calvinists but died before it could happen. The disciples of Arminius, now called Arminians, continued the debate. In 1610, they produced the five points of the Remonstrance, which were their five points of disagreement with Calvinism. The Calvinists countered with their five counterarguments arranging them with the acronym TULIP. The disciples of Calvin and Arminius never ended the debate, and the arguments continue to this day. We will list the TULIP with the counterarguments below. We will make it brief.

T Total Depravity – Total inability

Humanity is born corrupt, utterly sinful, and totally depraved and can have no part in salvation except by divine destiny and intervention. (Augustinian Gnosticism, everything material is evil)

Answer). Man is under Adam's curse of sin, but Jesus died to release us from the curse. We have a conscience and choose between right and wrong. After being born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, and raised to walk in the newness of life, we can be free from sin by God's grace. He who the son, Jesus, sets free is free indeed (*John 8:36*).

U Unconditional Election – Predestination

From eternity past, God predetermined and unalterably destined who would receive salvation based solely and unconditionally on His sovereign will, and these are called the Elect. Salvation is a sovereign act of God that man cannot change, affect, or resist.

Answer). If salvation is determined solely by God for the Elect, then damnation is also exclusively determined by God. That slanders God as being unfair, unjust, and the creator of evil. If God created people to be evil without the ability to do otherwise, how could he send them to hell for the evil he made them do? If they have no choice, how is that fair? God does not create evil. (*James 1:13-17*) Evil is a consequence of man's choices. God created a perfect world, but all the world's evil exists due to man's disobedience and rebellion. God does not predestine people to hell; God gives people the freedom to choose, and their rebellion and rejection of Christ will send them to hell.

L Limited Atonement - Election

Limited atonement is the view that Jesus Christ died exclusively for the sins of the Elect, those predestined to salvation, and no others.

Answer). The election is the same premise as predestination, which says God chooses the saved and the damned before they are born. Why did Jesus command us to go to the uttermost parts of the world to preach salvation if God will only save the elect? Why do evangelism? Faith comes by hearing, but how can they hear without a preacher? (*Romans 10:13-17*) Jesus died for the world's sins, but only those who choose to receive it by faith get saved.

*1 Timothy 4:10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, **who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.***

I Irresistible Grace - Sovereignty of God

God brings his Elect to salvation through an internal call, which the Elect have no power to resist. The Holy Spirit supplies grace to the Elect until they repent and are born again. The Elect has no choice

regarding salvation, which is outside their control, and they cannot resist the destiny that God has assigned to them.

The answer). Again, irresistible grace focuses on the sovereignty of God to predestine the saved and the damned, eliminating man's free will. God is not an evil dictator or a tyrant; his servants will serve and love him voluntarily without being forced or programmed like robots. God is love. Does it make sense that he would force people to love him against their will? What kind of love would that be?

P Perseverance of the Saints - Once saved, always saved

Salvation is the work of God, who keeps the Elect eternally secure. Once a person gets saved, they cannot be unsaved. If a professing Christian backslides and forsakes God, they never had salvation.

Answer). Once Again, eternal security goes back to the sovereignty of God; they say when God predestinates somebody, they cannot lose what God has predetermined. There is no question that God can keep his children eternally secure. The real question is, can we forsake God and lose salvation after being born again? Not incidental sin but intentionally sinning, rejecting Christ, and dying in blatant, unrepentant sin. The best way to know we are eternally secure is to flee from sin and love God with all our hearts.

*Hebrews 6:4-6 **For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.***

*2 Peter 2:20-22 **For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to***

have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. ... according to the proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Ezekiel 33:18 *"When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it."*

1 Chronicles 28:9 *[David's final words to his son] "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever."*

Calvinism is a remnant of Catholic doctrine that never got purged in the Reformation. Calvin was a devotee of Augustine's teachings, and Luther was an Augustinian monk, but neither renounced his teachings. These issues divided the reformers, but it was not a topic of debate for the apostles. **The actual argument may be the institution's sovereignty over believers versus the individual's freedom of choice or corporate versus individual salvation.**

Denominations

As the Protestant reformers came out of the Catholic Church, they faced the same dilemma as Israel coming out of Egypt or the Apostles beginning the new covenant of grace; they had an institutional mindset from centuries of Catholic rule. The question was, what changes to make? The hierarchy and leadership issues became divisive, and some wanted to maintain institutional control over the people. The institutional model almost always turns into a dictatorship or an elite ruling class. The institution is always the highest priority in self-preservation, and the people are subordinate to leadership. By contrast, others fought for the New Testament model of servant leaders and the priesthood of all believers, emphasizing the equality of all believers and religious freedoms. Jesus set the example of

servant leadership by humbling himself and coming down from the throne of God to become a man, a servant, and then his death on the cross.

Philippians 2:1-8 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Mark 10:42-45 "You know ...those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

As the Protestants tried to purge Catholic teachings and practices from the churches, different factions formed over how to structure church leadership to return to the example of the first church.

- **The Anglican, or church of England**, is a church/state type of hierarchy, and the King is the head of church and state, a dictator with all power. The next level down is the bishops, the local clergy, then the people.
- **The Presbyterian** church model had no Bishops, and the members would vote for elders, and elders would convene for synod meetings to govern the churches.
- **The Congregational or Baptist** church models had no Bishops, each local church operated independently, and

membership came from people drawn by the Holy Spirit. The congregation voted for elders, and the local pastor was over the church.

- **The Quakers** had no pastors or elders and were only a society of friends meeting together.

The Puritans in England were trying to pull the church of England out of the Catholic and Anglican type of hierarchy. They also opposed being forced to follow the Common Book of Prayer, which prescribed every facet of prayer and the order of services and was highly ritualistic. To say an unapproved prayer, not in the book, or conduct a church service outside of the guidelines in the book was against the law. Since church and state were under the king, religious violations could be considered treason. That was the environment where King James ordered his authorized translation. King James was a Calvinist, but he was a dictator first and foremost, and he would protect his power above all. Here are a few quotes from King James that show his attitude about his position as king:

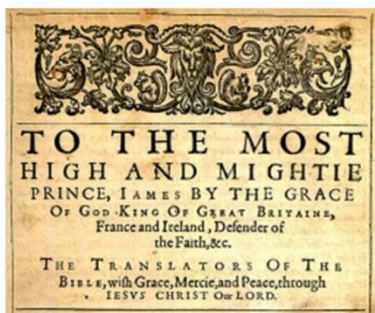
The state of monarchy is the supremist thing upon earth: for kings are not only God's Lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called Gods. [King James, Speech to Parliament, March 21, 1609.]

God has power to create, or destroy, make, or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accountable to none: to raise low things, and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soul and body due. And the like power have Kings; they make and unmake their subjects: they have power of raising, and casting down: of life, and of death: judges over all their subjects, and in all causes, and yet accountable to none but God only. [King James]

KJV & Church

In considering the King James Version, aka the Authorized Anglican Version of the Bible, we should start by looking at the word church,

which appears nowhere in the original Greek scriptures but was inserted into the English Bible by translators. The original word was **ekklesia**, which translated means; called-out, a congregation or assembly of people. Ekklesia speaks of people and has nothing to do with a building or an institution. So, for example, the correct reading of Matthew 16:18 would be, “And I also say to thee, that thou art a rock, and upon this rock, **I will build my assembly**, and gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Youngs Literal Translation). The word "church" is not in the original Greek text of the Bible because its roots are pagan. So how did a pagan word replace the words congregation or assembly in our Bibles? Let's Follow the history; starting from **1382, John Wycliffe** translated the word ekklesia as *chirche*, which was in the Old English of his time. But Wycliffe did not speak Greek and translated from a Latin Bible into English (translation of a translation). That may explain why he used the word *chirche* instead of *ekklesia*. However, Wycliffe was not a proponent of religious buildings and institutions and spoke of the invisible church of the elect. The translations that followed Wycliffe rendered the word *ekklesia* as a congregation:



Renderings of Matthew 16:18

In 1526 Tyndale’s Bible, is rendered “congregation”

In 1535 Coverdale Bible, is rendered “congregation”

In 1537 Matthew Bible is rendered “congregation”

In 1539 The Great Bible is rendered “congregation”

In 1568 Bishops Bible is rendered “congregation”

In 1560 Geneva Bible used the word “church.” But the Geneva Bible is unique for many reasons. First, John Calvin, John Knox, Myles Coverdale, John Foxe, and other reformers produced it in Switzerland. They had fled there to escape persecution from the Roman Catholic Queen of England, Bloody Mary. **The Geneva Bible was the first to separate into chapters and verses (chapter separations only began in the 1200s).** It was the first study bible with commentary on the side margins. But it had the books of the Apocrypha, a carryover of

Catholic influence and errors, which may be why they used the word church. Fifty years after its first printing, the King James Version copied 90% of its exact wording, minus the Apocrypha. Shakespeare quoted it, and the first Pilgrims to America brought it with them.

In 1611, the translators inserted the word church into the King James Version, and we will look at some of their motives. But before we do, we will go back a few years to get some background history. In 1526 **William Tyndale** was the first to translate an English version of the Bible directly from the original languages. In 1534, King Henry the 8th broke away from the Catholic Church, so He could divorce his wife, which the Pope would not allow. Ironically, King Henry used one of William Tyndale's writings as the rationale for the split from Catholicism and later killed Tyndale for his writings. So basically, breaking away from the Catholic church just meant Henry renounced the Pope and the Catholic church, renamed the existing churches in England from Catholic to Anglican, and appointed himself and his heirs as the head of the church. (It sounds like Constantine's takeover!)



That was a time of persecution for true believers; anyone who challenged church authority or practice could be deemed a heretic and severely beaten, imprisoned, or killed. The church used Biblical ignorance as a weapon to have power over the people. Most Bibles were in Latin and not available to the general public, and translating the Bible into English was illegal and considered a threat to the monarchy and church establishment. In 1535 **William Tyndale** was arrested and jailed because he translated the Bible into English and for his writings. In 1536 he was convicted of heresy and sentenced to be burned alive. When the executioner tied him to the stake, he shouted, "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes," the executioner then strangled him to death and burned his body afterward.

Just 75 years after William Tyndale's martyrdom, King James became the head of the church. The reformation movement had grown, and

King James faced different factions struggling for influence and power between the Catholics, Presbyterians, Church of England, and Puritans, not to mention the British Parliament. That growing friction created political and religious problems for King James, and his highest priority as a dictator was protecting his power and the monarchy. With the advent of the printing press, people were getting Bibles in English with commentaries that James deemed unfavorable to the state and his Calvinist theology. The Puritans had Arminian leanings and were pushing for more reforms to remove more of the Romish popery, and as congregationalist, they sought independence from the state. Therefore, King James authorized a new Bible translation to consolidate the religious groups, strengthen his power, and suppress other Bible translations and writings.

King James selected 47 Scholars and gave them 15 edicts controlling how they translated the new version. In the 3rd edict, He made it forbidden to use the word “congregation” as it had been in earlier translations. Also, anything that pertained to church leadership got translated to influence a mindset that supports orthodox clergy, institutions, and state-sanctioned education of ministers with official ordination. Words like Deacon, office, and Bishop reflect the attitude that church leaders must have a professional education in an accredited government school. In the original Greek, a bishop was an elder with oversight to look after, a caregiver. And the Greek definition of a Deacon was an errand runner, servant, or one who waits on tables, not a university-educated, state-ordained church official. King James only authorized and approved his version but branded others as seditious, like the Geneva Bible.

Before moving on, just a side note about the word “church” and its pagan origins, which existed in all the Celtic dialects long before its Greek counterparts. No doubt the word means a circle. The places of worship among the German and Celtic nations were always circular. The Druids had their Stonehenge, and the Celts and Saxons also met around stone circles to worship their gods. Many of the first English buildings for Christian worship were located on top of those same circle sites or built using stones from those sites. That may be why **William Tyndale** used the word



“chirche” (circle) in his Bible translation in 1382. We also get the word circus (like a three-ring circus) from chirche, or in our conversations, we speak to our circle of friends or have a circle of influence. There is also another, darker meaning for this word. In the dialects of the Anglo-Saxon, it was circe, a small church, with circol, a circle. In the Scottish dialect, it was called Kirk; in German, it was Kirche; in England, it is the word Circe.

Circe was also the name of a Goddess in Greek mythology. Circe was the daughter of the Sun god Helios, the fertility goddess, and a sorceress. (sound familiar?) She supposedly lived and was buried on the island of Aiaiai, which was in a chain of islands within eyesight of the isle of Patmos, where the Apostle John was banished when he wrote the book of Revelation. Circe was famous for taming wild animals for her circus. She was said to have the power to change men into lions, wolves, and especially pigs. She would seduce men to drink from her Gold Cup, which she had mixed with wine and drugs. After drinking from the cup, they transformed into a hybrid of man and



animal. The men would retain their human senses but get trapped in an animal body. We don't know what the King James translators knew about Circe and Greek mythology, but one thing is clear: Circe and her story greatly resemble the Harlot of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 17:3-6 ... And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast ... The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, **having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.** **I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints** and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement.**

Revelation 18:3 "For all the nations **have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,**

Revelation 18:6 "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; **in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.**

Revelation 18:23 For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for **by your sorcery** all the nations were deceived. "And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

The King James Version [KJV] forever altered the English vocabulary by using the word "church" instead of the original Greek word with its meaning, which is permanently ingrained in the culture now. We must use the word church if we want people to relate to what we are saying. It may be semantics, but it has a profound psychological impact on how we think. All that to say, most Christians are "**institutionalized,**"; meaning they are programmed to think of the church as a religion, a building, or denomination, rituals, or traditions. Whereas the "ekklesia" is a family gathering of believers, a congregation, an assembly of people for fellowship and encouraging each other's faith. There are other words that the interpreters used to satisfy King James's requirements, and they are subtle, almost subliminally creating the institutional mindset. But ministers also propagate institutional thinking to uphold their power, like King James, even though they may be unaware they are doing it.

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

Colossians 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on **the new man who is renewed in knowledge** according to the image of Him who created him,

The great ejection

On May 19, 1662, the Parliament of England prescribed adherence to the Book of Common Prayer, which explicitly required episcopal ordination for all ministers, deacons, priests, and bishops, which they reinstated after being abolished by the Puritans. The book was highly orthodox and ritualistic, prescribing every detail and word of every church service or function. They mandated every minister to take an oath pledging to terms of subscription to the Book of Common Prayer, Every Church of England minister must give “unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed” in the book and swear an oath never to attempt to change anything in church or state.

On August 17, 1662, an estimated 2,000 or 20 percent of ordained ministers got expelled from their office for not taking the oath. The deadline to take the oath was significant for two reasons. First, it was St. Bartholomew's Day, a reminder of what happened to the Calvinists in France on that day. And, because it was the payday for the clergy, all the salaries and pew rents owed them were supposed to be given to them that day. So, the "dissenting" ministers were put out of their parsonages, were unpaid, unemployable, and with nowhere to go. A similar act pronouncement was made the same year against the Quakers, called the Quaker Act. This act required all subjects to swear an oath of allegiance to the king, which Quakers refused out of religious convictions. The penalties were fines and imprisonment, and hard labor. These conditions forced the Puritans, Quakers, and others to flee England and Europe to come to America.

Moravians

Moravians were followers of Huss, first organized in 1457, calling themselves “unity of the brethren.” The founders taught what made a Christian was not doctrine or what a person believes but how that person lived their life according to the teachings of Jesus. They were committed to being guided only by the gospel and the example of Jesus and the apostles in gentleness, humility, patience, and love for their enemies. Located in ancient Bohemia & Moravia (modern Czech Republic) and suffered great persecution for the first 300 years. In 1722, they found refuge and experienced a revival under **Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf** in Saxony.

The Moravians started a prayer meeting and prayed 24 hours daily, lasting over 100 years. They started the first large-scale missionary movement by Protestants, and in 1732 they sent the first missionaries to the West Indies. Two of the Moravians sold themselves to be slaves to minister as missionaries to the slaves of St. Thomas, when denied access any other way. Moravians came in the 1700s to America as missionaries to the Native Americans, including the Lenape (Delaware) Indians, and they printed the Bible in the Lenape language. They built the first white settlements in Ohio and the first school. Members of the Lenape were on their village leadership boards and held positions in their church. Equality was preached and practiced.

In 1735 they went with General Oglethorpe to Georgia and attempted to establish a community in Savannah but failed. However, they profoundly impacted a young **John Wesley**, who had gone to Georgia during a spiritual crisis. Wesley was amazed at their calm; they did not fear death in a dangerous storm that broke the ship's mast and panicked the experienced sailors. After that, in 1741, the Moravians purchased land from **George Whitefield** and established a settlement that became Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

John Wesley

John Wesley (1703 – 1791) was born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley as the 15th of 19 children, of which only nine lived beyond infancy. His father was a graduate of the University of Oxford and the rector of Epworth. His mother, Susanna, was the 25th child of Samuel Annesley, who was a dissenting minister (refused to take an oath to the Book of Common Prayer) of Arminian philosophy and had separated from the Church of England. They taught each child to read and write as soon as they could walk and expected them to learn Latin, Greek, and significant portions of the New Testament by heart.



Wesley was an academic, taught Greek and philosophy, and became known for his rigid disciplines. He studied at Oxford in 1732, and with his brother **Charles**, **George Whitfield**, and others, they formed a campus “Holy Club” where they prayed and studied the Greek New

Testament together. George Whitfield was a gifted preacher and evangelist. John Wesley was a great discipleship mentor, and Charles Wesley was a prolific hymn writer. The three of them started the Wesleyan or Methodist movements.

On October 14, 1735, John and his brother Charles sailed from England to evangelize the Native American people and minister to the European settlers. On the voyage across the ocean, they encountered a dangerous storm, and the mast of the ship broke. John noticed that while the Englishmen were stricken with panic and fear, a group of Moravians were at peace, singing hymns and saying prayers. That experience left a lasting impression. The American mission did not go as planned, and their mission got canceled, and John and Charles returned to London. Back in London, Wesley met with the Moravians and attended their services. One evening Wesley was at the chapel at Aldersgate Street; he went to a service, and after hearing teaching from the book of Galatians, the reality of salvation by grace through faith struck him, and on May 24, 1738, John Wesley got born again. He wrote in his diary; I felt my heart strangely warmed. "I felt I did trust in Christ. Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

After returning from the states, Wesley found that opportunities to preach in the churches were closing. One of his friends from Oxford, **George Whitefield**, had the same problem when he returned from America. So, Whitefield took to preaching in open-air meetings with outstanding success. Wesley reluctantly accepted the call to step outside an orthodox church building and preach in the open air. But after that first experience, he preached wherever he could for the next 50 years, in churches, fields, halls, cottages, and chapels. Shortly after, John organized lay preachers to preach wherever they could. The houses where they met, they called **societies**, and Wesley outlined the behavior, practices, and virtues of those he equipped. Wesley went as far as ordaining lay people for ministry, which brought him stiff persecution from other groups. Wesley's organization became known as the Methodist for the systematic and strict discipline they encouraged. John Wesley was also at the forefront of women's

ministry and the abolition of slavery. Wesley was not a cessationist, meaning he believed the gifts of the Spirit did not cease after the time of the apostles.

