

Day 49—Phase One: The Sign of the Son of Man

Fred R. Coulter—May 23, 2015

Greetings, brethren! Welcome to Day 49, the Sabbath before Pentecost! We've seen how to count Pentecost, particularly in this year when we had the Holy Day—the 1st Day of Unleavened Bread—on the weekly Sabbath.

The seven weeks of the harvest represent the seven churches in Rev. 2 & 3. The book of Revelation becomes the most important thing for us to consider with the churches and with the resurrection. When you count with the Calculated Hebrew Calendar, Pentecost is the *last day*. Let's see how important this is, and let's see how much is packed into the first three chapters of Revelation, and how that represents the Church, and the harvest of the Church.

Tomorrow we will see that the harvest takes place with all included: those from the time of Abel on down to Christ, from Christ on down to the resurrection, all together raised in that first resurrection, which we will discuss tomorrow.

Note the audio and special effects for the book of Revelation on DVD, cbcg.org. The book of Revelation is so important and contains so many things that it is—without knowledge of the rest of the Bible, sufficient knowledge—very difficult to understand.

- let's see what we are dealing with
- let's see why this is so important
- let's understand how God views things

What we have in Rev. is:

- *God's view* of the world
- *God's view* of the Church
- *God's view* of the things that are going to take place leading up to the return of Jesus Christ

We will see that the return of Jesus Christ is actually two phases. Today we will cover phase one.

Revelation 1:1: “*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, to show to His servants the things that are ordained to come to pass shortly; and He made it known, having sent it by His angel to His servant John who gave witness to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and all the things he saw*” (vs 1-2). I'm sure that many of them John did not understand.

Here's a blessing we can claim. This is why you cannot read and study the book of Revelation too much. But be sure that you read and study the

rest of the Bible so you can plug everything in together.

Verse 3: Blessed *is* the one who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy and who keep the things *that are* written therein; for the time *is at hand*.” Yes, the time right now really is at hand. We see three things here:

1. reading
2. hearing
3. keeping

That ties in with everything that God has given us in the Old Testament and the New Testament, which is:

- *diligently keep* His commandments, laws, precepts and so forth
- *hearken, listen to and obey* the Word of God
- *pay particular attention* to what has been written

We will see how important Rev. 2-3 actually are.

Verse 4: “John to the seven churches that *are* in Asia: Grace and peace *be* to you from Him Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come; and from the seven spirits that are before His throne.” {note sermon: *The Holy Spirit of God, the Seven Spirits of God*} What are the seven Spirit's of God? What do they do? That's very important to understand; Jesus is directing them.

Verse 5: “And from Jesus Christ... [these are His words, and that's very important for the Churches] ...the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

That ties right in with the Passover and comes forward to the harvest. Counting toward Pentecost is a *harvest* Feast. Always remember that *Trumpets is never a harvest Feast*.

Verse 6: “And has made us kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him... [we will see how that will work out later] ...and those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen” (vs 6-7).

Verse 8 give us a perspective of how God views time, and how that God is capable of doing

and thinking so many more things, especially when we consider the greatness of the universe that God has made, and the greatness of the things that He has put on the earth for us. God has given all mankind the earth to replenish, to multiply, to use the things that are here. What a wonderful blessing that is. But unfortunately there is the adversary Satan the devil—interlaced through everything, all the way through the book of Revelation—is fighting against God’s plan:

- against those who are brethren of Jesus Christ

bringing

- confusion
- false doctrine
- false prophets

We’ll see that and how important that is.

Verse 8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega...” First and last letters of the Greek alphabet showing that He purposed that the New Testament be written in Greek, not in Hebrew.

“...*the Beginning and the Ending,*’ says the Lord, ‘Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty.’” (v 8). We’re going to see something very important here: ***how many times Christ told John to write!***

What we have here is very similar to what we have with Moses and God. God told Moses, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying...’ and Moses told the people what God was saying. Likewise here, Jesus is telling John to *write*, so John is not only a witness of these things, but he is also Jesus’ personal secretary!

There are those who will lament: Why didn’t Jesus write something so that we would know it was from Him? *Well, He did!* He dictated the things from John for the Churches.

Verse 10: “I was in *the Spirit* on the Day of the Lord...” John saw all these visions. For those who believe in Sunday, some translations have translated that as *Sunday*. So, Sunday-keeping is in the Bible! ***NO!*** Men have changed it to fit *their* traditions.

- When they do that, *they cut themselves off from God!*
- When they do that, *they try and tell God what to do!*

No man can tell God what to do! Otherwise, He is not God and is not Sovereign.

