

1934

File

Bible Lessons



"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are **CHANGED**" II Cor. 3:18

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. 9, No. 4
Oct., Nov., Dec.
1977

Faith Pub. House
Guthrie, Okla.
73044

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 9

Oct., Nov., Dec., 1977

No. 4

Table of Contents

	Page
Oct. 2 John on the Isle of Patmos	1
Oct. 9 John's Vision of the Glorified Christ.....	7
Oct. 16 Messages to Ephesus and Smyrna	10
Oct. 23 Message to Pergamos.....	19
Oct. 30 Message to Thyatira	24
Nov. 6 Messages to Sardis and Philadelphia.....	28
Nov. 13 Message to the Laodiceans	33
Nov. 20 The Throne of God	41
Nov. 27 The Lamb Takes the Sealed Book.....	47
Dec. 4 The Early Morning Church Versus Paganism	52
Dec. 11 The Great Apostasy and Rise of Roman Catholicism	56
Dec. 18 The Image to the Beast	61
Dec. 25 Rejoicing with the Angels	65

**Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church
Edited by Mrs. Marie Miles, and other co-workers.**

**Subscription Price—35¢ a copy for quarter of year, or
\$1.40 per year, issued quarterly.**

Second class postage paid at Guthrie, Oklahoma.

**Published Quarterly By
FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE
920 W. Mansur Ave.
GUTHRIE, OKLAHOMA 73044**

Theme for Fourth Quarter, 1977

We felt led of the Lord to study in the book of Revelation. There is much controversy about the interpretation of Revelation, but we do know there is a correct meaning to all that was written to the "servants" of God. The Holy Spirit will reveal to us the meanings if we will but seek Him. God revealed it to some of the early ministers in this reformation, and we want to accept those truths. The book, "Revelation Explained," by F. G. Smith should be studied, also other pioneer minister's writings. This book should be of great interest to every Bible student and its importance is great.

We will refer to other's writings in preparation of this study. One thing you will notice is that most of the book of Revelation is written in symbolic language. This is important to understand so it can be rightly divided. We must remember that God cannot be symbolized. Isaiah said, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Isa. 40:18. Also there is no "created intelligence in God's great universe that can be chosen to represent" Jesus. "The human aspect of the Saviour as exhibited during the incarnation in His sacrificial death, may be properly symbolized by a lamb slain from the foundation of the world, as in chapter five."

The Lord has not revealed all the revelations to us, but we will endeavor to treat that which seems clear to us by the Holy Spirit.

—M. Miles

October 2, 1977

JOHN ON THE ISLE OF PATMOS

Rev. 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand,

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

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

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

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

Memory Verse: And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Rev. 1:6.

Central Thought: Christ was the direct author of the revelations from God to the angel; from the angel to the apostle John, for those who became children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Word Definition *Revelation* or "the book of the Apocalypse" (Greek word), signifies literally a "revelation or discovery of what was concealed or hidden." *Symbol* means "the sign or representation of any moral thing by the images, or properties of natural things. Thus, a lion is the symbol of courage; the lamb is the symbol of meekness, or patience."

LESSON BACKGROUND

John was a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos, banished there by the tyrant Domitian, in A.D. 95. Patmos was a small, rocky island in the Aegean Sea. It was ten miles long and six miles wide and was close to the coast of Asia Minor. At the death of Domitian in A.D. 96, his successor, Nerva, permitted John to

return to Ephesus, where he lived and died at the age of about one hundred years.

The seven churches to whom he addressed his messages were churches close to where he lived, but they are written to "his [Jesus Christ's] servants," all who become children of God through a spiritual birth, even from the beginning of the dispensation until the end of time.

We will understand as we study further, that the book of Revelation is made up of symbolic language. Of course we do have symbolic language in the Old Bible, such as the dream Joseph interpreted for the Pharaoh of Egypt. The seven lean kine meant the seven lean years and the seven fat kine meant the seven years of plenty.

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet which mean the same as the "beginning and the ending."

"The seven spirits before the throne describe the third person in the Trinity," which is the Holy Spirit. If they were seven angelic spirits they would have been "described as seven angels, and not as seven spirits." (F. G. Smith).