An area of confrontation came from his stance against Calvinism. Wesley arrived at his conclusions against Calvinism while in college independently of Jacob Arminius. Wesley was so vehemently opposed to the doctrines of Calvin that his systematic theology became known as Wesleyan Arminianism. Wesley was the clearest of the English advocates of Arminianism. Wesley once said the Calvinist understanding of predestination is blasphemous, as it represented God as worse than the devil. Wesley became so outspoken on the topic that in 1778, he published "The Arminian Magazine." The Calvinist debate came between John Wesley and his old friend **George Whitfield**, and the arguments became so contentious they separated for a time. Wesley continued the movement from an Arminian perspective and Whitfield's from a Calvinist viewpoint. Eventually, Whitefield dedicated himself entirely to evangelism as a traveling preacher going back and forth from England to America, leaving his converts to the Methodist movement. In their final years, they renewed their fellowship, and they always had a deep respect for each other. At the request of George Whitefield, he had John Wesley preach at his funeral. One line from that sermon has survived the centuries to become a regular part of our language today. Wesley said **there are many doctrines of a less essential nature ... In these, we may think and let think; we may agree to disagree. But, meantime, let us hold fast to the essentials.**

It is a shame that John Wesley and George Whitefield couldn't agree to disagree sooner. George was the greatest evangelist of his time, and John Wesley was one of the best discipleship mentors ever. But both ran their race with all their strength until the end. John Wesley preached until the final year of his life, and he died on March 2, 1791, at 87 years of age. During his life, he traveled 250,000 miles on horseback, enough to circle the earth ten times. Wesley preached two or three times a day, and his sermons totaled more than 40,000. He ordained 541 itinerant preachers, and the Methodist movement had grown to 135,000 members. He managed to organize and aid charities. Wesley wrote, edited, or abridged 400 publications on theology,

music, marriage, medicine, abolitionism - anti-slavery, and politics.

The Awakening

The Puritans and others fled England to seek religious freedom in the new world in America. They founded states, cities, universities, hospitals, and orphanages and built the infrastructure for the new world. The Puritan philosophy believed in the priesthood of believers with God as king and living by the word of God or the "rule of the law." They shaped a revolutionary new form of government with a Judeo-Christian philosophy acknowledging that God grants certain inalienable rights of life, liberty, land, and the pursuit of happiness. The premise of a government for the people by the people originated from a sermon in 1638 by Reverend Thomas Hooker. When his congregation got off the ship from England in raw unsettled land, they had to self-govern by necessity. Rev. Hooker wrote and delivered a sermon that would become the charter for their new settlement, and later it became the charter for the state of Connecticut, which they founded. That sermon later influenced the writing of the Declaration of Independence. Rev. Hooker's sermon said, "The foundation of authority is laid firstly in the **"free consent of the people"** ... The choice of public magistrates belongs unto the people by God's own allowance."

After the colonies got established and the population grew, the Puritan zeal began to wane until God moved sovereignly over the people. **George Whitefield**, Jonathan Edwards,



and others brought about a great spiritual awakening that transformed the colonies with salvation and reverence for God. George Whitefield pioneered large open-air meetings and toured in a circuit around the American colonies and England. Benjamin Franklin attended Whitefield's meetings and said he could hear George's voice from over 500 feet away. Then he estimated that 30,000 people could listen to Whitefield in the open air. George Whitefield preached at least 18,000

times to an estimated 10 million people in England and the American colonies.

Like every revival or movement, new methods and traditions were started and passed down to the following generations. Much of what we do in church today has its roots in the great awakening and the movements that followed, (but not from the Bible).

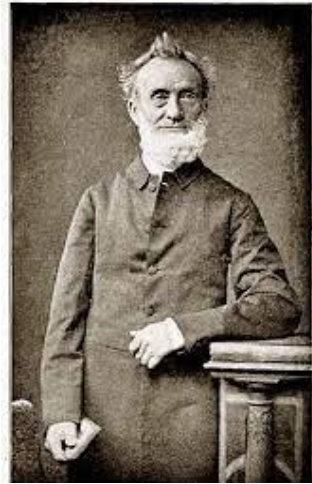
Passing the Plate

The churches in England would rent the best seats or pews to the rich, and the poor would sit or stand in the back of the church.

Pew rentals were part of the salary for the ministers. They also received tithes, which Zwingli and other reformers fought as a Catholic practice. After the Americans declared independence from England, the British cut off all money to the American revolutionary churches. Their solution was to raise funds by **passing an offering plate** for tithes and offerings.



George Mueller lived from 1805 to 1898 and restored the idea of living by faith and trusting God to provide for every need. George lived by the principle that he would never ask for money, let his needs be known, or borrow money; instead, he would pray and trust God to supply his needs. His life was a continuous testimony of God's provision. Among other things, George built five orphanages with over 2,000 children living in them at a time, and he fed, clothed, and educated them by faith and prayer. On many occasions, they had no food for the orphans, and he would have



the children sit at the dining room table, he would pray, and the food would show up just in time. In his lifetime, George raised 10,024 children in five orphanages costing about 14 million dollars to build, and established 117 schools that educated more than 120,000 children. He also traveled over 200,000 miles to 42 countries to preach Christ. He never took a salary, passed a plate, or asked a man for money, but he never lacked anything because God was his provider.

Altar call

During the 1700s, God used the ministry of fiery preachers in the American colonies to bring about a "Great Awakening," and multitudes turned to God for salvation. **Jonathan Edwards** delivered a sermon entitled "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," the people were so afraid that they would go to hell that they clung to the pews in fear. To accommodate those gripped with fear, they designated a bench, called a **mourner's seat**, in the front row of the sanctuary for sinners to stay and pray until they felt assurance of salvation. The mourner's chair got tweaked by evangelists like **Charles Finney** in the 1820s and eventually evolved into our modern "**altar call**," where people gather at the front of the sanctuary for prayer. **Billy Graham** popularized altar calls in the 1950s and added a modified version of something used for over 100 years before him, known as the **sinner's prayer**. The sinner's prayer is the most popular evangelistic tool used today, where someone leads the sinner(s) to repeat a prayer to ask Jesus to come into their heart and be their personal Savior.

Sinner's prayer

Ok, let's knock over this golden calf and illustrate how something esteemed as essential to the gospel is only a tradition invented by man. First, the sinner's prayer is not



a "get out of hell card" or a "now you are ready for the rapture card." That can be a false promise of security, especially if the sinner who prays doesn't repent and lives like the Devil afterward. Nobody in the Bible ever had anyone repeat a sinner's prayer or anything remotely close to that. Nowhere in the Bible is Jesus referred to as someone's personal Savior (*Philippians 2:10, Rev 19:16*), or that people should ask Jesus into their hearts. Jesus was against repetitious prayers, and no magic formula of words said in prayer format can save souls. Salvation is only by grace through faith in Christ.

To have souls repeat a prayer to mass produce conversions to Christ only reflects the commercialization of the American gospel. Making blanket declarations of salvation over people is dangerous, and treading into a realm of authority reserved for God alone. Only by the

conviction of the Holy Spirit does anyone repent and believe in Jesus for salvation. The Colonial Puritans had the mourner's bench where souls might stay for days under the conviction of the Holy Spirit until they felt released from their sins and knew they had become born again. The sinner's prayer is not a shortcut or an assembly line for salvation. Jesus said to make disciples and teach them, and said nothing about leading them in the sinner's prayer.

*Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Sunday school

Next, the first Sunday school started in England in 1751. And in America in 1855, a young shoe salesman converted to Christ in a Sunday school class. And since he had great compassion for Chicago's poor children, he started a **Mission Sunday School**, and by 1864 he rented a hall (a converted saloon) for his outreach to children. When that became too small for his kids, he purchased a building and started a church. His church, the Moody Bible Church, is still a historical landmark in Chicago, and **D.L. Moody** became a world-famous preacher in his life and church history. One of his accomplishments was making Sunday school almost mandatory in all churches.

Pentecostals

The name Pentecostal came from a passage in the second chapter of Acts, which describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in the first church. The main distinction between Pentecostalism and prior movements is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer and the restoration of Spiritual gifts. The Calvinists are cessationists, meaning they believe the dispensation for speaking in tongues, healing, and casting out demons ended and died with the last of the apostles (so they say). On the other hand, the Anabaptists, Armenians, John Wesley, and others were not cessationists but looked to God to restore everything the church had lost since the time of the first church. Here is a practical example of this dispute based on the following verses.

*Acts 3:2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; ... Then Peter said, **Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.** And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God.*

There is a report that during the time of the Catholic inquisitions, a priest was giving a tour of St. Peter's Basilica to a friend. The priest boasted as he showed his friend all the treasures made of gold, silver, and precious jewels. Then the priest turned to his friend and said, we cannot say as Peter did, silver and gold have I none. And his friend replied, yes, and neither can you say rise up and walk.

Sadly, multitudes of Christians are on the wrong side of both issues. Some have earthly treasures and no treasure in heaven. Others have no power to see people get saved, healed, and delivered from demonic oppression. If ever there was a time to forsake everything to follow Jesus, it is now. If ever there was a time to reach the lost and hurting with the power of the gospel, it is now.

*Mark 16:15-18 And he [Jesus] said unto them, **Go, ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;** They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; **they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.***

Pentecostals speak in tongues, heal the sick, and cast out demons. Yes, some Pentecostals have bad testimonies. But that doesn't discredit the majority or void the word of God. The word of God says *these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall lay hands on the sick,*

and they shall recover. If you don't believe it, argue with Jesus. So, the gifts haven't changed or disappeared, and multitudes will get filled with the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit will be active until the rapture happens and the church gets caught up to heaven.

Now that we cleared that up, we can look at the roots of modern Pentecostalism. The first raindrop that fell from the current outpouring of the Holy Spirit happened in Topeka, Kansas. **Charles F. Parham** was the Pastor of Bethel Bible School; he and his students started a 24-hour prayer chain praying for an outpouring of the Spirit to fulfill scripture by speaking in tongues. On January 1, 1901, one student asked for prayer, and she began speaking in tongues and could not stop speaking in tongues for four days.



Parham went to Houston, Texas, in 1905 and taught about the outpouring and gifts of the Holy Spirit at the Bryan Hall Bible School. And that Bible school was segregated for whites only, but there was a black man who would go and sit outside to listen to the teaching. The man's name was **William Seymore**, and he was the son of a slave who served in the Civil War and died from his war injuries. Seymore had contracted smallpox, which caused him to be blind in one eye. William took an invitation to Pastor a group in Los Angeles, and after being there one week, they fired him. A white pastor heard of his situation and took him into his house, and they became prayer and Bible study partners. William would pray 7 hours a day, and people started coming to him for prayer.

In April of 1906, William got invited to teach to a small group at Bonnie Brae St. in Los Angeles, and two people received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. News traveled fast, and a large crowd gathered around the house. When the porch collapsed, they decided to find another meeting place. They found a run-



down, abandoned building at 312 Azusa St. in Los Angeles. It had been a stable, a storage area, and an African Methodist Church and

needed lots of repairs. The first floor was dirt, and the second floor, which they called the upper room, was an apartment.

The meeting hall quickly got packed, with 800 people inside and 500 outside. By this time, everybody was receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, and many miraculous healings frequently happened. The LA Times paper was running articles defaming the movement, and that only served to give them free publicity and publish it to the world. The crowds crossed racial and economic barriers, and people came who were black, white, Hispanic, Orientals, European, poor, rich, and people from around the world. From 1906 to 1909, they held meetings three times a day, seven days a week, and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, they had spontaneous worship, preaching, teaching, healing, signs, and wonders. Those who came from abroad returned home to spread the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to their countries. Out of Azuza Street, two Pentecostal denominations formed, the Assembly of God, the Church of God, and other groups splintered off from them. Today there are over 644 million Pentecostals worldwide, making it the fastest-growing and largest movement in modern Christianity.

The first outpouring on Azuza street was the closest thing to the book of Acts, since the book of Acts. Was everything perfect? Absolutely not! The first church also had plenty of problems, and that movement was under the leadership of Peter, James, John, and Paul, and their letters addressed those problems, which became our Bible. There will always be problems with flawed humans, but the church needs the Holy Spirit and the power of God now more than ever in these end times.



Charismatics

There was another outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the 1970s through the 1980s called the Charismatic, Pentecostal, or the Jesus movement. Many young people, hippies, and people from every denomination, race, and income level, young and old, were born again and Spirit-filled. With this outpouring of the Spirit, multitudes spoke in tongues, cast out demons, and miracles took place and spread around the world. Different movements came from that outpouring, Calvary Chapel, The Vineyard, Toronto Airport, Brownsville, Pensacola, and others. Also, church music got transformed with new venues of Praise and Worship and Contemporary Christian Music.

Since then, many winds and waves of teachings, fads, and leaders have blown through the church, which will only increase as God separates the bride of Christ from the Harlot church. Some Spirit-filled people go astray by experimenting with their spiritual experiences contrary to the written word of God and going to extremes chasing the supernatural, making them prone to error. On the other hand, the strict Calvinists believe all the gifts have ceased and attribute speaking in tongues, demonic deliverance, and divine healing to the Devil. They may be dangerously close to attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the Devil [blasphemy] and be legalistically and institutionally in bondage. Like it or not, the spiritual battles will increase more and more until the return of Christ. So, believers need balance, discernment, and the power of the Holy Spirit to do the will of God until Jesus comes.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In January 1933, two days after Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer delivered a radio address in which he attacked Hitler warning Germany about Him. The radio broadcast was cut off midway through his speech. Bonhoeffer was the first Pastor who spoke out against the persecution of the Jews and tried to raise resistance to Hitler. He ran an underground seminary and worked with a secret German military intelligence organization that actively resisted the Nazis and plotted against Hitler. At that time,



Bonhoeffer and other Protestant leaders sought to unify the opposition, and out of the 16,500 Protestant clergy members, about 7,000 joined in what they called the "confessing church." However, most of those clergy were more concerned about self-preservation and saving their institutions than opposing the actions of the Nazis outside of the church. Many of the confessing church members were Nazis or supported them. There were only a few who actively worked against Hitler and the Nazis.

Hitler's officers got tasked with combining Christianity with National Socialism, the Nazis, and making a state-run German Christian movement. Two-thirds of the German Christians supported a Nazi Party member who was a neo-pagan as their leader. November 1933, there was a rally with 20,000 German Christians that made three resolutions:

- 1). Adolf Hitler is the completion of the reformation.*
- 2). Baptized Jews are to be dismissed from the church.*
[As a side note, there are estimates that 200,000 Christians of Jewish descent died in Nazi Germany.]
- 3). Remove the Old Testament from the Bible.*

One of the Nazis had a 32-point program for the National Reich Church that included: removing the foreign Christian faiths imported into Germany since the year 800, removing Bibles, and replacing them with "Mein Kampf" (Hitler's book).

Bonhoeffer could have moved to America but decided to be with his people through the war. He stayed active with the resistance until he was arrested and imprisoned for eighteen months. Hitler ordered his execution along with six others, including his brother, and on April 9, 1945, the Nazis hanged him to death. Less than a month later, the Germans surrendered on May 7, 1945. Hitler was dead, and the war was over.

That was not just Diedrich Bonhoeffer's story but the story of German Christians under persecution, which shows how quickly a nation, religious denominations, culture, and people can change when persecution happens. The reign of Hitler was like a dress rehearsal for

the Antichrist, but the real show will begin shortly; the stage is getting set, the actors are in the shadows, and the most unimaginable and horrific drama of suffering is about to start. Jesus said end times signs would come like birth pains, increasing in intensity and frequency, including persecution and deceptions. And it's not a matter of "if" but "when."

Standing up boldly for your faith in the face of torture and death is the ultimate test. As Satan challenged Job's integrity, he said, skin for skin, let me touch his body, and Job will curse God to his face (*Job 2:4-5*). There is a possibility that the United States and the Western world may experience persecution before the rapture, and if we don't stand up now, we won't stand up then. In some ways, we already saw this with the Covid shutdowns. How many churches became controlled by the government and put up no resistance? How many Christians sheepishly got their DNA genetically altered because they feared a manufactured virus with a 99% survival rate? Persecution and martyrdom will not be a piece of cake, especially for those who miss the rapture. What will they do when they get commanded to worship the image of the beast (the antichrist) or get their head chopped off? If they can't handle the foot soldiers, what will they do when the four horsemen of the apocalypse come charging at them?

Jeremiah 12:5 ***If you have run with footmen, and they wore you out, then how can you compete with horses?*** *And if you feel secure in the land of peace, then how will you do in the swelling [floods] of Jordan?*

Bonhoeffer lived in Germany, where Luther launched the reformation, it was a majority Lutheran nation, but once Hitler came to power, most Christians compromised to save their skin. Hitler was evil, but he was a sissy compared to the Antichrist, a man possessed by Satan that unleashes hell on the entire planet. Bonhoeffer's example forces us to ask ourselves if we are part of the resistance or on the side of evil. We are coming to the final testing grounds to separate the bride of Christ from the Harlot church. Things will get far worse than under the Nazis. But the Holy Spirit inside the bride of Christ will restrain evil and fight back the darkness until Jesus takes his bride away in the rapture.

*“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”
Diedrich Bonhoeffer’*

*2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 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.*

What now?

What's coming next? Jesus will snatch the church away, then God's wrath and judgments come upon the earth. And this is why we need to learn the difference between the harlot church and the bride of Christ. The bride will ascend with Christ up into glory, and the Harlot goes through the great tribulation and descends into hell. So how do we prepare for what's coming? That depends on whether you are the Bride of Christ or the Harlot church. The bride has a responsibility to prepare and take action.

*Revelation 19:7-8 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.**" And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for **the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.***

Here are the qualifications for the Harlot, zip, zero, nada, nothing, none. Keep living life as usual, buy, sell, eat, drink, get married, live life, go for the gusto, and live however you want, with no concerns. Everything is all good until one day, out of nowhere, BAM!!! Sudden destruction hits, and the world becomes hell on earth.