“...and I heard a loud voice like a trumpet behind me, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and what you see, ***write in a***

book, and send *it* to the churches that *are* in Asia: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’ And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me... [Where was it coming from?] ...and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands; and ***in the midst...***” (vs 10-13).

It was in a circle. The reason that they’re in a circle is because of the way that the Churches are applied to that time, down through history and the end-time. Then John described them, beautiful and fantastic:

“...of the seven lampstands *One* like *the* Son of man, clothed in *a garment* reaching to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden breastplate. And His head and hair *were* like white wool, white as snow; and His eyes *were* like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like fine brass, as if *they* glowed in a furnace; and His voice *was* like *the* sound of many waters. And in His right hand He had seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword went out of His mouth... [the Word of God (Heb. 4:12)] ...and His countenance *was* as the sun shining in its *full power*” (vs 10-16).

God wants us to know that Christ is the Head of the Church, He is in charge of everything. Brethren, our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ is based upon this. Here we are given, directly, a message from Jesus Christ, not as a man, but ***as a living spiritual God!***

Verse 17: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead; but He laid His right hand upon me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, even the One Who is living; for I was dead, and behold, I am alive into the ages of eternity. Amen. And I have the keys of *the* grave and of death”” (vs 17-18). No one else has any power concerning life or death *spiritually*, only Jesus Christ!

Verse 19: “***Write...***” That’s why we have the whole Bible written down; that’s why we have *The Faithful Version*. There are so many terrible translations out there, and they are, even now, working on a New Testament that eliminates the words: *the Father and the Son*—referring to God the Father and Jesus Christ, Who is God manifested in the flesh—so that they would not offend the Muslims. God could not care whether the Muslims are offended or not, because it applies to *everyone!*

Unless you repent, you shall likewise surely perish! God is not here to placate feelings. God is not here to play patty-cake, nicey-nicey. ***He is the powerful God, ruling the Church, upholding the universe by the word of His power!*** This is the One we have to deal with, and He gives us direct access

to God the Father, the greatest, most wonderful *thing through the power of the grace of God, to receive the Spirit of God and have direct access to Him!* Never forget that!

Verse 19: “Write the things that you saw, and the things that are... [and He’s about ready to give those things] ...and the things that shall take place hereafter.... [interpretation]: ...The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, *is this: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands that you saw are the seven churches*” (vs 19-20). Quite an interpretation!

The Seven Churches:

Now let’s talk about the seven churches. What is the most important thing to God on the earth? *His people! His Church!* Who is the Head of the Church? *Jesus Christ* (Eph. 1:22-23)!

Think about this: God has given prophecies concerning nearly every major nation on earth. In fact, when He says ‘all nations’ in prophecy, that is *all nations!* There are very few prophecies concerning the Church in the rest of the Bible outside the book of Revelation. That’s important to understand. What we have here in Rev. 2 & 3 is a threefold meaning of the seven churches. That’s why it’s written down.

1. the literal seven churches at the time that John was writing the book of Rev.
2. the churches down through history

We don’t know the exact cutoff from church to church. I’m sure there were overlaps, just like they existed all at one time as literal churches, prophetically they exist and there are overlaps without a doubt.

3. the end-time

What we find in Rev. 2 & 3 is God’s perspective of how He views the Churches. Jesus Christ is the Head of it. He has a message for everyone who is in the Church of God, and this is applicable at all times.

It’s not over here or over there, but there are predominate things that are problems in the Churches of God. If we would carefully examine Rev. 2 & 3 we would see that those problems still exist today.

I. Church at Ephesus:

Revelation 2:1: “To the angel of the Ephesian church, write: ‘These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, Who walks in *the midst of the seven golden lampstands....*’—

direct from Christ; so Jesus did have things written—didn’t He? *Yes!* The whole book of Revelation, and as a matter of fact, the *whole Bible!*

Verse 2: “**I know your works...**” Study everywhere it talks about *works* and see how important they are. The reason being is that *you cannot have faith without works!* What you believe is what you act upon. These are *works of:*

- faith
- the Spirit
- the Truth
- righteousness
- preaching the Gospel

He says this of every single church. As we read these things we will see that God knows everything we do. Why should that come as a surprise? *Christ and God the Father are dwelling in us!*

“...and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars” (v 2). We are to test whatever anyone preaches:

- Is it really the Truth of God, or is it clever lie?
- Are they the things that match up with everything else in the Bible: *line upon line; precept upon precept; here a little, there a little!*
- Does it cover exactly what God wants us to know?

or

- Is it pick and choose? *I like this; we’ll do that! We don’t like this; we won’t do that!*

That’s exactly what the false prophets do. What did Jesus tell us right at the first? *Beware of false prophets that come to you in sheep’s clothing.* What did He tell us right at the end? *Beware of false prophets who will deceive you!* (Matt. 24)

Here they tested them, and we are to test them! Brethren, I want to warn you right now, today, there are false prophets *within* the Church of God who are teaching false doctrines and things contrary to the Truth of God and how God has set it forth. That’s why we have the Word of God; to test it and to prove it.