*Luke 17:26-30 "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, **until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.** "Likewise, as it was also in the days of*

Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all." Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman ... they shall not escape.

Jesus didn't mention the horrible sins of Noah's or Lot's time that usually comes to mind, like violence and homosexuality. The roots of their sins were their preoccupation with everyday life, they didn't heed warnings from God, and they were arrogant, self-centered, overfed, had plenty of free time, and ignored the needs of others. What started from those seemingly minor roots of sin grew into a tree with the evil fruit of wickedness, violence, and sodomy.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore, I did away with them as you have seen.

Noah preached for years without a single convert outside his immediate family, and when Lot warned his sons-in-law, they scoffed at him. The Harlot church is full of scoffers that mock prophetic warnings.

Genesis 19:14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

2 Peter 2:5-7 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness,

2 Peter 3:3-7 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Jude 1:17-18 But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.

The bride of Christ lives in a state of readiness because Jesus could come at any time. But the fake church will be spiritually asleep, oblivious to the urgency of the times. They will sleep right through the night while the thief, Jesus, steals his bride away in the rapture. They will wake up in the tribulation after it's too late. They will regret that they were sleeping and not watching and will face the grim reality of choosing martyrdom for Jesus or the mark of the beast.

Matthew 24:42-44 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. "Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Luke 21:34-36 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the

whole earth. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

In the following sections, we will see the character of the apostate harlot and the holy, spotless bride. We will start with the harlot.

Prepare the Harlot

First, we know there will be a great falling away, and many will depart from the faith and fall into deception. The people in the Harlot church may not realize their condition and think they are doing fine, which is part of the deception. God will send a strong delusion, and there will be deceiving spirits and teachings that are demonically inspired. People will damage their consciences beyond the ability to feel conviction for their sins. They will reject God and any Biblical truth in pursuit of their pleasures.

2 Thessalonians 2:3,11-12 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, 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.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than

lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

The falling away from faith in Christ is already happening and progressing rapidly. We witness so-called Christian churches committing evil abominations in the name of Christ, promoting abortion and gay ministers, letting drag queens teach in Sunday school, and so forth, on and on. They are the harlot church and have nothing to do with Christ, yet they bring reproach to Christ by claiming to be Christain. Many other churches are not as overtly evil, they are much more subtle, appealing to the flesh, with anything that fills the seats, but they are enemies of the cross of Christ. They are not enemies of the loving Jesus who did healings, did miracles, fed multitudes, walked on water, and blessed everybody. They love him. But they are enemies of the Jesus who was beaten with 39 lashes from a barbed whip and hung on a cross, who preached about hell, gave scathing rebukes to the hypocrites, and demanded that anyone who follows him take up their crosses, die to themselves, and follow in his steps.

Philippians 3:17-19 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame who set their mind on earthly things.

Luke 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The **end times signs** come like birth pains; one such pain was the Covid pandemic. Covid was a global manufactured **plague**, with all the world's governments following the same mandates immediately, using fear and panic to create emergency powers, lock down citizens, and close businesses and schools in a global power grab of the elites over the people. Now we see **wars and rumors of war** as the nations are jockeying for power and control over resources, land, and global dominance. We have also seen unprecedented **earthquakes**, floods, droughts, and natural disasters on the increase. We can see the dismantling of the global infrastructures of supply chains, food, energy, and finance, causing poverty, **famines**, and **death**. Our world is undergoing deconstruction to "build back better" the globalist world order for the Antichrist. And on the technology side, with digital identification and Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), and artificial intelligence, the technical ability to implement the mark of the beast, the antichrist financial system to track and control every person on earth, and their ability to **buy or sell**, is already here.

*Matthew 24:6-9 "And you will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. "For **nation will rise against nation**, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be **famines** [starvation], **pestilences** [plagues], and **earthquakes** in various places. "All these are the beginning of sorrows [birth pains] "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.*

*Revelation 13:16-18 **He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.** Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is six hundred and sixty-six (666).*

All the end times signs are a gauge to guess how close the tribulation period is, but there are no signs for the rapture; Jesus could come at

any moment for his church. Those who miss the rapture have only two options, die as a martyr for Jesus or take the mark of the beast and go to hell. Those who die as martyrs will be guests at the marriage supper of the lamb. And those who take the mark of the beast are part of the Harlot, and they will endure foul and loathsome sores and afflictions in a painful death and then go to hell.

Revelation 16:2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and **a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.**

Revelation 14:9-11 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **"If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. 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 ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."**

Rapture a Mystery

After Jesus taught the multitudes, his disciples needed help understanding his parables and asked him to explain their meanings. Jesus said Blessed are your eyes for what you see and your ears for what you hear, many prophets and righteous men of all the previous generations desired to see what you are experiencing, but they did not. Jesus was revealing to his disciples' secrets hidden from the beginning of time. Most of the New Testament reveals the spiritual truths behind the symbolisms of the Old Testament. There were around 100 prophecies regarding Jesus' first coming. But there are 800 prophecies about the end times and Christ's second coming; how blessed are our eyes to see what the prophets foretold from Enoch to the time of the Apostles.

Matthew 13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "**Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ... "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; "for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.**

Some things are outside the boundaries of human comprehension, and only after the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our understanding can we perceive and grasp them. Those who are not born again cannot see the things of God (*John 3:3*), and they are foolish to them. To think that God will remove his faithful followers from the earth in a mass resurrection, transforming their bodies and transporting their souls to heaven, only impacts Spirit-filled believers. Some carnal church people hear the teaching but mock it; others ignore it, but those who hear the message and believe it live in expectation of the imminent return of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:6-14 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. **But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ... These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

2 Peter 3:3-4 ... **knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" For**

since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

*Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,***

The disciples knew nothing about the rapture and the church during Jesus' earthly ministry; those mysteries remained concealed for some time. It took at least ten years after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the Jerusalem council to accept fellowship with Gentiles so the disciples could fully understand the mystery of the church. The apostle Paul wrote his first epistle around 10 years after that and his writings are the primary source of information about the mystery of the rapture. At that time, Paul prayed for the Ephesians that God would open the eyes of their understanding to comprehend the revelations he was sharing with them.

*Ephesians 1:7-10 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, **having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him.***

*Ephesians 1:15-19 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, **making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His***

mighty power

Church / Body

Paul, by the Holy Spirit, revealed the hidden mysteries of the church as the body and bride of Christ. One of the most popular Bible verses, John 3:16, says, "For **God so loved the world** he gave his Son," but a lesser-known verse says that **Jesus so loved the church** that he gave himself for her. Part of the mystery of the rapture is the mystery of the church because only the Spirit-filled followers of Jesus will get raptured. The word church is not in the original scripture; the Greek word ekklesia means a called-out assembly of people or a congregation of people. This assembly of individuals born of the Spirit come together to form the body of Christ.

Ephesians 5:23-32** For the husband is head of the wife, **as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.** Therefore, just as **the church is subject to Christ**, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.** So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, **just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body**, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." **This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

So, the church is not a building or denomination or even a random group of people. The true church consists of all born-again followers of Jesus everywhere who have answered the call to come out of a life of sin and worldly indulgences to a life separated unto God and his service. Only God knows the secrets of the heart, so only God knows those individuals who are the genuine members of his church, his body, his bride.

Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.

The Bride

There is a difference between the Bride and all other believers throughout all the ages, like the difference between the Bride and the guest at a wedding. The gospels say nothing of the Bride, speaking only of the bridegroom and the guests, most likely because the Bride was a mystery until after the Apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist said that Jesus would be the bridegroom, and he would be the friend or best man of the bridegroom.

John 3:27-29 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, **I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.**

Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest of the Old Testament saints but the least in the kingdom of God; the church, the Bride of Christ, is greater than him.

Matthew 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The Bride is only greater because of a better covenant, better promises, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Engaged, Sealed

Some would argue that the Old Testament saints experienced the Holy Spirit and that John the Baptist had been "filled with the Holy Spirit" from his mother's womb in an attempt to include Old Testament saints with the Bride of Christ.

Luke 1:13-15** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and **you shall call his name John.**" And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. **He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

The unique filling of the Holy Spirit came upon John as an individual because, in the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would only come upon selected individuals, elders, judges, prophets, priests, and kings, and for specific times and purposes. Notice how the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and came upon David.

***1 Samuel 16:13-14** Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and **the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.** So Samuel arose and went to Ramah. **But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul,** and a distressing [evil] spirit from the LORD troubled him.*

The Old Testament saints had a different experience than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that fills and indwells New Testament believers in Jesus. The baptism of the Holy Spirit started on the Day of Pentecost and will last until the end of the church age at the rapture of the church.

Acts 2:17-18, 38-39 [Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost] 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ... Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

John said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire and then acknowledged that he needed to be baptized by Jesus. In other words, John did not have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that promise is exclusive to the church.

Matthew 3:11-14 "I [John] indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He [Jesus] who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.... Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

All followers of Jesus in the New Testament have access to the better covenant, better sacrifice, better promises, and everything that pertains to life and godliness, above what was available to Old Testament saints. The most significant event after being born again is being Spirit-filled. The greatest blessing is that the Spirit-filled person is engaged, promised, or sealed to be married to Christ when he returns for his Bride.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

***Ephesians 1:13-14** In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,** to the praise of His glory.*

Ephesians 4:30** And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

In ancient Israel, the parents arranged marriages, and the process began with an engagement, a legal contract that included a dowry, meaning money and gifts, given to the bride's parents to seal the agreement. Once sealed, the engagement was a legally binding contract, and breaking off the wedding engagement would require a letter of divorce (*Matthew 1:18-19*).

The Holy Spirit seals the bride of Christ until the day of redemption, the rapture. And it is the Holy Spirit working in our lives that prepares us for the rapture. On God's part, he will never fail; he will never break his promise. But the apostle Paul's greatest fear is that Satan could get us to stray from simple, pure devotion to Christ.

***2 Corinthians 11:2-4** 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 subtilty, 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.*

Galatians 3:1-3** O foolish Galatians! **Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth**, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

God will never forsake us, but we can be prone to forsake him, especially when we walk by our fleshly desires and not by the direction of the Holy Spirit. Whenever we stray from Christ and give our love and devotion to others, like sinful pleasures, money, possessions, and things we idolize, we are committing spiritual adultery.

James 4:4-7 *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

Romans 8:5-9 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

The dependence of the Bride on the Holy Spirit is a central theme for the church. The Holy Spirit is essential to prepare the Bride of Christ for the rapture, so much so that the Holy Spirit and the Bride speak with one voice.

Revelation 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

The Rapture

In essence, the rapture is the wedding day for the Spirit-filled followers of Jesus and the blessed hope of every believer since the time of the Apostles. The rapture and the second coming teachings are so crucial that Paul gave them the highest priority. Paul stayed three months with new converts in Thessalonica, and sometime after leaving, he wrote back to them and said that they knew perfectly well about the coming of the Lord and our gathering together to him.

Of all the things Paul could have taught new believers, he ensured that they understood the teaching of the rapture and the difference between believers and the ungodly. Paul said sudden destruction would come upon them, the ungodly, but added, "that Day," the Day of the Lord, a time of judgment and wrath, would not come upon the followers of Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

Let's read portions from Paul's letters to the believers in Philippi, Corinth, and Thessalonica to see the rapture and resurrection of the church.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep [have died] in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [harpazo] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

We just read 1 Thessalonians 4:17, which said those who died and those who are alive "in Christ" would be "caught up," which is the Greek word "harpazo," which means to seize, catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force). In the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, the Greek word harpazo got translated as **rapturo**; that is where we got the word "rapture." So, when Jesus returns in the rapture, he will snatch away his people, the bride.

Biblical Precedence

The idea of God snatching his people to heaven is not new; it has happened in the past. What is unique and different about the rapture is the number of people taken up from Earth to Heaven. The rapture is not just one person but the removal of all Spirit-filled believers in a moment, the twinkling of the eye. Let's look at the previous raptures that have happened.

Enoch

The first incident was before Noah's flood, just seven generations from Adam that was Enoch, the first person raptured to heaven, and he was also the first to prophesy about the second coming of Christ to judge the world.

Genesis 5:21-24 After he begot Methuselah, **Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So, all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And, Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.**

Hebrews 11:5 **By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him";** for before **he was taken** he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Jude 1:14-15 Now **Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."**

Elijah

Another example is Elijah, and somehow all the sons of the prophets knew that God would snatch him away suddenly, so having advance warning of a rapture event is not new. Like Elijah's case, all those in the prophetic community watch for the rapture while the world is oblivious and unconcerned.



2 Kings 2:3 **Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!"**

2 Kings 2:5 **Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" So he answered, "Yes, I know; keep silent!"**

Elijah was walking with his disciple Elisha who asked to receive a double portion of Elijah's prophetic anointing when he left. As Elijah and Elisha were walking together, a chariot of fire with horses of fire separated them and snatched Elijah away to heaven.

2 Kings 2:10-11 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, **if you see me when I am taken from you**, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, **that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.**

Philip

Next, the evangelist Philip was water baptizing a new convert in a river when the Holy Spirit "harpazo" snatched him away to another place.



Acts 8:38-40 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now **when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away**, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. **But Philip was found at Azotus.** And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Paul

Another example is the apostle Paul recounted an experience where he was "harpazo" snatched up to the heavenly Paradise and heard inexpressible words.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago **whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know**, God knows such a one was **caught up to the third heaven.** And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows how he was **caught up into Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, **which it is not lawful for a man to utter.**

Christ was the first fruit, meaning the first to rise from the dead. Then at the rapture, the dead and the living in Christ will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and transformed with a new resurrected eternal body.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 But now **Christ** is risen from the dead, and has become **the firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. 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 all shall be made alive. **But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.**

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also **eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,** according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that **we who are alive** and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede **those who are asleep [dead]**. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. **And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [harpazo] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Appearances

Part of the confusion regarding the rapture is because Jesus will make multiple appearances when he returns. He will come secretly like a thief in the clouds for his church; this is his first appearance. Seven years later, Jesus will come with an army of saints behind him, and every eye will see him (*Jude 1:14, 15*). He will destroy the armies of the world along with the antichrist (*Revelation 19:11-21*). Then Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives, which will split apart, creating a valley (*Zechariah 14:2-4*). Then Jesus will enter the eastern gate to

Jerusalem (*Ezekiel 43:1-4, 44:1-2*) and set up his glorious throne (*Matthew 25:31-46*) in the valley of Jehosaphat (*Joel 3:2*) to judge the sheep and goat nations, and this is his second appearance when he returns. The terminology used to separate these appearances is the Rapture and the Second Coming, the rapture is for the church, and the second coming is to save Israel and judge the world.

The Rapture / Church	Second Coming / Israel
Believers disappear	Christ appears
Unseen – like a thief	Every eye sees Him
Rapture, over in a moment,	Christ wars & judges nations
Meet the Lord in air	Rules on earth 1,000 years
Christ comes for his Bride	Christ returns with His Bride
Ushers in the tribulation	Ushers in the Millennium
Imminent – no warnings	Preceded by many signs
Message of comfort	Message of judgment
Program for the church	Program for Israel & nations
New Testament only	From Genesis to Revelation
Believers are judged	Nations & Israel are judged
Leaves creation unchanged	Creation is changed
Nations are unaffected	The nations are judged
Israel's covenants unfulfilled	All Israel's covenants fulfilled
No effect on sin in the world	Sin is judged, destroyed
Before the day of wrath	Christ executes God's wrath
Is for believers only	Affects everyone on earth

End Times - Time Line

Time	Event	Description
Pre-tribulation	Signs	Signs for coming tribulation, Matt 24, Lk 13, 21, Mk 13
?	Rapture	Rapture, judgment seat of Christ 1 Thess. 4:16, 2 Cor 5:10
Gap		Unknown time between rapture and the tribulation
?	Gog Magog	Unknown when this battle begins Ezekiel 38, 39
7 Year Trib Begins	Covenant Confirmed	Israel confirms 7-year covenant with the antichrist, Tribulation begins antichrist revealed Daniel 9:27
	7 Seals	7 judgments released, 4 horsemen, antichrist, war, famine, ¼ people die, Revelation 6:1 to 8:1
	2 Witnesses	Two Jewish Witnesses confront the nations for 3 ½ years, martyred by antichrist, resurrected in 3 ½ days Rev 11
	144,000 Jews	12,000 Jews from each of the 12 tribes of Israel are sealed and protected, Revelation 7:1-8
Mid tribulation 3 ½ Years	Antichrist Power	Satan, 10 Kings give power to antichrist, he has power for 3 ½ years to kill the saints, commits abomination of desolation, declares himself god, demands worship Rev 13
	Martyrs	Innumerable number refuse to worship image of the antichrist, or take his mark and die as martyrs Rev 7:9-17
	7 Trumpets	7 judgments released, 1/3 plants, fish, people die, water poisoned, demons released from pit of hell Rev 8:7 to 10:7
	7 Bowls	7 judgments released, sores those with mark, sea life dies, rivers & springs turn to blood, Armageddon, Rev 16
Post-tribulation	2 nd Coming	Jerusalem attacked Luke 21:24, Zech 14:2 Christ appears Israel repents is saved Zech 12:8-10, Rom 11:26-27
	Armageddon	Every eye sees Jesus & saints behind him, destroys armies of the nations, antichrist & false prophet cast into Lake of Fire Rev 19:11-21 Satan bound 1,000 years Rev 20:1-3
	Mt. of Olives	Jesus descends, his feet touch the Mount of Olives which splits the mountain creating a valley Zechariah 14:4
	Eastern Gate	Jesus enters Eastern Gate of Jerusalem Ezekiel 44:2
	Judgment	Angels gather nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, Joel 3 Jesus on throne of glory, separates sheep from goats, goats go to Hell, sheep to Millennial kingdom Matt 25:31-46
1 st Resurrection		Old Testament saints & tribulation martyrs resurrected & receive rewards, Marriage supper of the Lamb Rev 19:7
Gap	Transition	75 days between 2nd coming & Millennium, Dan 12:11-12
Millennium	Kingdom Rule	Christ rules from Jerusalem, Jewish temple, worship, people live hundreds of years, earth restored, animals tame Isa 2:14, 11:6-12, 19:19-24, 35, 65:17-25, Ezekiel 40-48
	Gog Magog	Satan released, final battle, time is no more Rev 20:8-10
Eternity	White Throne	Whoever's name is not in the book of life is judged sent to the Lake of Fire, which is the Second Death Rev 20:11-15

When will it happen?

There are different opinions about when the rapture happens and who gets raptured. And in this case, what a person believes about the rapture can significantly affect their attitudes and lifestyle. Since the bride and the rapture are tied together, we will attempt to clarify both issues.

There are many, and sometimes contentious, opinions of when the rapture will take place. Jesus said he didn't know, the angels don't know, and no man knows the specific day or hour of the rapture, but only the Heavenly Father knows. However, we can discern the signs of the times and the seasons to see the stage getting set up for all the end times prophecies to have potential for their fulfillment.

Mark 13:28-32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, **you know that summer is near.** "So, you also, **when you see these things happening, know that it is near at the doors!** "Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.** "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

Matthew 16:2-3 [Jesus' speaking] He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; "and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' **Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.**

1 Thessalonians 5:1 But **concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.**

The fact that Jesus said nobody knows the day or hour is called the doctrine of imminence. There are no warning signs for the rapture. Jesus will come like a thief in the night, unannounced, by surprise. It will happen so fast that no one sees it, like a flash of lightning; in a

moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and the bride of Christ is gone.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ...

Matthew 24:27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

At any moment

The viewpoint that considers imminency is called the pre-tribulation rapture. This viewpoint agrees with Jesus' words that no man knows the day or hour. After the rapture, and once the tribulation period begins, there is a fixed time frame for things to happen. The time the rapture happens is unknown, and the period between the rapture and when the tribulation starts is unknown.

The tribulation begins with the confirmation of a seven-year covenant of peace between the antichrist and the nation of Israel (*Daniel 9:27*). Once that covenant is in force, we know the time frames and order of events. Those who know the scriptures know that once the tribulation begins, 3 1/2 years later, the antichrist enters the temple and declares himself to be god, and 3 1/2 years after that, Jesus returns to make war and judge the nations. There are no surprises; even the ungodly will know to hide in caves, rocks, and mountains in the great day of wrath when Jesus appears.

Daniel 9:26-27 And the people of the prince who is to come [antichrist] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [7 years]; But in the middle of the week [3 ½ years], He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."

Matthew 24:15, 21 [Jesus' speaking] "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), ... "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Revelation 6:15-17 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Delivered from Wrath

The tribulation period, all seven years, is full of the wrath and judgments of God. The second half, in particular, will be the worst time of suffering in human history, culminating with the return of Christ to tread the winepress of God's wrath. Jesus said it would be like the days of Noah and Lot, which demonstrated a pattern of God protecting or removing the righteous when his judgment destroys the wicked.

Luke 17:26-29 "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. "Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

God did not spare the angels who sinned, and he did not spare the ancient pre-flood world of Noah. But God saved righteous Noah and his family inside the Ark while bringing a flood of judgment on the ungodly.

2 Peter 2:4-5 For if **God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;**

Hebrews 11:7 **By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.**

The premise that God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked was the basis of Abraham's intercession for Lot before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 18:23-25 And Abraham came near and said, **"Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"** "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it?" **"Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"**

2 Peter 2:6-9 ... **and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,**

Those who have been born again and put their trust in Christ for salvation will not be subject to God's wrath at the second coming of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

God has promised all those who will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution. Since the first disciples, the true church has always had martyrs for the faith, and there are more today than ever, especially under Islamic, Hindu, and Communist regimes.

However, American and Western "Christians" have been the exception to the rule of persecution, we have not suffered severe persecution, but that may end soon. Our version of American Christianity will come to a time of testing by fire, and it's not a question of "if" but "when." We know that all the world's inhabitants will worship the antichrist or have their heads chopped off, and we are heading rapidly in that direction; the antichrist beast system is steadily forming before our eyes.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Matthew 24:9-10 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

Revelation 13:15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped

the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. *And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

The difference between wrath and persecution is that persecution is from man and done with cruelty and hatred, but only has temporary effects on the earth. The wrath from God can be corrective and redeeming if it produces repentance.

Hebrews 12:4-8 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." ***If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.****

But when the unrepentant and hard-hearted people reject repeated attempts by God to offer them repentance and salvation, they will face the judgment of abandonment, and the full wrath of God will smash them with an immeasurable impact both now and in eternity. Persecution may include physical death, but God's wrath does not end with physical death but sends the body and soul to Hell and the Lake of Fire in the eternal second death.

Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Luke 20:17-18 [Jesus' speaking] Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone'? ***Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."***

Revelation 20:13-14 *The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades [Hell] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

As we said, God has not destined us for wrath. The bride of Christ will not be beaten and bloodied by God's wrath in preparation for the wedding day, but she will most likely suffer persecution at the hands of cruel men before that day arrives.

In this study, we present the pre-tribulation view of the rapture because we believe it is correct. We can agree to disagree with those who don't see the rapture the same way as us as long as we agree with them on the essential doctrines of salvation. We will avoid a long, detailed study with every angle and view of the rapture scenarios. But we will briefly summarize the most popular rapture theories according to the setting in their time periods. Be it unto you according to your faith (*Matthew 9:29*).

Pre- trib going to fly

Those looking for the pre-tribulation rapture expect Christ to come like a thief in the night, in secret, only seen by those who look for him. There will be no warning, and it can happen at any time. In a moment, a complete transformation happens. The physical bodies change into their eternal resurrection bodies as they are caught up to the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. **They are watching and praying and preparing to fly.**

Mid trib going to die

Some believe Jesus will come in the middle of the seven-year tribulation to rapture them away. What happens in the middle of the tribulation? The antichrist commits the abomination of desolation; he goes into the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and declares that he is god. Satan and the kings of the earth give him their power, and God allows him to have authority for 3 1/2 years to kill the saints (*Revelation 13:4-7, 15*).

So, when the antichrist is killing believers for refusing to worship his image and for their faith in Jesus, they hope to be raptured. Maybe they confuse the martyrs' resurrection with the church's rapture. **Those living in the middle of the tribulation will prepare to die.**

Pre-wrath will hide

Some teach a pre-wrath rapture, which assumes that God removes his people after the first 3 1/2 years but before the end of the seventh year when Jesus brings the full wrath of God to the ungodly nations. They say pre-wrath, but in reality, all seven years of the tribulation experience intensifying wrath, which escalates until it reaches the pinnacle of devastation and death when Jesus appears. The ungodly living at that time will cry out to the mountains to cover them and hide in the caves and rocks to escape the wrath of the Lamb, Christ. They are preppers and think they will survive the tribulation by going off-grid, being self-sufficient, and hiding. They may escape the antichrist, but they cannot escape from Jesus Christ. **They are preparing to hide.**

Post trib going to Fry

And finally, some hold to a post-tribulation rapture that believes Jesus comes for his people after the tribulation period. There are multiple views within this camp. Some think they can be preppers and survive. Others believe the tribulation has already happened, or we are experiencing it now. Some say they must conquer and "Christianize" the world before Jesus returns.

There will be three groups of survivors from the great tribulation: the Jews and the sheep and goat nations. The surviving Jews and the sheep, believers who helped the Jews, will enter the Millennial kingdom and repopulate the Earth (*Matthew 25:31-46*). The ungodly goats will be destroyed by the appearance of Christ when he comes to judge, wage war, and trample the ungodly in the winepress of God's wrath and send them to Hell. **They are preparing to fry.**

*2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 ... since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us **when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day**, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.*

The source for some of the previous viewpoints may be false teachings like replacement theology, amillennialism, Preterism, Kingdom Now, New Apostolic Reformation, etc., which are topics for a different study. When asked about the end times, the first thing Jesus warned about was deception.

Who is Raptured?

One thing we notice about Paul's letter to the Ephesians is that Jesus will sanctify, cleanse, wash, and remove every spot, wrinkle, and blemish to present to himself a glorious church. Does that mean that Jesus does everything and we do nothing? Can we live in sin like the ungodly and still be raptured? Some say the rapture is purely by grace alone and that you can't do anything of yourself to be rapture worthy, or else you are trying to earn salvation by works.

Indeed, only by God's sovereign grace and mercy through Christ alone does anyone hope to stand blameless before God regarding salvation. But regarding rewards, God judges according to works, and faith without works is dead (*James 2:17-18*). Otherwise, why all the warnings from Jesus and the apostles if we have no responsibilities? What if people set the rapture bar too low by abolishing all standards and accountability? Wouldn't that quench the fear of God and open the door to sin? Why gamble with your soul by living a lukewarm, compromised life? What on earth is worth missing the rapture? There are eternal consequences at stake.

The cure for lukewarmness is persecution or being filled with the fiery zeal of the Holy Spirit. And we must submit to the Holy Spirit to sanctify our spiritual wedding garments to remove every spot of the fleshly lust, every wrinkle of old dead religion, and every blemish in our character to walk worthy of Christ to the best of our ability.

Revelation 3:15-18 [Jesus to the Laodicean church]"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

In short, shouldn't the bride love her bridegroom above all others? Will Jesus marry a harlot??? Those who want to be the bride of Christ should try to love Jesus with all their heart.

Isaiah 62:5 For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him," 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

Will all professing Christians be raptured? For some people that's like asking, how deep can I go into sin and still be saved? Or, what are the bare minimum requirements to go up in the rapture? It is far better to look at it from the opposite direction of considering this world's pleasures as dung compared to the eternal riches we gain by knowing Christ. We should be motivated to run after Christ with everything within us so we win the race and prize of being Christ's bride.

Hebrews 11:24-26 **By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.**

Philippians 3:7-12 **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 **Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 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.**

In Paul's analogy of running the race, he speaks of the discipline of an athlete to run a race. The athlete dedicates their entire life to winning their race, diet, exercise, routines, and schedules for months and years focused on the big race to win the gold medal. The race is a sprint to the finish line, but if the athlete steps out of their lane, they disqualify themselves! What a gut-wrenching disappointment! The disappointment of being disqualified and missing the rapture would be magnitudes worse than anything we can imagine! That might sound frightening, and it should, because the fear or reverence for God keeps us from sinning, purifies our life, and keeps us in our lane.



***2 Corinthians 7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

***Philippians 2:12-16** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.*

"In Christ"

One aspect of Paul's first letter to those in Thessalonica that often gets no consideration is the phrase "in Christ." The bride of Christ will be found "in Christ" when he returns, both those currently alive and those who have died in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep **in Jesus**. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

There is symbolism throughout the Bible that demonstrates that our salvation comes by being "in Christ." Noah's family got saved by getting into the ark, symbolic of being in Christ. Israel got saved in Egypt by putting the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorpost and staying inside their homes when the death angel passed over them, which points to Christ our Passover. Israel had cities of refuge for an innocent man to flee from the avenger of blood, and as long as he stayed in the city of refuge, he was safe; Jesus is our city of refuge.

Over and over, every page of the Bible has symbolism of Jesus, our stronghold, fortress, tabernacle, and dwelling place. Jesus said that he is the vine and we are the branches; everyone who abides in him will have his life flowing through them, and everyone that gets cut off from him will be gathered together and thrown into Hell's fire.

John 15:1-9 [Jesus' speaking] **"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide**

in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

We will list a few verses that speak of the blessings of abiding in Christ, which include redemption, no condemnation, life, the love of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and good fruit.

Romans 3:24 ... being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Calvinist Rapture

Some teachings may undermine the work of the Holy Spirit to prepare people for the rapture. The Calvinist teaching of once saved, always saved may lull people to sleep, or worse, it may encourage people to indulge in sin, thinking they cannot lose their salvation. One YouTube Calvinist preacher said that someone could be watching porn and smoking crack when Jesus comes, and they will go up in the rapture. How many viewers struggling with those sins felt encouraged to

continue in their addictions because of his statement? Are there no standards???

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

1 Corinthians 15:32-34 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

The once-saved, always-saved teachers say that ALL Christians will get raptured, which can give a false sense of security and sways their interpretation of the end times. Because they say all Christians get raptured, that will leave a void with zero Christians on the Earth. So, they must explain where the great multitudes of Christian martyrs will come from during the tribulation period (*Revelation 7:9-14*). As a result, they predict the most significant revival of all times, which is not a literal interpretation of the scriptures but a theory based on a series of assumptions to protect their teaching. They will not consider the possibility of lukewarm compromised “Christians” being vomited out of the Lord’s mouth and left behind (*Revelation 3:16*).

The exception for revival in the tribulation would be with the Jews, who will have a national turning to Christ at the second coming. Their revival begins with 144,000 from the 12 tribes and one third of the nation of Israel getting saved at the end of the tribulation. During the tribulation, two-thirds of the Jews will die (*Zechariah 13:8*), more than during the holocaust, and many will likely die as martyrs for their faith, possibly as Messianic Jews (*Revelation 15:3*). But among the Gentiles, there is nothing recorded in scriptures about a tribulation revival, those are baseless assumptions.

Easy Belief-ism

Many Evangelists and Pastors will ask people to repeat a sinner's prayer, which is not in the Bible and is not a scriptural precept. Then they tell those who repeated the words of a one-minute scripted prayer that they have a get out of Hell pass and are eternally saved and rapture bound. That type of salvation has been called cheap grace or easy belief-ism and is a product of the American culture, a mass production assembly line of salvation.

This style of evangelism began in the 1800s and became popularized by Billy Graham and other television evangelists. Many have sincerely gotten saved after saying the sinner's prayer, but the prayer did not save them; faith in Jesus did. But, multitudes that repeat the prayer and continue to live like the Devil are on their way to Hell. Jesus never said to have people repeat a sinner's prayer. We should not give anyone false assurances of salvation or the rapture; that assurance can only come from God after they are born again. Jesus said to make disciples, teach, and baptize (*Matthew 28:19-20*), and we should mentor our disciples to be disciple makers. If they are born again, walking in the Spirit, and love God they can have confidence that God will present them faultless with exceeding joy to Christ at the rapture.

Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

Walk worthy

When Jesus warned about the end times, he said to watch and pray to be "counted worthy" to escape the tribulation and to stand before the Son of Man. Here's a question, did you have to be counted worthy to receive salvation? No! We can't save ourselves; we can only receive salvation by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf. But Jesus said we must pray, watch, and be worthy to escape the tribulation and stand in his presence. We should watch for the end time signs and be watchful over our spiritual lives. In all his epistles, Paul urged the churches to walk worthy of the Lord, which should

come naturally to anyone in first love with Jesus.

Luke 21:35-36 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. **"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."**

Ephesians 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, **beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,**

Colossians 1:9-10 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, **and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.**

2 Thessalonians 1:9-11 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, **when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,**

Move with fear

Noah moved with fear to prepare the ark to save his family from the flood. As far as we know, it took 120 years to build the ark, and Noah preached righteousness that whole time, but only his family listened and obeyed.

Hebrews 11:7 *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*

Philippians 2:12 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

2 Corinthians 7:1 *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

We are facing a worse time than Noah did, and Jesus said it would be the worst time in human history. We know billions of people will die horrible deaths from starvation, plagues, war, and being tormented by demons. We must be watchmen to warn others of what's coming and get them into the ark of salvation, Christ.

One of the best tools of evangelism is the teaching of the end times and the second coming of Christ. Many people are seeing how the world is going crazy, and they want to know what is going on. When we identify how current events are coming into alignment with the scriptures, it validates the accuracy of the Bible, answers their questions, and points them to Christ. We know that only God can open the eyes of the heart and change people's lives, but we can do our part by being watchmen and warn them about what is coming.

Matthew 24

The original writings of the Bible had no chapters and verses; chapter divisions started in the 1200s, and the first Bible printed with chapters and verses was the Geneva Bible in 1560. So, passages like the Olivet discourse, when Jesus prophesied about the end times, got cut into two chapters instead of one, dividing the message into two parts, part one in Matthew 24 and part two in chapter 25. Therefore, we must examine Matthew 24 to understand Jesus' prophesies about the end

times signs, events, and prophetic parables.

When some people read Matthew 24 and 25, they fail to see Israel in the tribulation period and only see the church. That distinction is essential to understand end times prophecy. The viewpoint that sees only the church stems from replacement theology, the erroneous teaching that says the church has replaced Israel as God's covenant people. But nothing could be further from the truth. God will never break his covenant with Israel; as long as the sun, moon, and stars are in the sky, Israel will be God's people.

***Psalms 89:34-36** My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.*

***Jeremiah 31:33-37** "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. ... This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar the LORD Almighty is his name: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me."*

In reality, the reverse is true with Matthew 24; we see Israel only because the church is raptured before the beginning of the tribulation and does not appear in tribulation narratives.

Also, many people are unaware that Jesus will make multiple appearances when he returns. First, he comes in the clouds for his **church at the rapture**. Then at the end of the tribulation, he comes to save **Israel at the second coming** and destroys the armies surrounding Jerusalem. His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Then he will enter the eastern gate to Jerusalem and later judge the nations in the Valley of Decision, aka the Valley of Jehosaphat near Jerusalem.

We should also keep in mind that when Jesus spoke to his disciples, they would have seen everything from a purely Jewish perspective; they knew nothing about the church or the rapture because those were hidden mysteries for at least another decade (*Ephesians 5:32*). Believe it or not Jesus was not a Christian, he never went to church or read a New Testament Bible, Jesus was Jewish and came for the Jews (*Matthew 15:24*). The times Jesus spoke about the great tribulation, the abomination of desolation, and the second coming, are not for the church; the church is caught up to heaven before those events happen. Matthew 24 & 25 are warnings and instructions to help the remnant of Jews to survive the great tribulation.

Jesus was prophesying about the great tribulation, or as the Old Testament prophets called it, "the day of the Lord." That is a time of God's judgments and wrath, and there are eight times more prophecies about the Day of the Lord than when Jesus came the first time to take away our sins. Let's read Matthew 24 and highlight a few things that pertain to the Jews and the great tribulation. Verses 4 to 14 are general signs that precede and set the stage for the approaching tribulation period. These signs, like birth pains, will grow in intensity and frequency and include deceptions, wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes.

Matthew 24:4 14 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows [birth pains].

This part of the prophecy speaks about the beginning of the tribulation from verses 9 to 15 and immediately speaks about martyrdom, false prophets, and the great apostasy.

Matthew 24:9-15 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations

for My name's sake. "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. **"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.** "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

This part of the prophecy speaks about when the antichrist commits the abomination of desolation, which takes place in the middle of the great tribulation. in a rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

Matthew 24:15-16 "Therefore when you see the **'abomination of desolation,'** spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the **holy place**" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in **Judea** flee to the mountains.

The second three and a half years are called the great tribulation and will be the worst time of suffering and torment in human history. Very few people will survive that time, and billions will die.