Verse 3: “A *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name’s sake have labored and have not grown weary; nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love” (vs 3-4). What does that mean? What is the *first love*? *The first love is the greatest commandment: to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, being and strength!*

What did they start focusing on? *Loving*

your neighbor as yourself! You can't love your neighbor as yourself unless you first love God. We are going to see that God can come upon a church at any time. We've actually seen that happen!

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent..." All of the churches need to repent. Two of them are not told directly to repent, but we'll examine that when we get to it. Are we not to repent everyday? *Yes, we are!*

"...and do the first works; for if *you do not*, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place **unless you repent**" (v 5). We saw how that happened after John died. How the false prophets came in and by 200 years later what do we have? *The Roman Catholic Church saying that they are Christian!* Where do these false prophets come from? *Satan the devil!* What do they do? *As Peter said, they twist and distort and do not know the Truth!*

Always remember: ***If you have part of the Truth you also have error, because unless you have all the Truth...*** You can't pick and choose! That's what the false prophets did.

Verse 6: "But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans..."—hierarchical government and a false grace. You have a hierarchy but 'we don't need the laws of God. If we have the Spirit of God we ought to be able to resist sin and not sin.' So, you don't need to worry about the commandments of God. At least they hated that!

"...which **I also hate**" (v 6). Think about that! You need to look and see if the ministers/elders are:

- teaching
- encouraging
- uplifting
- helping them to correct themselves
- always looking to God the Father and Jesus Christ

If they are, and not putting themselves between you and God the Father and Jesus Christ, then they are not Nicolaitans. ***But that has been a great sin in the Church of God!***

Verse 7: "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches..."—all of them, so all of the correction throughout goes to the whole, to all the brethren.

"...To the one who overcomes... [we have to overcome] ...I will give *the right* to eat of the tree of life that is in *the* midst of the paradise of God" (v 7).

Remember: ***God loves us, and these things***

we are to watch for. That's why He has had it written down. There's going to come another time of persecution, just like it did here.

II. Church at Smyrna:

Verse 8: "And to the angel of the Church of *the* Smyrneans write: These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive. **'I know your works...'**" (vs 8-9). He says that to every one of the churches. How are we judged? *By our works! Our works reflect what we think!*

"...and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich)..." (v 9). If you remain faithful under duress and persecution and facing death—and you die—you are rich!

"...and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews..." (v 9). That is they are declaring themselves to really be Christians. Jesus said that salvation is of the Jews, and Paul said that a Jew was one who was *circumcised inwardly!* The circumcision is *of the heart, not in the flesh; a spiritual Jew!*

"...and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan" (v 9). Satan likes to get in there and lead us astray. Remember, he works by:

- incrementalism
- false prophets
- false apostles
- false teachings
- false doctrine

So, we have to be aware of all of that!

Verse 10: "Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

Jesus said, 'Fear the One Who has power over *life and death* to cast into Gehenna! Do not fear men who can kill the body, but they can't kill the life!' We need to remember that, and we can see it already happening with the martyrs of Jesus right in today's world. You know that it's eventually going to come here. *Don't fear any of that! Be faithful unto death and 'I [God] will give you a crown of life.'* Throughout we will see:

- encouragement
- correction
- overcoming
- naming the major problems and difficulties that will face the Church

Verse 11: "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one

who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.” Take the opposite: *The one who does not overcome will suffer the second death!*

III. Church at Pergamos

Verse 12: “And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos, write...” They had a great temple and altar to Zeus, which is Satan the devil! When you live directly in Satan’s world—like we do today:

- How much does that affect us?
- How much does that affect our thinking?
- How much did that affect the organization of the Church?

They were good for a while, so He gives a warning, “...These things says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword” (v 12)—showing that God is going to judge everything by the Word of God. It’s going to cut, it’s going to be true, and you cannot inculcate the practices of the false Christianity of this world into the Churches of God.

Verse 13: “I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is*; but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” Satan today is deceiving the whole world, so we need to be on guard.

- How much does that affect us?
- How many things do we think and believe come because we are in the world with all of these modern technological advances that bring everything:
 - ✓ right into our homes?
 - ✓ right into our lives?
 - ✓ right into our minds?

We have great deal to overcome—don’t we?