Matthew 24:20-22 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the **Sabbath.** "For then there will be **great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.** "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Jesus personally comes for His bride and secretly takes her away at the rapture like a thief in the night. But at the second coming, every eye sees Jesus as the Son of Man in the clouds with power and great glory to save Israel, make war, and destroy the armies that came against Jerusalem. At the second coming, Jesus sends angels to gather His elect, Israel, and believing survivors of the Gentiles, the sheep. Then Jesus will sit on the throne of glory to judge the sheep and goat nations (*Matthew 25:31-32*).

Luke 21:20-27 "But when you see **Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.** "Then let those

who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. "For these are **the days of vengeance,** that all things which are written may be fulfilled. " For there will be **great distress** in the land and **wrath** upon this people. "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And **Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth **distress of nations,** with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, **for the powers of heaven will be shaken.** "Then they will see the **Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.**

Matthew 24:29-31 "Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. "**Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven,** and then **all the tribes** of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man** coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. "And **He will send His angels** with a great sound of a trumpet, and **they will gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 25:31-32 "**When the Son of Man comes in His glory,** and all the holy angels with Him, then **He will sit on the throne of His glory.** "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

Joel 3:12-14 "**Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;** For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, the vats overflow- For their wickedness is great." **Multitudes, multitudes in the**

valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

Jesus stressed two warnings leading up to the tribulation, the first was to beware of deception, and the second, be ready, watch, and pray to be accounted worthy to escape what's coming.

Matthew 24:4-5 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, and will deceive many.'

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Matthew 24:44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

As mentioned, chapters and verses got added centuries later, but Matthew 24 and 25 were originally one speech. So, chapter 25 picks up where chapter 24 left off, speaking about the tribulation and second coming.

The 10 Virgins

We begin chapter 25 with the parable of the ten virgins, a familiar passage that most people read as the rapture. First, the narrative from the previous verses speaks about the great tribulation and the second coming, but let's ignore that for now and consider what the parable is saying.

If this story is about the rapture and the bride of Christ, it could read as follows; Jesus went to retrieve ten virgins who were supposed to marry Him. The first five virgins were the Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and the Calvary Chapelites, and they were wise. And then there were five foolish virgins, one Catholic, one Anglican, and another Presbyterian, and so forth. You get the idea.

The notion that there are ten brides of Christ is ridiculous on its face. Nowhere in history have ten women married one man at the same time

in the same wedding ceremony, ever! The symbolism of the ten virgins being the bride of Christ does not work, and the text does not refer to them as brides.

*Matthew 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to **ten virgins** who took their lamps and went out to meet the **bridegroom**.*

Other Translations

The King James is a good translation, but not accurate in some verses. Some of the earliest manuscripts were in Latin, Syriac, and Persic (*Aramaic*). All these preceded the King James Version and contradicted it in Matthew 25:1. Older translations end verse one with an ending that the King James Version excluded, saying "and the bride." Which would look like this:

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, **and went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride**.*

That gives an entirely different interpretation than the rapture narrative. That would eliminate the ten virgins from being the bride and make them bridesmaids instead. So, let's look at the versions which include the added phrase, then compare them with the other translations.

Latin Vulgate (This is the version that gave us the word rapture) tunc simile erit regnum caelorum decem virginibus quae accipientes lampadas suas exierunt obviam **sponso et sponsae (husband and wife)**

Wycliffe's Bible (John Wycliffe translated from the Latin Vulgate). Then the kingdom of heavens shall be like to ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went out to meet the **husband and the wife**;

Douay-Rheims (This was also taken from Latin Vulgate) Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the **bridegroom and the bride**.

International Standard Version

Foot note: 25:1 Other mss. read **the groom and the bride**

Contemporary English Version

Foot note: 25.1 to meet the groom: Some manuscripts add “**and the bride**”

Let's look at the definition of the word “virgin” in the original Greek to see who these girls were.

Strong's 3933 virgins = parthenos, par-then'-os; a maiden; by implication, an unmarried daughter: virgin.

The original word for virgin is an unmarried daughter. People married young back then and assumed that if a girl was a virgin, she was unmarried. The bridesmaids were young girls who were often relatives or close friends of the bride. **And once a girl was engaged to be married in that culture, she was considered married. That implies that these virgins were not engaged to the bridegroom and were young unmarried bridesmaids, not the bride.**

This premise was a factor in Jesus' birth with Joseph and Mary, who were engaged to be married. Their engagement was a pledge or marriage covenant and a binding legal contract. An engaged couple was considered husband and wife. So, when Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant and he never had sexual relations with her, Joseph contemplated divorcing Mary. But God intervened by sending an angel who admonished Joseph in a dream that what Mary conceived was from the Holy Spirit. So, Joseph refrained from divorcing Mary **BEFORE** they were married.

*Matthew 1:18-24 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother **Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.** But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "**Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to***

take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" which means, "God with us." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

These ten virgins were not engaged or pledged to be married to anyone, not the bridegroom (Jesus) or anyone else; otherwise, they would not call them virgins. They were attending as guests to a wedding in the role of relatives and friends of the bride, aka bridesmaids. Also, note that **the ten virgins are never in any translation of the Bible called the bride.** Let's read the translations that refer to the virgins as bridesmaids.

God's Word Translation

"When the end comes, the kingdom of heaven will be like ten **bridesmaids**. They took their oil lamps and went to meet the groom.

Weymouth New Testament

Then will the Kingdom of the Heavens be found to be like ten **bridesmaids** who took their torches and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Common English Bible

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten young **bridesmaids** who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom.

New Century Version

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten **bridesmaids** who took their lamps and went to wait for the bridegroom.

New International Reader Version

"Here is what the kingdom of heaven will be like at that time. Ten **bridesmaids** took their lamps and went out to meet the groom.

New Living Translation

“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten **bridesmaids** who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Bible in Basic English

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins, the **friends of the bride**, who took their lights, and went out with the purpose of meeting the husband.

Good News Translation

“At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like this. Once there were ten **young women** who took their oil lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

The Scriptures (ISR 1998)

“Then the reign of the heavens shall be compared to ten **maidens** who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Revised Standard Version

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten **maidens** who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

New Revised Standard Version

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten **bridesmaids** took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Complete Jewish Bible

"The Kingdom of Heaven at that time will be like ten **bridesmaids** who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom.

One Bride

The bride of Christ is one, not ten, as shown directly and in typology by the scriptures.

*Ephesians 4:3-4 ... endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. **There is one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called in **one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above***

all, and through all, and in you all.

*1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, **but one receives the prize**? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.*

If we look at virgins as symbolisms or types, Solomon had 1,000 women in his harem, and he had **virgins without a number**, but there was only **one bride**. Many people will attend the marriage supper of the lamb, queens, concubines, the patriarchs and virgins, Old Testament saints and martyrs, but there will be only **one bride**.

*Song 6:8 There are **sixty queens and eighty concubines**, and **virgins without number**. My dove, my perfect one, is the **only one, the only one of her mother the favorite of the one** who bore her. The daughters saw her and called her blessed, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*

*Psalm 45:13-15 The **royal daughter** is all glorious within the palace; Her clothing is woven with gold. **She shall be brought to the King** in robes of many colors; **The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You**. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; **They shall enter the King's palace**. [for the marriage feast]*

Asleep at Midnight

Let's look at the ten virgins again, and the first thing we notice is there are five wise and five foolish. But what are they all doing? **Slumbering and sleeping at midnight**. Is midnight speaking of the middle of the tribulation when the multitude of martyrs are populating heaven?



*Matthew 25:2-5 "Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, "but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. "But while the bridegroom was delayed, **they all***

slumbered and slept. "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'

That verse alone should prove that they are not the bride of Christ. All the warnings to the bride say, do not sleep, watch and pray, be children of the day or the light, and we are not of the darkness or the night.



1 Thessalonians 5:4-7 But **you, brethren, are not in darkness,** so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.** Therefore, **let us not sleep,** as others do, **but let us watch** and be sober. **For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.**

Romans 13:11-14 And do this, knowing the time, **that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;** for now **our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.** The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us **put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day,** not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Isaiah 29:9-10 Pause and wonder! **Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the LORD has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.**

They arose and trimmed or lit their lamps, and again they were all wrong because believers are supposed to keep their lamps burning all the time and should never let them go out.

Matthew 25:7 "Then all those virgins **arose and trimmed their lamps.**

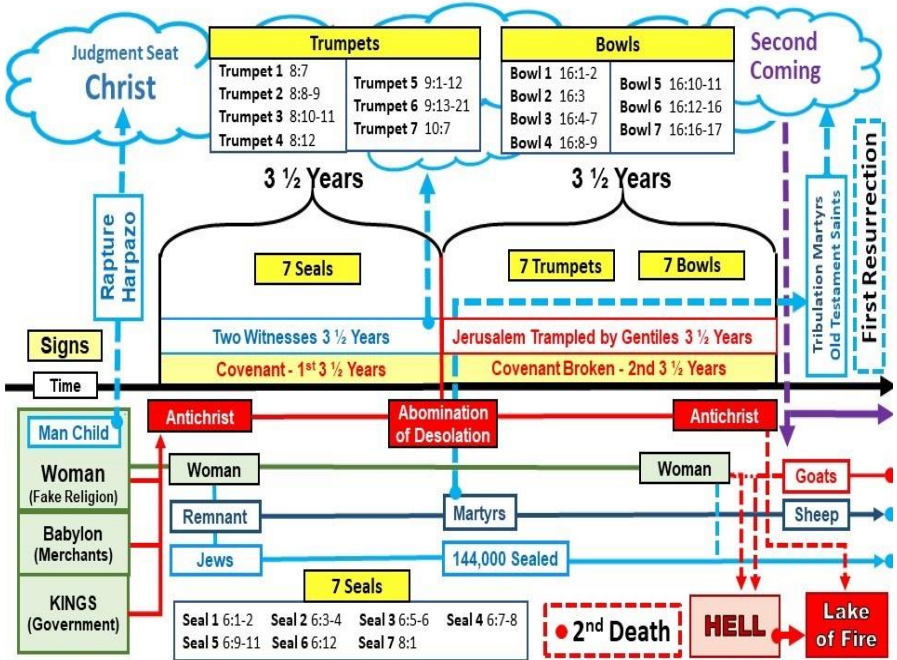
*Exodus 27:20 "And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you **pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually.***

*Matthew 5:14-16 "**You are the light of the world.** A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "**Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light so shine before men,** that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Several things you'll notice about the following verses, Jesus says when the **master returns from the wedding**. He does not refer to himself as the bridegroom with this group of people because he is not their bridegroom but their master and is returning **after the wedding**. He also mentions three watches of the night, which may imply the rapture is the **first watch**, and he may come for them in the **second watch**, at the middle of the tribulation, or the **third watch** at the end of the tribulation. The second and third watches include resurrections of the two witnesses, tribulation martyrs, and the Old Testament saints. Jesus says he will have them sit down to eat, which implies they will feast at the marriage supper of the lamb. But the main emphasis here is to watch, be awake, and open the door immediately. A sleeping watchman is worthless and gets judged for not seeing the thief (Jesus) and not warning and waking others (*Ezekiel 33:1-9*).

*Luke 12:35-40 "Let your waist be girded [be ready] and your lamps burning; "and you yourselves be like men who wait for their **master**, when he will **return from the wedding**, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. "**Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching.** Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. "And if he should come in the **second watch**, or come in the **third watch**, and find them so, blessed are those servants. "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour **the thief** would come, **he would have watched** and not allowed his house to be broken into. "Therefore, you also **be ready, for the Son of Man is***

coming at an hour you do not expect."



Next, we see that the five wise virgins had oil, and the five foolish had no oil. Oil represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The wise virgins are not the bride, but they have enough oil in their lamps to be bridesmaids or guests at the wedding feast. The wedding feast is only for the resurrected saints, and the ten virgins will join the feast only after dying for their faith in Jesus.

The foolish were void of the Spirit, without grace, and didn't know God. They attempted to buy oil in the middle of the night but were too late. The dispensation of grace ends when the church gets raptured, and there are no guarantees for last-minute conversions in the great tribulation. After the middle of the tribulation, you cannot buy or sell without the mark of the beast. At that time, if you seek to save your life by taking the mark of the beast (antichrist), you will lose your soul, but if you lose your life as a martyr for Jesus, you will save your soul.

Matthew 25:8-9 *And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 'But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'*

Luke 17:30-33 *"Even so will it be **in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.** "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise, the one who is in the field, **let him not turn back. "Remember Lot's wife. "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.***

Revelation 13:15-18 *He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak **and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.** He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, **and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast.***

Now we finally get to the purpose of this parable, and the wedding scenario was a vehicle to make a point about how we should live in expectation of standing before God in judgment, either for rewards or punishment. The wise were honored to attend the wedding feast and have eternal life. The foolish cried Lord, Lord, and they heard Jesus say I don't know you! The doors of salvation slammed in the face of the foolish virgins! That brings up another question, does it sound creditable that Jesus would be legally engaged to marry five brides he knew nothing about until the day they tried to crash his wedding?

Matthew 25:10-13 *"And while they went to buy, **the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us! "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.***

Matthew 7:21-23 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 'Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

Marriage Supper

Again, the King James Version translated Matthew 24:10 differently than virtually all the other translations. When the King James Version says those ready went to the wedding, the other translations say they went into the wedding banquet or feast, which gives a different meaning. However, bridesmaids can "go" to a wedding without getting married. But that verse speaks of the banquet that follows the wedding ceremony.



New International Version	wedding banquet
English Standard Version	marriage feast
Christian Standard Bible	wedding banquet
New American Standard 2020	wedding feast
New American Standard 1995	wedding feast
Legacy Standard Bible	wedding feast
New English Translation	wedding banquet
Revised Standard Version	marriage feast
American Standard Version	marriage feast
Youngs Literal Translation	marriage-feasts
Darby Translation	wedding feast
Hebrew Names Version	marriage feast
New Living Translation	marriage feast

The details of the marriage supper are uncertain, like the exact time it starts, whether it takes place in heaven, on earth, or both, and when it ends. Everything is subject to opinions and assumptions. But from what we know, it starts at some point after the rapture and may end sometime at the end of the 1000-year reign of Christ on Earth, the Millennium.

Those who will attend are all those who partake in the first resurrection, the church, two witnesses, tribulation martyrs, and Old Testament saints. The first resurrection is only for the saints considered blessed and holy. But no sinners will be there because they are not holy or blessed. There is no second resurrection; sinners go from physical death to the second death in hell.

Revelation 20:4-6 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for 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 who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

When Jesus told parables about the wedding feast, he referenced the kingdom of God or heaven. To the Old Testament Jews, that referred to the millennial kingdom where Jesus will rule and reign from Jerusalem for 1,000 years. But for the church, that speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem that comes down from God out of heaven. Somehow the church and the Old Testament saints combine with Christ to rule over the earth during the Millennial kingdom. God will reveal the details later.

Jesus explained the wedding feast in parables, so let's look at a couple of examples and think about the foolish virgins knocking at the door and getting kicked out.

*Matthew 8:11-12 [regarding a Roman Centurian] When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, **I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!**" And I say to you that **many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."***

*Matthew 19:27-29 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?" So, Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that **in the regeneration [Millennium], when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**" And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.*

*Luke 13:23-29 Then one said to Him, **"Lord, are there few who are saved?"** And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. "When **once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you,** where you are from," then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' "But He will say, **'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'**" **"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out."** **"They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.***

One thing we do know about the marriage supper of the Lamb is that it is the greatest blessing ever, and it will be a time of great rejoicing and filled with the most glorious worship in the presence of God. The

best news for us is that the church has the unspeakable honor of being the bride adorned for her husband, Christ.

Revelation 19:7-9 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.**" And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: **'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'**" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

Revelation 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

All those who enter the wedding feast must have a white garment, either as the bride at the rapture, the bridesmaids as martyrs from the tribulation, or as the guests, saints from the Old Testament.

Matthew 22:2, 10-13 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, "So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And **the wedding hall was filled with guests.** "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a **wedding garment.** "So, he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a **wedding garment?**' And he was speechless. "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Blessed are those who heed the call to the marriage supper. Unfortunately, not everyone who says Lord, Lord, will be taken in the rapture as the Bride of Christ. And all those who attend the marriage supper as bridesmaids have only one way to receive their wedding garments: by dying as martyrs during the great tribulation.

Revelation 6:9-11 *When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

Revelation 7:13-14 *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So, he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

The five wise virgins had enough oil to answer the call, lay down their life for Jesus, and receive a martyr's crown and white robe to enter the feast. While the foolish, Christian in name only, had no oil, grace, or hope of salvation. They will be turned away from the wedding feast and hear the terrifying words that will echo in their thoughts forever; I do not know you!

Matthew 25:10 *"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding [feast]; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'*

Context 10 Virgins

The theologians tell us the number one rule in interpretation is context. With that in mind, we will look at the verses that precede and follow the parable of the ten virgins. We'll start with Matthew 24, verses 44-51, where we read a parable about two kinds of servants that wait for their master's return. The parable ends with judgment, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, which would come at the second coming when Jesus judges the earth.

Matthew 24:44-51 "Therefore you also **be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.** "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.** "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. "**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 and at an hour that he is not aware of,** "**and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

The verses that immediately follow the parable of the ten virgins is the parable of the talents from Matthew 25, verses 14 to 30. This parable starts with a man on a long journey [Christ] and ends with his return [Second coming] to settle his accounts with his servants. This parable also ends in judgment with outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth. Are we starting to see a pattern?

Matthew 25:26 "But his lord answered and said to him, '**You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 'So, you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming ... 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'**

And the last parable of the same speech is of the judgment of the sheep and goats. That speaks of Jesus judging the nations at the second coming from the throne of his glory and rendering either a reward to the faithful who enter the Millennial kingdom and those who were unfaithful will face judgment and be cast into hell.

Matthew 25:31-46 " "**When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. "And He will set**

the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, **'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:** 'for I was **hungry** and you gave Me food; I was **thirsty** and you gave Me drink; I was a **stranger** and you took Me in; I was **naked** and you clothed I was **sick** and you visited Me; I was in **prison** and you came to Me.' "Then **the righteous** will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when ... 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these **My brethren**, you did it to Me.' "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, **'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:** ..."Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but **the righteous** into eternal life."

The parable of ten virgins, aka bridesmaids, is preceded by the prophecies about the great tribulation and sandwiched between three other parables about judgment at the second coming in the same speech. If context means anything, it seems the parable of the ten virgins is a warning about the tribulation period, that we should be watching and praying to be worthy to be raptured and escape the wrath that is coming.