Verse 14: “But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, **to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.**” How does that translate to today?

- things sacrificed to idols
 - ✓ the Eucharist
 - ✓ the Lord’s Supper
- spiritual fornication
- physical fornication
- same-sex marriage
- getting rid of things out of the Word of God to make it look like those are acceptable to God

Amazing, isn’t it? *Yes!*

Verse 15: “Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, **which thing I hate.**” Why? *Because it oppresses the brethren! They look to a man rather than Christ!* That’s why! Jesus is jealous over *His* Church. He does not want any of these things in *His* Church.

This is why, as we look at the harvest—like we find in Matt. 13—the world is the field; the seed is sown by Christ. There are many problems and difficulties that come along; yet, there are those who are the seed in the good ground who bring forth 30, 60 and 100-fold. Remember, *the harvest is at the end of the age!*

Verse 16: “Repent! For if *you* do not *repent*, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.” He is going to come and execute the Word of God in correction, to separate, to get rid of, to scatter. We’ve all experienced that! The lesson is that you cannot mix the doctrines of this world—which come from Satan the devil—with the doctrines and teachings of God, within the Church of God and expect God’s blessing to be there.

All of these things we need to watch, because out in the world today, how many Churches of God are there? *Well, pretty close to 12-1400 now!* Within them you find every one of these things that we’re reading here concerning the seven churches.

Verse 17: “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives *it.*”

There has to be repentance of these things. Here we find not only personal sins, but also organizational sins. Christ—Who is the Head of the Church—is making sure that we all know what is the Truth and what is right, and what we need to do.

Again, we see what Christ repeats to all of the other churches, plus some of the other problems that Satan brings in. Notice how active Satan is against the Church. We find that Satan is going to make war against the Church, against the brethren. He accuses us day and night before the throne of God, but we overcome him with the blood of Christ, the Word of our testimony—how we live—and not loving our lives unto death (Rev. 12).

Satan is there and controls the world; it all lies in the power of the ‘wicked one.’ That’s why Christ tells us to overcome!

IV. Church at Thyatira

Verse 18: “And to the angel of the Church in

Thyatira write...” When you have it written down, and you have the Bible in your hands, understand—we can draw a little analogy—it’s like receiving a legal notice from the court, which in this case is the Court of God, and Jesus is the Judge. When we receive that legal notice, we are to pay attention and obey, because if you do not obey that legal notice, then the law will be executed against you.

What is the final law that is given? *The second death!* We’ll see that here. Thyatira got itself in deep trouble. We will see that that is how the Protestants came about. That is what happened to the Church. Note DVD: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the 7th-Day Adventist Church). You need to see that, because the Waldensians and those who lived in the Alps—protected from the world by God—began to compromise and take things into their own hands and not trust in God.

This is at a time in history when the Catholic Church was really becoming very powerful. We saw, starting right in the first part of Rev. 2 with false apostles, then martyrdom, then changing of doctrine and the hierarchy. Now comes the full-fledged false doctrines.

“...These things says the Son of God, He Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet *are* like fine brass. I know your works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because **you allow...**” (vs 18-20). ***You are not to allow these things to happen!*** There are Churches of God who *allow* women to preach, teach, and Paul said that a woman in the Church is not to have authority over a man.

In the world, wherever women work, they may have authority over men, but that’s not in the Church. That’s not the structure that God has set.

“...you allow the woman Jezebel...” (v 20)—the daughter of the priest of Baal, so here comes all the traditional pagan teachings being stored up and brought into the Catholic Church and it’s spilling over into the Churches of God. Thinking that if they can compromise a little bit, they can avoid persecution. But notice how severe Christ’s correction is with them:

“...who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication... [spiritual fornication] ...and eating things sacrificed to idols” (v 20)—the Eucharist and the Lord’s Supper. Doing away with the Passover!

Listen, brethren, if you do not keep the Passover correctly, the way that it is in the Bible—and there are those today who have teachings

contrary to what Jesus taught concerning the Passover—we need to ask ourselves: Since that is the renewing of the New Covenant, **how do we stand before God if we change things?** One of the popular things today is having a calendar so that it is on a different day. Another popular thing is having foot-washing at the end of the Passover services, because they haven’t done enough study to understand that the *King James Version* is wrong when it says, ‘supper being ended.’ A completely flagrant mistranslation. So, you see how these things come about?

Verse 21: “And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent.” That was through the Reformation and the Council of Trent. There was a party, believe it or not, of Catholics at the Council of Trent who said that ‘*we should not have anymore traditions and doctrines that are not in the Bible, and we need to keep the Sabbath.*’

But the Council of Trent extended for quite a while, and the final coup-de-gras that did them in, and the Catholic Church did not take advantage of that time to repent, was when the Protestants failed to keep the Sabbath. You can read that in *Rome’s Challenge to the Protestants* (Appendix N—*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order*).