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

1 John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Revelation of Jesus

Now we will look at the book of Revelation and read what Jesus had to say to the churches. Chapter one is about what John saw in his vision of Jesus, and each aspect of the description of Christ meets the needs of one of the churches. The message addresses the things that you have seen, that are, and that will come to pass shortly. So, the book of Revelation gets divided into past, present, and future.

*Revelation 1:1 & 19 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants **things which must shortly take place**. ... "Write the **things which you have seen**, and the **things which are**, and the **things which will take place after this**.*

Chapters two and three are messages to seven churches and the things that are present tense. Jesus starts each message by describing the part of the vision of himself from chapter one that addresses an issue in their church. Jesus tells them what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong, issues warnings, and offers rewards to those who overcome the challenges that face their church. Those who fail the challenge will be part of the Harlot, and those who overcome will be the Bride of Christ.

Many teach that these seven churches represent seven different dispensations of time, but the text says nothing about dispensations. That theory is an assumption or opinion. We can apply the messages by their relevance to our situation or any church. We shouldn't think they don't pertain to us because they are from another dispensation. Otherwise, you could get your scissors and cut out the parts that don't like. The Bible says man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. If Jesus condemns immorality, all believers of every age must repent, not just people in a particular dispensation of time.

Overcomers

When Jesus sent messages to the seven churches, he spoke directly to born-again believers, followers of Christ. He was not speaking to unbelievers in the world. Jesus gave each church advice and warnings and told them the rewards if they became overcomers and the consequences if they failed to act on his warnings. Jesus told them to

do specific works, not for salvation, but for rewards. Their faith in Jesus must pass through the fires of testing to be proven. Those who are faithful gain something more precious than gold that perishes. Those who are unfaithful suffer loss.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, **each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, **you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,**

We will not go through all seven churches but will only use the church of Thyatira as an example to demonstrate this. First, let's look at the description of the risen Christ from the vision of John.

Revelation 1:12-16 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and **His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace,** and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had **in His right hand seven stars,** out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

Old Testament	Jezebel - Ahab's Wife	Rev	Woman, Harlot Babylon & Tribulation
	Church of Thyatira		
2 Ki 9;22 2 Chron 21;13	Jezebel a whore, pagan gods witchcraft, human sacrifice, Depths of Satan, Rev 2;24	17;3-6	Babylon the great whore, sorcery, sitting on the back of the beast
1 Ki 6;30-32	Jezebel a princess & queen, and ruled over 2 nations, multitudes	17;15	Babylon sits on many waters, peoples, multitudes, nations
1 Ki 6;30-32	Jezebel was wealthy, her father & husband had wealthy kingdoms	17 & 18	Babylon wealthy, prosperity gospel, religion as big business
1 Ki 18:19 1 Ki 22:6 2 Chr 18:5	Jezebel feeds 400 false prophets (prophets of groves) at her table	2:20	That woman Jezebel false teachers, and prophets
1Ki 18:4 1Ki 19:1,2	Jezebel persecuted, killed true prophets, threatens to kill Elijah	12;17 13:7,18	Dragon persecutes the remnant of her seed, take mark of beast or die
2 Ki 9;7	Jezebel killed the true prophets of the Lord	17;6	Babylon drunk with blood of Martyrs
2 Ki 10;6-14	Elijah prophesied Jezebel's & and her children's death,	2;21-22	Jesus - Cast Jezebel into great tribulation & kill her children
1 Ki 21:17-24	(Mother of Harlots)	17:05	(Mother of Harlots)
2 Ki 9;30-37	Jezebel trampled to death by horses, dogs ate her & drank her blood	2;18 19;17-18	Jesus' feet of brass, comes on white horse, tramples nations, beast, birds, feast on dead bodies
1 Ki 17;1 1 Ki 18;1 Jas 5:17	Elijah called for a draught, lasted 3 ½ years (challenged prophets of Baal the pagan god of rain, fertility)	12;14	Woman 3 1/2 years in the wilderness during tribulation
2 Chron 18;7 1 Ki 19;1-2	Elijah & Micaiah only 2 prophets standing against Ahab & Jezebel	11;3-12	Two Witnesses, killed by dragon, lie dead 3.5 days, caught up to heaven
1 Ki 17;1, 18;38-40	Elijah calls a draught & called down fire, kills enemies, 2 Kings 1:10-12	11;3-12	The Two Witnesses, call down fire, call droughts, send plagues, kill enemies
1 Ki 19;18 Rom 11:3-6	A Remnant of 7,000 hidden & reserved unto God	12;17 7;4-8	Remnant of her seed, 144,000 sealed and protected by God
2 Ki 2;11 Rev 2:26,27	Elijah caught up (raptured) in a chariot of fire, those who overcome in Jezebel's church, rule nations with rod of iron	12:05	Man child came out of the woman caught up to God, will rule the nations with a rod of iron

Jesus reveals himself to the church of Thyatira as having eyes of fire and feet of brass. His eyes are like torches that shine in the depths of our souls, with nothing hidden and everything put through the test of fire. His feet were of brass speaks of judgment (*Micah 4:13, Rev 19:15*). He will trample his enemies under his feet of brass. Who are his enemies? All those who tolerate the spirit of Jezebel operating in the church and committing sexual immorality, giving false teachings, and practicing idolatry. The warning about feet of brass is perfect for the church with a Jezebel spirit because Jehu killed Jezebel by throwing her off a building and trampling her with horses (*2 Kings 9:30-33*).

Revelation 2:18-23 "And to the angel of the **church in Thyatira** write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow **that woman Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, to **teach and seduce** My servants to commit **sexual immorality** and eat things sacrificed to idols. "And I gave her time to repent of her **sexual immorality, and she did not repent.** "Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Regarding the preparation for Jesus' return, the warning and the reward for this type of church are crystal clear. Jesus warned his servants that those in bed with Jezebel would get cast into the great tribulation, and he would kill her children. Since Jesus mentions Jezebel's children and his servants, we see the harlot and the bride occupying the same space simultaneously, like the wheat and tares. And since she has children going into the great tribulation, that identifies Jezebel as a mother of harlots. Jesus promised those who would overcome Jezebel, saying he would give them the power to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Scriptures say Jesus will also rule the nations with a rod of iron (*Psalm 2:6-9*). So, the overcoming church, his bride, will rule and reign with Christ over the nations with a rod of

iron in the Millennial kingdom.

Revelation 19:15-16 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. **And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

Revelation 2:18-28 "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. "But hold fast what you have till I come. "And **he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron;** They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' as I also have received from My Father; "and I will give him the morning star.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, **and shall reign with Him a thousand years.**

Golden rapture ticket

Some say that ALL Christians have the golden ticket to getting raptured, BUT if any professing Christian were to miss the rapture, it would be because they never got adequately saved. That begs the question, are there any qualifying standards determining who gets raptured and who is left behind? The sinner's prayer or church membership is not the golden ticket to the rapture. We don't have any unconditional guarantees to get raptured or saved if we live in blatant unrepented sin. Jesus will not get eternally married to an adulterous, filthy, carnal, sin-loving harlot. Everything we receive from God is by faith, and faith works in a pure conscience (*1 Timothy 3:9*). Sin defiles our conscience and separates us from God. If we want to be ready for the return of Christ, we should purify our lives and love Jesus with all our hearts. And Jesus will sanctify us as his holy, spotless bride. God is faithful, so we should put all our trust in Him, and he will keep us from falling and present us faultless before his presence.

Jude 1:24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Tribulation Martyrs

If all Christians are the bride of Christ and get raptured, from where do the multitudes of the tribulation martyrs come? There is no scripture definitively stating where the tribulation martyrs come from. Some say that the tribulation martyrs come from the greatest soul-winning revival of all time during the worst apostasy, cruel suffering, death, destruction, and judgment of all time. An innumerable multitude of people become born again, only to die as martyrs in less than seven years. There is nothing impossible for God, and God could do it. But at such a critical juncture, a significant revival of this magnitude must have scriptures that describe this revival, right? Wrong! The scriptures make no mention of any revival during the tribulation. This revival is a theory based on assumptions.

The only revival shown in the scriptures during the tribulation will be with the nation of Israel. The entire population of Israel that survives the great tribulation will believe in Christ and get saved, which will be the most significant revival of all time! However, we have no evidence for multitudes of Gentiles getting saved in the tribulation, it could happen, but it is not in the scriptures. Let's follow the narrative of the revival theory that claims a tremendous unparalleled revival of souls will get saved in the tribulation period. They speculate that the 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes will become flaming evangelists. But the only salvation we see happen from the scripture is the salvation of the 144,000 Jews, servants of God, being sealed. There is no mention of them preaching or doing any outreach, so their becoming active in evangelism would be speculation.

Revelation 7:1-8 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were

sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.

In the previous verses, we saw the 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes sealed, but there was nothing about any gentile revival. When we read the verses that follow the sealing of the 144,000 Jews, we see the multitude of tribulation martyrs, but they were already in heaven, with no indication of how they got there, just a change from the scene on earth to the scene in heaven.

***Revelation 7:9-14** After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So, he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

The two witnesses have their ministry for 3 1/2 years but will not reconcile people with God but proclaim judgment. The two witnesses will destroy their enemies with fire, plagues, and droughts, and the world hates them.

Revelation 11:3-6 "And I will give power to my **two witnesses**, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days [3 ½ years], clothed in sackcloth." ... And if anyone wants to harm them, **fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies.** And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. **These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues,** as often as they desire.

Many speculate on who these two witnesses are, and the most popular candidates are Moses, Elijah, Enoch, and the apostle John. Most likely, they will come in the spirit of those prophets but are not the actual prophets themselves. Jesus said that Elijah had already come when speaking of John the Baptist (*Matthew 11:14*). Also, Elisha got a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and the same thing could happen to one of the witnesses (*2 Kings 2:9*). And Jesus also addressed the spirit of Jezebel that manifested in "that woman" in the church of Thyatira; it wasn't the actual Jezebel who came back (*Revelation 2:20*). And we see how the King of Tyre embodied the spirit of Lucifer (*Isaiah 14:12*).

In the same spirit as Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses will also manifest many of the miracles and plagues during the tribulation that Moses and Elijah performed in their ministries. The antichrist and the world will hate the two witnesses because of the death and destruction the witnesses inflict on them. Then the antichrist makes war with them and kills them. They leave the bodies of the witnesses in the street for three and a half days, and the people of the earth rejoice and send gifts to celebrate. So obviously, the world did not repent, and there was no revival among the Gentile nations.

Moses	Elijah	2 Witnesses	Trumpets & Bowls
Snakes	Prophecy Jezebel	Calls for plagues	That Old Serpent - Satan
Ex 7:8-13	1 Ki 21:17-24	Rev 11:6, 16:19	Rev 12:9
Water Blood	Water/Drought	Water to Blood	1/3 Fish-Ships-Water Blood
7:14-22	1 Ki 17:1-4	Rev 11:6	Rev 8:8-9, 16:3
	Drought 3.5 yrs.	Drought 3.5 yrs.	1/3 Waters-Poison Blood
	1 Ki 18:1-4, Jas 5:14	Rev 11:6	Rev 8:10-11, 16:4
Frogs	←-----→		3 Frog Spirits - false trinity
8:1-14			Rev 16:13
Flies	Elijah rebukes Ahaziah for seeking help		1/3 Plants-Hail-Fire-Blood Sores
8:20-30	from Baalzebub - lord of flies, 2 Ki 1:1-3		Rev 8:7
	Calls' fire-kills men	Calls' fire-kills men	Sun Scorches men
	1Ki 18:38, 2Ki 1:9-12	Rev 11:5	Rev 16:8
Boils	←-----→		Sores on those with mark
9:8-10			Rev 16:1-2
Hail	←-----→		100 Pound Hailstones
9:13-33			Rev 8:7, 11:19, 16:20
Locust	←-----→		Demonic Locust from pit
10:1-20			Rev 9:1-12, 16:10
Darkness	←-----→		Darkness on beast kingdom
10:21-29			Rev 8:12, 16:10-11
		↘-----→	1/3 Sun Darkened
			Rev 8:12, 16:8-9
Thunder -Hail	←-----→		Thunder Lightning Earthquake
Ex 9:23 24			Rev 16:17-19
Cross Red Sea	←-----→		River dried - Army to cross
Ex 14:16, 22	Plagues not on Israel	Ex 8:22, 9:4-6, 11:6-13	Rev 16:12 (Moses Red Sea crossing)
Moses Body	Raptured	Resurrected	Antichrist/false prophet cast
Jude 9	2 Ki 2:11	Rev 11:12	alive in Lake of Fire - Rev 19:20

Revelation 11:7-10 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and -a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ***And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another,*** because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

After three and a half days, God raises the two witnesses from the dead, and they ascend to heaven with the world watching. Then there is an earthquake One-tenth of Jerusalem gets destroyed, and seven thousand people die. There was a remnant who saw everything and were frightened, but they were a remnant, meaning a smaller crowd, not an unnumerable multitude. Second, they were afraid and gave glory to God, but that wasn't the Gentile nations. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, a remnant of Jews, gave glory to God. Does that mean they got saved? It's possible, but the verse doesn't specifically say it. And that is the closest thing to repentance in the tribulation verses in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 11:12-13 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, ***Come up hither. And they [the two witnesses] ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.***

Next, they cite the angel who preaches the everlasting gospel to the whole earth. The gospel that the angel preaches does not mention repentance or salvation but fear God, give him glory, judgment has come, worship him. But after the angel preaches, we see no results, feedback, or response to his preaching. There were no altar calls, sinner's prayers, or any indication of revival.

Revelation 14:6-13 Then **I saw another angel** flying in the midst of heaven, **having the everlasting gospel to preach** to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people saying with a loud voice, **"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."**

Immediately after the angel preached the everlasting gospel, two more angels followed him. One angel announced the fall of Babylon, and another warned not to take the mark of the beast. The next verse says blessed are those who die in the Lord, pointing to the martyrdom of those who refuse to get marked by the antichrist. But there is no mention of revival. It may be possible that people will heed the angels' warnings and choose to refuse the mark of the beast and become martyrs. But as far as their repentance and conversions to Christ, no details are given, so we can only speculate.

Revelation 14:6-13 And **another angel followed**, saying, **"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."** Then **a third angel followed** them, saying with a loud voice, **"If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. 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 ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."** **Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"** "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

Contrary to a revival, the people in the tribulation will refuse to repent from demon worship, murder, sorceries - drugs, sex, and thefts, and they blaspheme God.

Revelation 9:20-21 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.**

Revelation 16:9-11 And men were scorched with great heat, **and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.** Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. **They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.**

In conclusion, no scripture states there will be a revival where innumerable multitudes of Gentiles get saved in the tribulation. It could happen, but that is speculation. And the multitudes of Jews who get saved will live to populate the millennium and not die. But we know there will be a multitude of martyrs during the tribulation; however, the scriptures don't say precisely where they come from. All that to say, it is possible that many "Christians" could become bridesmaids because they missed the rapture and may become part of the multitude of martyrs or join ranks with the Harlot and the beast. So, how we live before God is crucial, and we should put no confidence in a golden rapture ticket and become lukewarm or backslidden. We should work out our salvation with fear and trembling and watch and pray to be accounted worthy to escape.

Rev 12 -Time Frame

Revelation 12 reveals four prophetic actors and brings them together on the same stage, then follows them as they interact at a critical juncture of time, and each actor has a crucial role in fulfilling end-time prophecies. These actors are the woman, the man child, the

dragon, and the remnant. So, let's read Revelation 12:1-5 in the Amplified Version to see what it says.

Revelation 12:1-2, 5 And a great sign [warning of an ominous and frightening FUTURE EVENT] appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child (the Messiah) and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. ... She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

The Amplified Bible clearly says that Revelation chapter 12 verse 1 warns of an ominous and frightening **FUTURE EVENT**. However, in the study notes of the same Bible, they ignore that it is a future event and teach that these were events from the past. Their study notes say these verses speak of the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob, his wife Rachael, the nation of Israel giving birth to Jesus, and the ascension of Jesus to heaven after his resurrection. So, they are saying these future prophetic events symbolize things that already happened in the past. What happened to their ominous future event? Is it acceptable to use historical events to interpret future prophecies and void their future application? Is this a series of prophetic future events or not? If we take scripture literally, no interpretation is required, the future is the future, and the past is the past. The Apostle John heard a voice like a trumpet that said everything that follows after Revelation chapter 4, verse 1, is a future event. So, who should we believe, John or the Amplified Bible study notes? My vote is for the Apostle John.

The Amplified translators are not alone; traditionally, this is how most Christians read this portion of the scriptures. But the truth does not come by tradition, consensus, or majority rule. Among other things, truth is the word of God rightly divided. We will go over the traditional viewpoints with all their objections. Again, remember that everything is a future event from Revelation, chapter 4, verse 1, until Revelation, chapter 22, verse 21. The Patriarchs, Mary, and Jesus' resurrection are all history and not the fulfillment of future prophetic events.

Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice **which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."** (Hereafter, KJV)

Revelation 12:1-5 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; **a woman** clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And **she being with child** cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold **a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.** And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And **she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up (harpazo) unto God, and to his throne.**

There is only one scenario of future events where the woman, man-child, Dragon, and remnant exist simultaneously, and that is by taking the text literally as written. The original text gives a specific time frame for all these characters to be together during the same time to fulfill these events. As we proceed, we will demonstrate that the scriptures describe the time frame as just before the rapture until the middle of the tribulation. That is the only time frame for these four characters to interact in Revelation chapter 12,

Let's start by summarizing Revelation chapter 12. The scene opens with a pregnant woman having birth pains, or the beginning of sorrows, pointing to a time before the rapture. The Dragon, aka Satan, wants to devour her child as soon as it is born. The description of the Dragon is the key to the time frame. The Dragon has 7 Heads and 10 Horns, a reference to the global government that Satan will delegate to the antichrist during the seven years of the tribulation period. The Dragon's tail will cast down 1/3 of the stars, speaking of a great falling away before the rapture. As soon as the woman gives birth, her child gets immediately raptured, harpazo, caught up to God and his throne,

followed by the beginning of the tribulation period when Satan and his angels get thrown out of heaven and cast to the earth. The woman flees to the wilderness, and the Dragon goes to war with the remnant who has the testimony of Jesus. Then in chapter 13, the Dragon gives the antichrist the kingdom with the seven heads, ten horns, and power and authority to make war and kill the saints, which is in the middle of the tribulation.

Revelation 12:3 ... and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

Revelation 13:1-7 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast [antichrist] rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

Revelation 17:12-13 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

So far, we have put forth the premise that the time frame of Revelation 12 is from pre-rapture until the middle of the tribulation, and now we will present our evidence to make that case.