The conclusion was that the Protestants say ‘*sola scriptura*’—Scriptures only—yet, they follow the Catholic doctrine of Sunday, which was a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and not in the Bible. Since they do that, ‘they have accepted our tradition, they have accepted our teachings’—the Catholic Church’s—and the Protestant Reformation is null and void ‘in our eye, and we will keep our traditions and teachings.’

They did not repent! This is coming! This has happened! There was a lot of correction that God gave. One of the greatest corrections that God brought against the Roman Catholic Church was stripping her of the secular territories. Garibaldi did that in Italy. He took away all of the papal states and forced the Roman Catholic Church and the pope to only have sovereignty over the 100-plus acres where the Vatican sits today.

Let’s see what happens here; let’s see that it includes those who commit adultery with her. What is happening today? *Protestants are going back to Rome, going back and committing spiritual adultery!* This is living here for us today.

(go to the next track)

Let’s see what Christ has done because of those kinds of actions. Remember, today all the daughters of Babylon are coming back home, and the Churches of God need to be very careful that they do not take lightly

- how they have to stand for the Truth
- how they have to love God and Jesus Christ under all circumstances
- how important that our works are

Verse 22: "...unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts..." (vs 22-23). God knows *everything*: our heart, our mind, our thoughts.

- this is why we have the Feast days of God
- this is why we have a relationship with God with grace
 - ✓ not to take advantage of it to sin
 - ✓ not to do our own ways
 - ✓ not to compromise with the Truth of God
 - ✓ not to get comfortable and pleasant with everything around us

"...I will kill her children with death..." If you kill them, they're dead. But if they're killed "...with death..." that has to be *the second death!*

"...and I will give to each of you... [every individual member] ...**according to your works**" (v 23). You might go back and restudy this again and see how important this is. I think today is very important that we go through this word-by-word and see what is for us, and for the Churches of God, and what we need to do.

Brethren, we're going to enter into the difficult times described by Jesus Christ (Matt. 24) and how it extends out into the book of Revelation, as well.

Verse 24: "But to you I say, and to *the* rest who *are* in Thyatira, **as many as do not have this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan**, as they speak; I will not cast upon you any other burden, but hold fast what you have until I come. And to the one who overcomes, and keeps My works unto *the* end..." (vs 24-26). The key: ***I know your works!***

- Are they the *works of Christ*?
- Are we going to keep them to the end?
- Are we going to have the endurance that we need?

When the tough times come, all the 'glad-handler get along, go along' Christians are going to fall by the wayside. That's the warning here.

"...the one who overcomes, and keeps My works unto *the* end..." (v 26). How important are your works beginning here with the *washing of the water by the Word*?

"...I will give authority over the nations;

and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces; as I have also received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.... [spiritual life to shine like the sun] ...The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (vs 26-29).

It's fitting that we read this, go through all of it and see and understand what we really need to do, brethren. There are so many, many things in the world today

- to distract us
- to lead us astray
- to infiltrate our thoughts
- to infiltrate our mind
- to infiltrate our heart

All of those who belong to Churches of God need to constantly be testing:

- the doctrines
- the Truth
- the love
- the submission to God the Father and Jesus Christ
- loving each other as Christ has loved us

That is what we need to focus on. But look at all these troubles that come. What happens when you get all worn out from difficult things that have come along? *That happened to the Churches of God, too!*

V. Church at Sardis

Revelation 3:1: "And to the angel of the Church in Sardis, write: 'These things says He Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works, *and* that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead.'

Here is just wanting to do the bare minimum. There are Churches of God like that today, especially those who do not keep the Holy Days.

Verse 2: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die..." Unless you act upon knowledge, upon the Word of God, it's going to die. Other things will come along and crowd it out.

"...For I have not found your works complete before God" (v 2). Very interesting, indeed! The only way our works are complete is if we keep the works of Jesus Christ to the end.

Verse 3: "Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent. Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you."

The judgment of God can come at any time! Remember what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar? *He got all lifted up and said, 'Look at all this Babylon; this is what I have built. What a wonderful thing, I'm a great person. Look at what I have done.'* BANG!

The judgment and warning that Daniel gave him came upon him. For seven years Nebuchadnezzar was out there eating grass like the animals. After the seven years were over and God gave him back his sanity, he wrote the Epistle of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4).

All those in authority would do well to read that, to understand that God can come upon you quickly! That's what He said!