Now let's go back to the beginning of the vision and look at the woman; she is pregnant and is experiencing intense birth pains. Jesus said that the signs of his coming and the end of the age would be like the birth pains of a pregnant woman, which increase in frequency and intensity until the child is born.

Revelation 12:1-5 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she

being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

*Matthew 24:3-8 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. **Tell us they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"** Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ, 'and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **All these are the beginning of birth pains.***

The term "birth pains" relates to how all the end times signs and warnings will converge together simultaneously with greater intensity and frequency until the global conditions are ripe for the tribulation to begin. There are no warning signs for the rapture, which could happen anytime unexpectedly, like a surprise childbirth or a thief breaking in at night. By examining the descriptions of the pregnant woman and the Dragon, we can determine that this time frame is from before the rapture until the middle of the tribulation. We will now connect the dots, identify the parties involved, and present our evidence.

The Woman

Let's go back to Revelation 12 and look at the woman again. The popular teachings say the woman is Israel or Mary. They quote Joseph's dream in the book of Genesis, saying the sun is Jacob, and the moon is Rachel. Finally, they say that the man-child refers to the ascension of Jesus to heaven after his resurrection. Let's look at some problems with those theories.



First, we contend that the woman in Revelation chapter 12 is the same as in chapter 17; she is the mother of Harlots, the one world religion of the antichrist. The harlot church will be the bride of the antichrist leading her followers to him when he declares himself God, sets up an image of himself, and demands to be worshipped. So, Catholics, Christian denominations, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, pagan, and all peoples, tribes, and tongues will get violently forced to worship the antichrist. The Harlot, one world religion, is forming now and is in bed with the government, big business, and global elites. The international coalition of religions will unite over controlling narratives, usurp power over the people and weaponize religion to bring obedience and worship to the antichrist.

*Revelation 13:14-15 [The false prophet] And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, **telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast [antichrist] who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.***

In chapter 12, we see the woman fleeing into the wilderness; the next time we see her is in chapter 17, and she is coming out of the wilderness riding on the back of the beast, aka the antichrist.

*Revelation 12:14 But **the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness** to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.*

*Revelation 17:3-6 So **he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman** was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF***

HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw *the woman*, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement.

Old Testament	Jezebel - Ahab's Wife Church of Thyatira	Rev	Woman, Harlot Babylon & Tribulation
2 Ki 9:22-2 Chron 21:13	Jezebel a whore, worshipped gods of fertility, witchcraft, human sacrifice, Depths of Satan, Rev 2;24	17:3-6	Babylon the great whore, sorcery, sitting on the back of the beast
1 Ki 16:30-32	Jezebel was both a princess & queen, and ruled over 2 nations, multitudes	17:15	Babylon sits on many waters, peoples, multitudes, nations, tongues
1Ki 16:30-32	Jezebel was wealthy, her father & husband both had wealthy kingdoms	17 & 18	Babylon wealthy, prosperity gospel, religion as big business
1 Ki 18:19 1 Ki 22:6 2 Chron 18:5	Jezebel feeds 400 false prophets (prophets of the groves) at her table	2:20	That woman Jezebel & false teachers, and prophets
1 Ki 18:4 1 Ki 19:1-2	Jezebel persecuted, killed true prophets, threatens to kill Elijah	12:17 13:7-18	Dragon persecutes the remnant of her seed, take mark of beast or die
2 Ki 9:7	Jezebel killed the true prophets of the Lord	17:6	Babylon drunk with blood of Martyrs
2 Ki 10:6-14 1 Ki 21:17-24	Elijah prophesied Jezebel's and her children's death, (Mother of Harlots)	2:21-22 17:5	Jesus - Cast Jezebel into great tribulation & kill her children (Mother of Harlots)
2 Ki 9:30-37	Jezebel trampled to death by horses, dogs ate her & drank her blood	2:18 19:17-18	Jesus' feet of brass, comes on white horse, tramples nations, beast, birds, feast on dead bodies

The book of Revelation begins with a warning from Jesus about the woman, the harlot church. From the beginning of the book of Revelation to the end of the tribulation verses, there is one woman, the harlot church. In Revelation, chapter 2, Jesus warns of "**that woman Jezebel.**" Jesus said he would cast Jezebel and her **children** into **great tribulation**, thus identifying Jezebel with the great tribulation and the **mother of harlots**. Jezebel was the crowned queen over Israel; she was a mother with children, worshipped pagan gods, and killed the prophets of God. The Jezebel spirit is synonymous with

the mother of Harlots in Revelation chapter 17, and that spirit has been active in the churches since John wrote the book of Revelation.

Revelation 2:20-22 *"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow **that woman Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. **"Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds.*

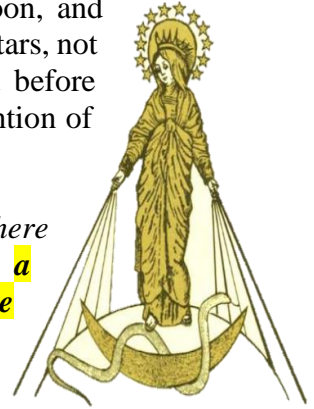
Could the woman be Israel? Yes and no. Secular Israel will take part in the antichrist's one-world religion and global government when they confirm their covenant of peace with the antichrist (*DANIEL 9:27*). **But before God judges and destroys the whore of Babylon; he will call the believing Jews to "come out of her, my people." If Israel was the woman, she couldn't come out of herself.** But the fact that God calls Israel out of Babylon confirms that Israel had been part of the woman up to that point. However, all of the believing Jews will come out of the whore of Babylon, and those who survive the tribulation will repent and get saved (*ROMANS 11:26*).

Revelation 18:2-4 *And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, **"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen**, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." **And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.***

Could the woman be Mary? First, Mary is historical and not part of a future prophecy. Also, the Biblical reference to a Queen of Heaven is a pagan Babylonian goddess not Mary. Let's look at Joseph's dream, which is the basis for saying Israel or Mary is the woman, and even though it is history, we'll look at it anyway.

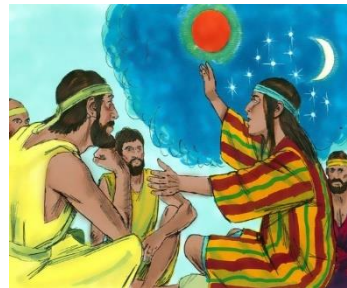
Despite the similarity of words, **Joseph's dream** and **John's vision** do not match. In Joseph's dream, the sun, moon, and **eleven** stars bowed to him. First, there were 11 stars, not 12, and then the sun, moon, and stars bowed before Joseph, obviously a man, and there was no mention of "the woman" or heaven in Joseph's dream.

*Revelation 12:1 [John's vision] And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; **a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars**: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*



*Genesis 37:9 [Joseph's dream] Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the **sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.**" So, he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? **Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?**"*

In **Joseph's dream**, the sun and moon were his parents, Jacob and Rachael; the eleven stars were his brothers, as interpreted by Jacob. Joseph's dream had its fulfillment around 15 years later in Egypt.



In **John's vision**, the moon was under the woman's feet. So, if the moon is Rachael, who is this woman to trample Rachael under her feet? That can't be Israel or Mary. Whoever she is, she is evil and an enemy to Rachael. Putting the enemies under the feet symbolizes conquering, submitting, and dominating over them (*1 Corinthians 15:24-25, Joshua 10:24*).

The Jewish people live by a 360-day lunar calendar. The new moons would signal the starting point for religious festivals, feasts, and cultural events and are extremely important to the Jewish identity. The primary scriptural reference for the moon is that it represents a faithful witness of the Messianic covenant between David and God. David would perpetually have a son to sit on his throne, speaking of Jesus, and Israel would be God's people forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.

***Psalms 89:34-37** My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. **Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.**"*

Jeremiah 31:35-36** Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day, **the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night,** who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): **"If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."

If this is a future event and this woman is treading God's covenant people under her feet, who is she? We would say she is the whore of Babylon, the harlot church, and the state religion of the antichrist kingdom, which would include Catholics, Jews, Christians, and all the combined religions of the world. Like the Lutheran churches under Hitler, which put up Nazi flags, swastikas, and pictures of Hitler. The Antichrist will put his propaganda in every church building, cathedral, synagogue, temple, mosque, and religious gathering place worldwide. And the government will weaponize this one-world religion to persecute all dissenters and kill them. The harlot religious leaders will sell their people to the antichrist and be drunk with power and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

***Revelation 17:6** I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*

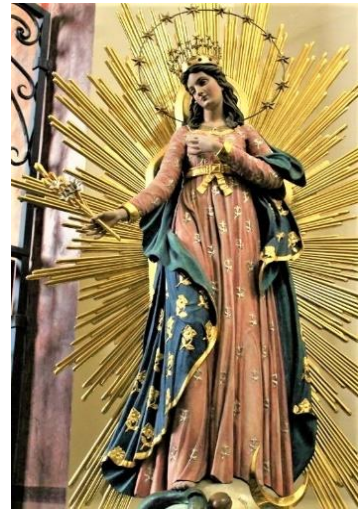
In **Joseph's dream**, he saw **the 11 stars**, that he interpreted as his brothers, **bowing before him**.

In **John's vision**, he saw **a crown of 12 stars on the woman's head**. This word for the crown in Greek is a stephanos, the wreath of one who wins in athletic games or is victorious over enemies. It is a temporary wreath made of leaves that will soon wilt and decay, meaning this woman's time to reign is short, seven years at a maximum.

In **Joseph's dream**, he saw **the sun as his father**.

In **John's vision**, he saw **the woman clothed with the sun**.

The pagans wore ceremonial vestments to worship the sun and utilized sunbursts on their idols and artwork. Ezekiel had a vision of an abomination being committed in the temple in Jerusalem as Jews worshipped the sun. The Catholics also assimilated much of the pagan sun worship practices in their vestments, idolatry, and art. This woman could symbolically represent both the Babylonian queen of heaven and the Catholic Mary because both are idols. Both are a type of the mother of harlots. The Israelites have a history of worshipping this pagan goddess, as we see in the book of Jeremiah. Israel worshipped the queen of heaven with star cakes and idolatry. She had stars around her head with sunbursts or halos. Some statues of Mary have twelve stars around her head. The number twelve represents Israel or the church, 12 tribes, and 12 apostles, but the 12 stars adorn this pagan religious idol representing the harlot church.



***Ezekiel 8:15-16** Then He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see **greater abominations than these.**" So, He brought me into **the inner court of the LORD'S house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar,** were about twenty-*

five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, **and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.**

Jeremiah 44:17-19 "But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, **to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem.** For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. "But since we stopped **burning incense to the queen of heaven** and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine." The women also said, "And **when we burned incense to the queen of heaven** and poured out drink offerings to her, did we **make cakes for her**, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands' permission?"

Acts 7:42-43 "Then **God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven,** as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And **the star of your god Remphan,** Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'

The Dragon

The Dragon is symbolic of Satan. This Dragon has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads, representing the global government of the antichrist.

Revelation 12:3-4 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold **a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.**

Most Christians use the scenario presented in Revelation chapter 12, verses 1 to 5, to describe the popular cliché or theory of a rebellion where Satan took one-third of God's angels with him when he fell from Heaven. This theory takes Revelation 12 out of context by using

a future prophetic event to explain something that happened in the distant past. Satan rebelled against God and has fallen angels with him, but that's all we know. We don't know how many of God's angels joined with Satan, and Satan still has access to Heavenly places, at least for now. Besides all that, God has an innumerable company of Angels (HEBREWS 12:22). So, what is one-third of innumerable? That doesn't matter anyway because the stars in question are not fallen angels, and the stars will get cast down soon if they haven't begun to fall already. So, who are they? We'll start with **one-third of the stars** thrown to the earth.

Revelation 12:4 [The Dragon] His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

Later, **Satan and his angels** will go to war with God's angels to stay in heaven but are thrown out and cast to the earth. These are different from the 1/3 of the stars that previously got cast down. They are two distinct groups and events that happen at two separate times.

Revelation 12:7-9 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So, the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

It doesn't make sense that the stars in verse 4 speak of Satan's angels; why would Satan cast down Satan's angels? According to that theory, Satan cast one-third of his angels out of heaven and then went to war with a significantly smaller army and fought to stay in heaven. That makes no sense. Jesus said Satan would not cast out Satan (*Matthew 12:26*).

So, we will look at a different viewpoint of this scripture, not the cliché Satanic rebellion against God, but from the perspective of a prophetic event yet to come. And we will identify the stars that get cast down. Of course, the book of Revelation provides the best answer

to who the stars would be. In John's vision, Jesus said that the stars are the angels of the seven churches in chapters 1 to 3.

Revelation 1:20 *"The mystery of **the seven stars** which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,** and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.*

And we come to another question, who are the seven angels of the seven churches? Some people think these angels are winged angelic beings from heaven. Have you ever seen or heard a literal heavenly angel preach in a church? Neither have I. The Greek word *aggelos*, translated as an angel, means a messenger, which can be angelic or human.

According to Strong's Greek concordance, the word **Angel** is *aggelos* which means; to bring tidings; a messenger; especially an "angel"; **by implication, a pastor.** We have numerous examples where the same Greek word for angel gets used for human messengers.

Revelation 22:8-9 *Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, **I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel <aggelos>** who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "**See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets,** and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."*

Revelation 19:10 *And **I fell at his feet to worship him.** But he said to me, "**See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus.** Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

Matthew 11:9-10 [John the Baptist] *But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, **Behold, I send my messenger <aggelos> before thy face,** which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

Luke 7:24 [John's disciples] And when the messengers <aggelos> of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, what went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Luke 9:51-52 [Jesus' disciples] And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers <aggelos> before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

James 2:25 [2 Israelis spies] Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers <aggelos>, and had sent them out another way?

Also, spiritually speaking, the believers of Jesus are seated in heavenly places with Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Ephesians 2:5-6 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

The seven angels in the seven churches were most likely the Pastors of the churches. In the scene of John's vision, the Dragon's tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. We could read this as one-third of pastors or ministers will get cast down from their heavenly vision of serving God to serving the flesh, the world, and the Devil. In other words, there will be a great falling away from the faith.

The tail of the Dragon is the false prophet who speaks lies and works with Satan and the antichrist to deceive the world.

Isaiah 9:14-16 Therefore the LORD will cut off head and tail from Israel, Palm branch and bulrush in one day. The elder and honorable, he is the head; **the prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed.**

How many pastors will fall from grace to serve sin? At least one-third will be deceived and jump on the one-world religion bandwagon. All it takes is a little compromise, lukewarmness, backsliding, greed, fleshly indulgence, and perhaps compliance with a godless tyranny. That's the trap and deception; ask the Lutheran pastors in Hitler's Germany.

The second beast is the false prophet; he has horns like a lamb and speaks like a dragon. The horns represent the power to do false miracles. He's like a lamb, but not a lamb, meaning he imitates Christ. He speaks like a dragon meaning he uses lies, seduction, and deception. He will perform miraculous signs and deceive the world. The false prophet is the one who will set up the image of the beast (antichrist) and cause as many that refuse to bow to die. One-third of all professing ministers will fall from the faith before the man-child gets caught up and raptured to heaven. Then they will be either martyred for Jesus or bow down to the image of the beast.

Revelation 13:11-15 Then **I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.** He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, **and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast,** whose fatal wound had been healed. **And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast** who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could

speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

The Antichrist is the little horn in Daniel's vision. Daniel saw him going after the stars, casting them down, and trampling them. Stars, those seated in heavenly places with Christ, the pastors, and religious leaders will fall. The Antichrist is a man possessed by Satan, who will cast down other men, not angels.

Daniel 8:9-10 And out of one of them came a little horn [antichrist] which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.

Enoch prophesied about the coming of the Lord to execute judgment on wandering stars who are twice dead. Those people got born again but went astray; their faith got uprooted, they died spiritually, and they became twice dead in sin. And they have a special place reserved for them in hell.

Jude 1:12-15 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

After the man-child gets raptured to heaven, Satan and his angels will be thrown out of heaven and cast to the earth. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, still has access to heavenly places. But when He gets cast

down, He will have great wrath while earthbound because his time is short, seven years at a maximum.

Revelation 12:7-12 *And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So, the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God, day and night, has been cast down. ... "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! 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."*

And at the end of the tribulation, Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years and be released for a short time. Again, Satan will deceive the world and persuade them to attack Jerusalem to destroy God's people. There will be no battle, God sends fire from heaven and devours the attacking armies, and Satan gets cast into the Lake of Fire and will get continuously tormented forever.

Revelation 20:1-3 *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

Revelation 20:7-10 *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle,*

whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. **And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**

Man Child

The Dragon is not concerned about the pregnant woman, maybe because she is a harlot and will sell herself to him anytime, but he is obsessed with killing her child, the man-child. This man-child gets harpazo, raptured, and caught up to God and his throne.



Revelation 12:2, 4-5 And **she being with child** cried, *travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.... and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up [harpazo] unto God, and to his throne.*

Some teach that the man-child is Jesus. Besides being a past event rather than a future prophesy, there are problems with that interpretation. The Greek word for "caught up" is **harpazo**, the root word for "the rapture," which means to seize or catch away and take by force. Nobody or nothing could ever seize, snatch, or capture Jesus by force.

Also, Jesus didn't ascend immediately to Heaven as the man-child does in Revelation 12. Jesus was buried, descended to Hell, and three days later ascended to Heaven by HIS mighty power. Death, the grave,

and Hell could not hold Jesus down because of the exceeding greatness of his resurrection power. Jesus voluntarily laid down his life and took it up again to ascend far above all principality, power, might, dominion, and name.

John 10:17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because **I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.** This command I have received from My Father."

Ephesians 4:8-10 Therefore He says: "**When He ascended** on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended" what does it mean but that **He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens,** that He might fill all things.)

Ephesians 1:19-21 ... and **what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His 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 age but also in that which is to come.**

Romans 1:4 [Jesus]... **declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**

Another argument they make for Jesus to be the man-child is that the scriptures say he will rule all nations with a rod of iron. But scripture also quotes Jesus as saying those who overcome the Jezebel spirit will have power over the nations, and they shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. Jesus also promised his disciples that he would bestow upon them a kingdom, and they would sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus also said some faithful believers would rule over ten cities and others over five cities (*Luke 19:17-19*).

*Revelation 2:25-27 [Jesus to the Thyatira church] "But hold fast what you have till I come. "And **he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron;** They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' as I also have received from My Father;*

*Matthew 19:28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, **you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

*Luke 22:28-30 "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, **"that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."***

Also note that the woman gives birth to a manchild, not an infant or a newborn baby. Women do not give birth to a man; this passage is not about natural childbirth but a picture of people who have been born again spiritually. The Greek word for man is arrhen. It means a male (as stronger for lifting). The Greek words for a child are huioi and teknon, meaning a son. In ancient Jewish culture, the sons were heirs of the blessing and inheritance. The manchild describes their designation as heirs and co-heirs with Christ as sons of God (*Romans 8:17*). The manchild speaks of growth and maturity in the body of Christ as we strive until we all come to the unity of faith unto a perfect **man**, to the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness. The manchild also speaks of how we must become humble like little children and have a **child-like** faith to enter the kingdom of heaven and be great there.

*Ephesians 4:11-15 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ,** 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, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head Christ.

Matthew 18:2-4 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. " Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

To each of the seven churches, Jesus gave the challenge to overcome something. We cannot overcome or do anything to earn salvation. Salvation is only by faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross. But after we are born again, we get confronted with spiritual battles and overcome them the same way we got saved, by faith. The apostle John tells us how to overcome; first, we overcome Satan by what Jesus' blood accomplished on our behalf, then by being born again and keeping a faithful testimony. Finally, we overcome by loving Jesus more than our own lives. The **overcomers** remain faithful through their times of trial and testing.

Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

The dedicated followers of Jesus who overcome will be caught up to heaven and will rule and reign with Christ. But Jezebel's children who attend church while living like the Devil will go through the great tribulation.

REVELATION 2:20-23 [church in Thyatira] *"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow **that woman Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. **"And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. "Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into **great tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds. "I will kill her children with death,** and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.*

After warning of the great tribulation for those who succumb to the Jezebel spirit, Jesus follows with the promise of rewards for those who overcome and remain faithful; they will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Revelation 2:26-28 [church in Thyatira] *"But hold fast what you have till I come. And **he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' as I also have received from My Father;** "and I will give him the morning star.*

Jesus warned each of the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 of their faults and issued each one a challenge with punishments for the disobedient and rewards for the overcomers. The following is a list of the rewards promised to the overcomers in the churches.

Revelation 2:7 [Church of Ephesus] *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.**"*

Revelation 2:17 [church in Smyrna] *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**"*

*Revelation 2:17 [church in Pergamos] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.***

*'Revelation 3:5 [church in Sardis] **"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.***

*Revelation 3:12 [church in Philadelphia] **"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.***

*Revelation 3:21 [church of the Laodiceans] **"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.***

The woman was "with child," that word in Greek is *gaster*, and Strong's defines it as the stomach; by analogy, the matrix; belly. The word matrix is interesting; Webster defines it as something within or from which something else originates, develops, or takes form. This woman is Babylon, the mother of Harlots, and all false religions were created and formed from within her and spread worldwide. All Christian denominations have roots in the Catholic church, like Babylon, the mother of harlots. When protestors spoke against sin and heresy, they got persecuted, tortured, and killed. Faithful believers had to suffer and endure many hardships until they were forced out, excommunicated, martyred, or fled for their lives, the truth, and religious freedom.

This woman was "pained;" the Greek word is *basanite*, which Thayer's Lexicon defines as to question by applying torture. That application would apply to the Catholic Inquisitions in the past but is relevant to today's current persecuted church under Muslim, Hindu, and Marxist

governments. Question by torture and other means will apply to the future antichrist government church that will seek to track, monitor, and control every detail of every person's life on earth. This woman, the harlot, has always been drunk with power and the blood of the saints.

Revelation 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:

There is another kind of spiritual persecution that grinds against the soul, a type of social stigma, isolation, retribution by government, and moral rot that creates an abrasive environment for the followers of Jesus in the secular society. Daily while living in Sodom, Lot's righteous soul felt vexed and grieved by the ungodly behavior and aggressive threats of the Sodomites. The Sodomites tried to attack Lot, but two Angels forcibly snatched, seized, and removed him from their hands. The angels blinded the perverts and removed Lot from Sodom before God sent fire and brimstone to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

2 Peter 2:6-9 ... and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

Luke 17:28-29 "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

As we, the overcoming church, watch for the return of Jesus, we should feel like Lot, grieved and vexed in our spirit as we see the

deluge of perversion and wickedness flooding the earth. Also, our godly testimony will result in greater and greater persecution by the world and the harlot church until Jesus comes and snatches us out of the harlot system and this wicked world.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

1 John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

So, who will be raptured? The answer is the church, the bride of Christ. The harpazo, rapture, is the wedding day for the Spirit-filled church. Jesus will come in the clouds like a thief and snatch his bride from the earth. Jesus loved the church and died to present her to himself as a glorious bride. What would a wedding be without love between the bridegroom and the bride? After all, the greatest command is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Jesus is coming for those who love his appearing and worship God in Spirit and truth.

Isaiah 62:5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So, shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Ephesians 5:25-32 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ... For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I

Speak concerning Christ and the church.

2 Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

When Jesus comes, he will resurrect those who have died "in Christ" first, then those who are alive "in Christ" will be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, and their bodies will instantly transform to be like Jesus' resurrected body.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 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 prevent them which 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Then each one will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged for what they did in their bodies, whether good or bad.

2 Timothy 4:1 *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*

2 Corinthians 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

The Remnant

Next, we see Satan go after the remnant of the woman's seed, those who got left behind when the man-child got caught up to God and his throne. They missed the rapture but have the testimony of Jesus. They are not part of the Harlot because they don't flee to the wilderness with her. So, they become the focus of Satan's wrath, and he goes to war against them.

Revelation 12:17 *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

So, who are these people? They have the testimony of Jesus but missed the rapture and were left behind. Maybe they were the Thyatira brothers who failed to overcome the sins of Jezebel. Or, they were the five wise virgins, bridesmaids who slept until midnight but still had some oil in their lamps. Because they have the testimony of Jesus, the Dragon will vent all his wrath on them first. They will either die and be part of the great multitude of martyrs or survive the tribulation and stand at the judgment of the sheep and the goats.

Revelation 12:11 *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

Revelation 13:7 & 15 *It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ... He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the*

beast should both speak **and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.**

Revelation 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, **I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:**

Revelation 7:9-14 ... and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ... Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, **"Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"** And I said to him, **"Sir, you know."** So, he said to me, **"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."**

Sheep remnant

There will be a believing remnant from different nations that survive the tribulation. How and when they come to salvation, we don't know. These will be the people who helped the Jews during the tribulation and avoided taking the mark of the beast. They will be at the judgment of the sheep and the goats.

Matthew 25:31-34, 41 **"When the Son of Man comes in His glory,** and all the holy angels with Him, then **He will sit on the throne of His glory. "All the nations will be gathered before Him,** and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his **sheep** from the **goats.** **"And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ... "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:**

The remnant of the nations will repopulate the world during the millennium; two examples are Egypt and Assyria. Just after the sheep and goats get judged, the sheep believers will disperse to repopulate

the planet as Noah's family did after the flood. The Jews will live in their inheritance in the greatly expanded territories of Israel.

Isaiah 19:18-25 In that day five cities in **the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts**; one will be called the City of Destruction. **In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border.** And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for **they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day,** and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; **they will return to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria,** and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. **In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."**

Revelation 20:7-9 Now when the thousand years have expired, **Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.** They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Fear & Persuasion

If we believe that the Bible is true and all these things are on the horizon, we should walk in the conviction of the Holy Spirit with godly fear and reverence, growing and maturing in holiness. If we genuinely believe what the Bible says is coming and live like it, our testimony becomes much more powerful and believable to others.

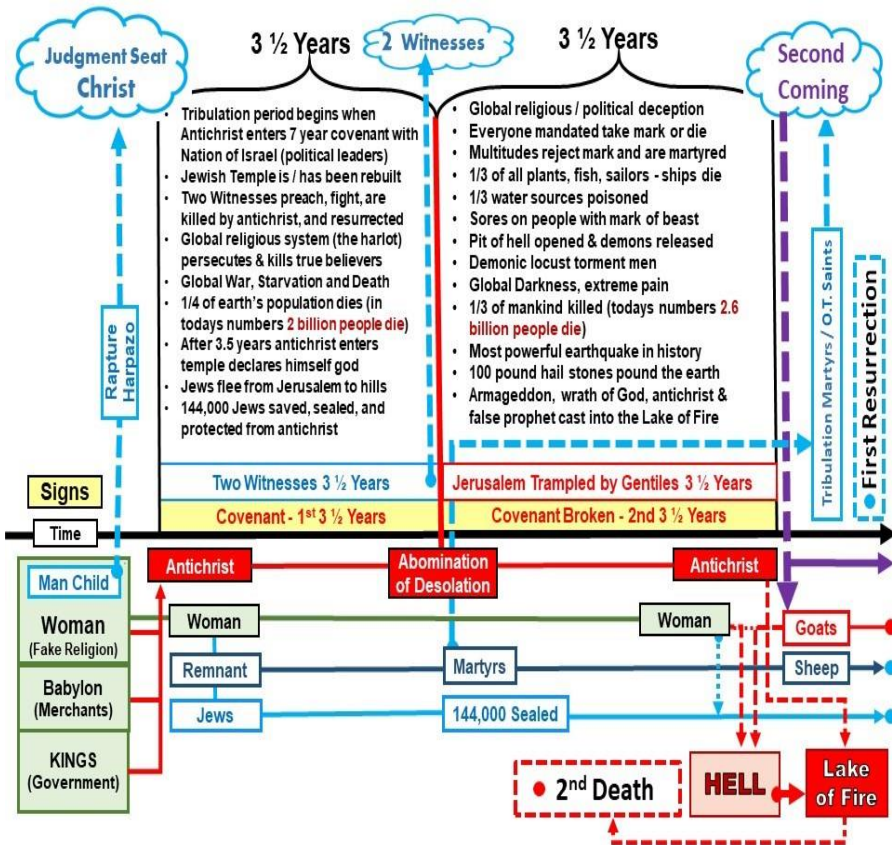
*2 Corinthians 5:9-11 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;***

*Philippians 2:12, 15-16 Therefore, my beloved, ... **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ... that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.***

*2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God.***

We have been contrasting between the fake religions, the Harlot church, and those who sincerely want to follow God, the bride of Christ. Nothing is a more striking contrast than how they end their journeys. We skipped over how bad it will be for those who miss the rapture. We cannot even comprehend how evil and painful the world will be with Satan completely controlling and possessing a global dictator with swarms of demons like locusts released from the pit of hell onto the earth, plagues, famines, 1/3 of all water, trees, and fish poisoned or destroyed, 1/4 people die. Later another 1/3 of the people die slow, cruel deaths. And after they die, they go to the lake of fire. Seeing that these things could happen in our generation to us, our family, and our loved ones, the question has to be: **What kind of people should we be?**

2 Peter 3:9-15 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.*



Walk Worthy

We should look forward to Jesus' return because the rapture is the blessed hope and the glorious wedding day between Jesus and his church. And we may suffer persecution first, but we should remain faithful, live right and pray that He counts us worthy to be His bride.

2 Thessalonians 1:5, 11 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, **that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ... Therefore, we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling,** and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, **and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."**

Watch

Jesus warned that he would come like a thief by surprise. If the homeowner is sleeping, the thief can sneak in and out, and the homeowner will only find out about it once it is too late. Jesus emphasized the priority of watching, praying, and the consequences of being caught sleeping upon his return.

Matthew 24:42-44 "**Watch** therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have **watched** and not allowed his house to be broken into. "Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is **coming at an hour you do not expect.**

Revelation 16:15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. **Blessed is he who watches,** and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

If we watch for Jesus' return, we should be watchmen to warn others of what is coming. When we warn people of danger, we are free from their blood, but if we fail to warn people of the coming destruction, we are held accountable for their blood.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 "So you, son of man: **I have made you a watchman** for the house of Israel; therefore, you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. **"When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!'** and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. **"Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.**

Blessed Hope

The rapture is the wedding day for the bride of Christ, and it is our blessed hope. The bride gets ready by trusting Christ and keeping her spiritual wedding garments clean and pure. Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom, is faithful to present us faultless and blameless before the presence of His glory. We can encourage ourselves by his promises, God is faithful.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that **He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.**

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; **and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.**

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**

1 Corinthians 1:7-8 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

Bride, New Jerusalem

Jesus told the disciples that he would go and prepare a place for them, his bride, the church, and that place is beyond human description, the most glorious city, the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 19:7-8 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 21:1-2 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:9-10 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

The New Jerusalem will be the eternal home of the followers of Jesus, with resurrected bodies and joy unspeakable and full of glory in God's presence. We can read the description, but on this side of eternity, we cannot comprehend what God has prepared for us. The only way to

vaguely understand the glory of the New Jerusalem is by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul momentarily stepped out of time and into eternity in a vision, was caught up, harpazo, raptured to Paradise, and heard inexpressible words which were not lawful for humans to utter.

1 Corinthians 2:9 *But as it is written: **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.**" But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows such a one **was caught up to the third heaven.** And I know such a man whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows how he was **caught up [harpazo] into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.***

Having said it is beyond human words; we will not try to describe the indescribable. The center of attention of this vision is God himself, it's not about anything or anyone else, and everything in heaven points to God. Many people get ideas about what they will do in heaven, family reunions, conversations with famous saints, explorations, etc. That's fine, but maybe the main point is that we are going to heaven to be with God first and foremost. He is on the throne and will decide what we will or will not do and whether he allows us to go galivanting across the universe. We don't know anything except that his servants will serve him, and we will be like the angels; whatever they do, we will do. We will look at heaven, the New Jerusalem, our Spiritual mother, focused on how it symbolizes God in our relationship with him.

Galatians 4:26 *But **Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.***

The street (*singular*) of gold speaks of Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life that leads to God. Jesus is the narrow gate, and only by faith in him (*Ephesians 2:8-9*) can we walk the street of gold.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

Matthew 7:13-14 **"Enter by the narrow gate;** for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. **"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

Psalm 16:11 **You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

The sun, moon, and stars are not needed there because Jesus is the light of the world (*John 8:12, 9:5*), and the glory of God is the light of the New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, **"I am the light of the world.** He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the **light of life."**

John 9:5 "As long as I am in the world, **I am the light of the world."**

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the river of life flowing from God's throne.

John 4:14 "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But **the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."**

John 7:37-39 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.** **"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."** **But this He spoke concerning the Spirit,** whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Jesus is the tree of life, a reminder of his death on the tree, the wooden cross where he died to give us eternal life.

Galatians 3:13 **Christ has redeemed us** from the curse of the law, **having become a curse for us** (for it is written, **"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"**),

1 Peter 2:24 who **Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness **by whose stripes you were healed.**

Jesus is the treasure hidden in the field, more precious than the gold or every layer of precious jewels of the foundation he laid with his wisdom before he created the world.

Colossians 2:2-3 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to **all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

1 Corinthians 2:7 But **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,**

Proverbs 16:16 **How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.**

Matthew 13:44 ¶ **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**

Jesus is the pearl of a great price at every gate. Like the oyster that creates a pearl because of irritants inside its shell and dies to give up its pearl, Jesus took all our sins and sorrows and died to give us entry into the New Jerusalem.

Matthew 13:45-46 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, **"who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.**

There is no temple because God is the temple, and we will abide in the presence of God, having communion with Christ forever. He who tabernacled with Moses in the tent in the wilderness and tabernacled with the apostles will dwell with us forever in our eternal habitation, and we will worship in His heavenly temple.

Exodus 25:8-9 And let them make me a sanctuary; that **I may dwell among them.** According to all that I shew thee, **after the pattern of the tabernacle,** and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

John 1:14 And the **Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us,** and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, **"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,** and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

There his servants will serve him (*John 12:26*) and be like the angels of God (*Matt 22:30*), not marrying each other, but unlike angels, we will be the bride of Christ, which they can only desire to look into.

John 12:26 **If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be:** if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.

Matthew 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, **but are as the angels of God in heaven.**

Revelation 22:3-4 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; **and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name**

shall be in their foreheads.

1 Peter 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you **with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.**

We will read the following description given to John in the Revelation of Jesus without any commentary; it speaks for itself and is the goal, the finish line in our race, and Jesus, our prize, is waiting on the other side.

Revelation 21:11-26 ... **having the glory of God.** Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also, she had a great and high wall **with twelve gates,** and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, **which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:** three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had **twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.** And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. **The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth.** And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. **The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones:** the first foundation was **jasper,** the second **sapphire,** the third **chalcedony,** the fourth **emerald,** the fifth **sardonyx,** the sixth **sardius,** the seventh **chrysolite,** the eighth **beryl,** the ninth **topaz,** the tenth **chrysoprase,** the eleventh **jacinth,** and the twelfth **amethyst.** **The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for**

the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

Revelation 22:1-5 And he showed me a **pure river of water of life**, clear as crystal, proceeding **from the throne of God and of the Lamb**. In the middle of its **street**, and on either side of the river, was **the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits**, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the **nations**. And there shall be no more curse, but **the throne of God and of the Lamb** shall be in it, and **His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face**, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: **They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.**

Jesus finishes the vision with three more warnings that he is coming quickly and to watch. The Holy Spirit and the bride speak as one giving the invitation to come and drink from the river of life freely. The fact that the Spirit and the bride have one voice shows that we depend totally on the Holy Spirit to prepare us, so it is crucial to walk in the Spirit and drink freely from the water of life!

Revelation 22:7 "**Behold, I am coming quickly!** Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:12 "And **behold, I am coming quickly**, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Revelation 22:16-17 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the

*Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." And **the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.***

*Revelation 22:20 "Surely **I am coming quickly.**" Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus!***



Call to Action

We are in the end times; our world is changing quickly to line up with Bible prophecy. Jesus said the signs of his return would be like birth pangs, growing globally in intensity and frequency. We are seeing those signs happening weekly in real-time with wars, food shortages, pandemics, shutdowns, and natural disasters, all leading to global tyranny. There will be global persecution of Christians and Jews, and it's not a question of if, but when. There will also be a great falling away from Christ, and we can see it happening already. So-called churches are already becoming sexually immoral, politically woke, and in bed with the government. As more churches go apostate or get down, true believers may have to find or create small groups for fellowship. While we have time and freedom, we should study the scriptures, share the gospel, and watch for Jesus to return. This book is part of a series of studies that all Christians should know and teach. We call it the "toolbox series" because these studies are tools to equip you to share your faith with others. For free resources and study materials, visit our website at Ears2Hear.online.