Verse 4: "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy. The one who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life..." (vs 4-5). What do you know about that! Think on that for just a minute! That could happen; that's going to happen to some, obviously, if they don't repent.

"...but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (vs 5-6).

- Do we hear?
- Are our minds open?
- Are our hearts open?
- Are we willing in attitude, in love and in submission to God the Father and Jesus Christ?

VI. Church at Philadelphia

Verse 7: "And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, **write**: "These things says the Holy One, the One Who *is* true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens. **I know your works...**" (vs 7-8). Here's the message: **Write!** Think of all of these as a personal message from Jesus Christ to each of us as individuals and to all the Churches of God as organizations. God is judging both.

"...Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept My Word, and have not denied My name" (v 8).

The Church of Smyrna and Philadelphia, out of the seven, that are not told to repent. We're told to overcome. So, the only way that this can come about, that you have nothing to repent of is because you're repenting every day, and you're living by

every word of God. You are loving the Truth and studying the Word of God, filling your mind with it and keeping the commandments of God.

This is going to come, v 9: "Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan... [the super elite of the world: politically, economically, religiously] ...who proclaim themselves to be Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet..." They're going to worship God in our presence! Isn't that something?

This is what we need, this is the complete model that God wants us to follow:

- loving God
- loving the brethren
- keeping His Word
- being faithful in everything

"...and to know that I have loved you" (v 9). ***God loves you and Christ loves you!*** That's why these seven letters to the seven churches. It fits through all time, every individual and every church organization. Quite something! Remember, Jesus said to His disciples that *the words that He speaks are Spirit and Life. The flesh profits nothing!*

Verse 10: "Because you have kept the Word of My patience..."—the works; *I know your works* of:

- keeping the Word of His patience
- not denying His name
- keeping His Word

"...I also will keep you from the time of temptation, which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth" (v 10). That will undoubtedly be *the mark of the beast!* ***It is coming! It is coming!*** Everyone is going to be use to it. We have the closest thing to it now. We have chips you can put in the right hand, or the eye-watch (iris scan) with the computer, everything right there.

Everyone who takes the mark of the beast is going to give up his or her free moral agency to Satan the devil directly! We need to think about that! It's coming upon the whole earth.

Verse 11: "Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown." We're living in a time when we need to watch all

- the doctrines
- false teaching
- false prophets
- false ministers
- false brethren

Verse 12: “The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him My new name.*” That is a wonderful and fantastic thing, brethren!

Verse 13: “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

VII. Church at Laodicea

A lot has been said about the Laodiceans. It sounds like a lot of the Church today. It’s probably true that what we know as the Church of God today, the greatest majority have been Laodicean. So, write a message. As we read these things, let’s take it *personally* to ourselves for correction, and take it *collectively* for all of the congregations of God, wherever they are.

Verse 14: “And to the angel of the Church of *the* Laodiceans, write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginner of the creation of God. I know your works... [to all of the churches] ...that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth” (vs 14-16).

Does that not sound like scattering the Church? *Yes, indeed!* We have so many things today that we become complacent! Never in the history of the world has it been so applicably true!

Verse 17: “For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’... [‘Look at all the blessings of God.’ Really?] ...and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” That’s a terrible condition to be in. Yet, there are those who are that way today. But you don’t need to give up hope, because God loves you! You need to repent like He says!

Verse 18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire...”—through trial; Paul writes of gold, silver, precious stone; wood, hay and stubble (1-Cor. 3). The fiery trial is going to prove it. There are going to be fiery trials.

- What are *you* going to do?
 - Are you going to yield to God?
- or*
- Are you going to complain?
 - Are you going to run off and seek comfort and safety somewhere, through some thing?
 - Are you going to avoid coming before God

to repent?

- Are you going to repent just partly of what you do?
- or*
- Are you going to repent of everything that you are?

“...so that you may be rich; and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see” (v 18). When you anoint your eyes with eye salve, then you need to pray the prayer of:

Psalm 119:18: “Open my eyes so that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law”—*all of the Word of God!* God loves the Laodiceans, He loves all of those of the seven churches.

Today, as you look around the world, God looks at it and there are these seven churches in existence today. It’s not restricted to any one single corporate church. So, if any minister says, ‘If you are not in this church, you are not going to receive eternal life. If you leave this church you’re going to into the Lake of Fire.’ **LIE!**

- If you are not in Christ and God the Father you are not in the Church!
- If you reject the Truth and turn your back and walk away from it, you will be in the Lake of Fire!

That’s what God has said! But God’s Word and God’s people are not restricted to one single organization on earth.

Revelation 3:19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.” God loves the Laodiceans. They have some work to do. Verse 20 shows something very, very important. You have pushed Christ out of your life so far that He has to come and knock to get back in.

Verse 20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone hears My voice...** [through the Word of God and your conscience] ...and opens the door... [the door of your mind, because you have pushed Christ so far out] ...I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” There is a revival for you. There is an opportunity for you. *But you have to repent!*

Verse 21: “To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**”

Phase One

Let’s examine *phase one of the return of*

Jesus Christ: In order to understand the first phase of the return of Jesus Christ, that is keyed to the verse in Rev. 1, ‘Behold, every eye shall see Him.’ Let’s see how this is going to work and how this is going to develop.

First of all, Jesus tells His disciples that there will be many false prophets; they’ll deceive you. There will be wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, earthquake in different places. Nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

Matthew 24:8: “Now, all these *things are* the beginning of sorrows.” These have come in cycles down through time, and we’re seeing it come again being all magnified and fulfilled according to the Word of God.

Verse 10: “And then shall many be led into sin, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” We’re right in that time right now. That’s what’s happening.

Verse 11: “And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.” There are more false prophets than ever before. Remember what those at the Church of Ephesus did. They tested all the false prophets; tested their teachings whether it was of the Truth or the deception.

Verse 12: “And because lawlessness shall be multiplied...” That’s what it is in the world today, everywhere!

- no one can tell the truth
- no one is honest
- no one knows right from wrong
- no one knows good from evil

Everyone thinks that his own actions are good, even that their lies and stories that they tell will serve a good purpose to make people aware of things. *How ridiculous!* If that’s not from Satan the devil, I don’t know what is.

“...the love of many shall grow cold” (v 12). Who can trust anyone? But here we are in the middle of it:

Verse 13: “But the one who endures to *the* end, that one shall be saved.” Today we have more means of preaching the Gospel to the world than at any time in the history of the world. It’s getting more and more widespread through all of the vast technology that we have. We ourselves have:

- cbcg.org
- churchathome.org
- afaithfulversion.org
- originalbible restored.org
- godsyouth.org

Other Churches of God likewise have websites and things where they are reaching out and preaching. We have those people who are preaching the Gospel and warning, even out of contention, not really truly right, but having some Truth in it. We have those who are warning concerning:

- the financial problems
- the crime problems
- the government problems
- the religious problems

What is happening, because all the churches are coming together under Rome, they are accepting same-sex marriage, homosexuality, the worship of idols and things like that. It’s all magnified here in the end-times.

Verse 15: “Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy place.’...”

That did not happen with the destruction of the temple in 70_{A.D.} that’s why you have a parenthetical statement inserted there, right in the midst of what Jesus said. This was inspired to be put there by Jesus Himself when John was canonizing the New Testament: “...(The one who reads, let him understand.)” (v 15).

They’re working on the temple. They even had practice with the slaughtering of lambs for the Passover this year in Israel. It’s going to be interesting to see how things come together. There will be a temple built. They will discover—and are already working on it now—that they don’t have to put the temple where the Mosque of Omar is, where the Muslims consider that to be the holiest place. They couldn’t ever build it there, and that’s not where the temple actually was; it was south of there.

So, they will be able to build it right where the Spring of Gihon is. How soon that will be we don’t know. But they are gradually—through The Temple Institute (templeinstitute.org)—having many things all ready to go. So, there will be a temple, because Rev. 11 tells us there will be a temple. There will be an ‘abomination of desolation’ because Jesus said there would be. It didn’t happen in 70_{A.D.}

Verse 16: “Then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains. Let the one *who is* on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house” (vs 16-17). You have to flee immediately!

Verse 18: “And let the one *who is* in the field not go back to take his garments. But woe to those *women* who are expecting a child, and to those who are nursing infants in those days! And pray that your flight be not in *the* winter, nor on *the* Sabbath”

(vs 18-20). That shows we're to keep the Sabbath! When that happens, this is the signal of the starting of the Great Tribulation. We will go through and see that that is the key for us to begin to understand the first phase of the return of Jesus Christ.

Verse 21: "For then shall there be great tribulation, such as has not been from *the* beginning of *the* world until this time, nor ever shall be *again*. And if those days were not **limited**..." (vs 21-22)—not the word *shortened* because false prophets come along and say, 'Jesus could return at any time and God could cut the days short.' *NO!* He is saying that the Tribulation is limited. What is the limit of the Tribulation? *Three and a half years!*

If there were not the limit "...there would no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be limited. Then if anyone says to you, "Behold, here *is* the Christ," or, "*He is there,*" do not believe *it*. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and they shall present great signs and wonders, in order to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (vs 22-24).

Think about that! If you do not follow the instructions of what Jesus said, of testing the false prophets, whether they are of the Truth of God or not. It's going to be hard and very difficult because there are so many different Bibles out there, so many different translations out there. That's why we have *The Faithful Version*.

Verse 25: "Behold, I have foretold *it* to you. Therefore, if they say to you, "*Come and see! He is in the wilderness*"; do not go forth. "*Come and see! He is in the secret chambers*"; do not believe *it*" (vs 25-26).

Here is the first phase of the return of Jesus Christ, v 27. We have to add in something from the book of Hosea that is very important—Hosea 5 (last part) and first part of Hosea 6. It shows that God is going to afflict Israel for two whole years. That will be lifted with the 144,000 (Rev. 7). Then there is a year and a half left before Christ and the saints come back to the earth from the Sea of Glass.

Here is how they are going to see Christ: Right at the beginning of the third year of Tribulation, meaning there's a year and a half left:

Matthew 24:27: "For as the light of day, which comes forth from *the* east and shines as far as *the* west, so also shall the coming of the Son of man be." **Phase ONE!**

All of a sudden there is going to be in the sky—and we'll see it when that happens—*another sun*. They will see it as the earth turns on its axis for a year and a half. It will be out there plenty far enough that after they get used to the fact that it is

there, they will continue on with their wars and fighting. Then Christ explains how that's going to happen.

Verse 29: "But immediately after the tribulation of those days... [against Israel, it continues to get worse for the rest of the world (Rev. 8, 9, etc.)] ...the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (vs 29-30).

The resurrection is not going to take place immediately. Let's see how all of this comes about. Let's understand that these things will happen just exactly as it's laid out here in the book of Revelation. Jesus opens the seals.

We will see where it brings us from the beginning of the Tribulation up through to the time when, just described by Jesus Christ, the sign of the Son of man in heaven. The world will see it and the world will know it. Even though they will see and know it, they will think this is an invasion from outer space by aliens, which will be true! Christ is an alien and all the resurrected saints will be aliens, and we will come from heaven—where the clouds are—and take over the earth.

Rev. 6—the first seal is opened and the gathering of all the religions together. After that takes place, the second seal opens and that is the beginning of the Tribulation, and it's going to last three and a half years. The first two years are going to be against Israel. The rest of the time is going to be against the rest of the world and will be far more intense and difficult than what came against Israel.

Then the third seal is opened and we have famine and death, rationing of food and so forth. Then the fourth seal is opened—death—and killed is one-fourth of the earth. Imagine one-fourth of mankind is going to die in the Tribulation and wars of men against men. Of course, there will be demons behind the scenes doing it. But not like it will be when we come to Rev. 8. Then the fifth seal is the martyrdom of the saints. We've covered that how with the Church at Smyrna. That is going to come again.

Right after that ***the sixth seal when the sign of the Son of man appears in the heavens like a second sun:***

Revelation 6:12: "And when He opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake... [just like Jesus described] ...and the sun became black as *the* hair of sackcloth, and the

moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its untimely figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind” (vs 12-13). A fantastic thing is going to take place; *unbelievable!*

This is when they will see the sign of the Son of man, the second sun in the sky. Something is going to happen in the heavens to cause that to be. Every eye will see this, and it will be there for a year and a half. No one is going to have any excuses!

Verse 14: “Then *the* heaven departed like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the powerful men, and every bondman, and every free *man* hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from *the* face of Him Who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, **because the great day of His wrath has come, and who has the power to stand?**” (vs 14-17).

The first thing He does is in Rev. 7 because this ends the Tribulation against Israel, with the saving of the 144,000, and against those who repent because of the awesome signs and sights that they see. They will have a little over a year until the resurrection. The world will have a year and a half until Christ returns with the saints.

This is the first phase of the return of Christ, and we’ll pick it up tomorrow with the resurrection Pentecost and what is going to happen at that time.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 1:1-8, 10-20
- 2) Revelation 2:1-29
- 3) Revelation 3:1-18
- 4) Psalm 119:18
- 5) Revelation 3:19-21
- 6) Matthew 24, 8, 10-27, 29-30
- 7) Revelation 6:12-17

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 4:12
- Ephesians 22:23
- Matthew 13
- Revelation 12
- Daniel 4
- 1 Corinthians 3
- Revelation 11; 7
- Hosea 5; 6
- Revelation 7-9

Also referenced:

- Sermon: *The Holy Spirit of God, the Seven Spirits of God*
- DVD: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the 7th-Day Adventist Church)
- Article: *Rome’s Challenge to the Protestants* (Appendix N—*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order*; also at cbcg.org).

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