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Who gave the messages in the book of Revelation to John?
2. To whom were they given?
3. Mention different references to Jesus in our lesson and discuss.
4. Who will behold Jesus when He comes in the clouds?
5. To whom is John a companion and how does tribulation affect a person?
6. What does it mean to be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day?"

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

A note of praise is struck in our hearts when we read what John wrote about Jesus. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Praises be unto our Lord and Saviour! He is the one "which is, and which was, and which is to come!" Through His coming here to the earth, living and dying with victory over death, which enabled Him to arise again, has made Him the "prince of the kings of the earth." Today, He is sitting on the "right hand of God," with "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." I Pet. 3:22. He is the One whom we love and serve with such deep reverence, that we do not want to do one thing to displease Him. He is the "first-begotten of the dead" and, as the apostle Paul

declares, He is the "first-fruits of them that slept," and "the first-born from the dead." Because Jesus arose, we will arise in that great resurrection day at the blowing of the trumpet, when "time will be no more." What a glorious plan God made for us! We can be prepared to meet Him in the air when "he cometh with clouds" of glory. We will be among that number which the Apostle John speaks of when he says, "every eye shall see him." You will be there, too. The great question is, how will that day find us? Will we be ready to meet Jesus in peace, or will we cry for the rocks and mountains to hide us from His face? Some may not believe that they will be there, but the fact still remains whether they believe it or not, they will be there! Even those who nailed Him to the cross, and those who cried out, "Crucify him," will be in that great number on that last great day. They will behold Him in the clouds. Solemn thought!

There is one thought which is in our lesson that I trust you will always remember. The Apostle John referred to himself as "your brother and companion in tribulation." He suffered as we do for Christ's sake. Also notice the humility and the lowly plane upon which he places himself. He doesn't refer to himself as some great one, yet he had every right, with all God revealed to him if we look at it from that angle alone. Tribulations have a way of bringing a person down to the plane of humility. If a person has not gone through some great suffering, he still has something to learn. That is, if the person goes through with victory and a willingness to walk the humble path with Jesus. It is reported that John had been thrown in a hot vat of oil but God preserved him. Surely he suffered much for Jesus' sake.

Another thought that is good to remember is that John spoke of being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." When we go to services on the Lord's day, are we in the Spirit, or are we planning out our next week's work, having our minds on other things, or are we just in a sleepy attitude? Oh, if we want our souls to be fed, we want to be in the Spirit as the message goes forth, and as we look into the Word of God along with the minister. We need to take our Bibles and read with an open heart as the Spirit moves upon our hearts in the service.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is evident that many of the early Christians looked for the return of Jesus to take place within a short space of time after His ascension. As time went on, and Jesus did not return,

their hearts were perhaps tempted to become confused or discouraged. We see in the epistles of Paul and Peter that they were made aware, by the Spirit, that the coming of the Lord was not as close at hand as had been supposed. The years were fleeing by, and one by one the beloved apostles were stepping off the scene of action. Persecutions were mounting up, and it was no doubt with great sorrow that the church beheld John being banished from their midst out onto that lonely island. But God's ways are above our ways, and just when man gloats in triumph, thinking that he has surely prevailed, God can, and will, work and bring men's devices to naught.

Far out on that lonely island sat John, the beloved disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, He could have given way to gloom and despair and looked on his banishment with sorrow and regret. But, no! This man had a vision of eternal spiritual things. He knew Christ had said that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church. He knew that Christ still lived and was interceding for him at the right hand of the Father. Thus, on that first day of the week, the Lord's day, John was "in the Spirit." He was feasting on the good things of God. This was the setting for the Lord's mighty visitation to him. What a great blessing this was, not only to John, but to the whole church and work of the Lord. What a message of reproof, correction, comfort, and encouragement to the churches who were endeavoring to keep the faith. It could spell one thing. That was (despite the fact the Lord was not coming immediately), His great work was to go forward to the ends of the earth, and despite persecution and opposition, the saints who follow Christ were to ultimately triumph over the forces of Satan, and the Church of God would be victorious down to the end of time.

This will encourage us who are endeavoring to stand for the truth today against the foes of darkness and sin which are pressing us. Christ's church is triumphant! If we will keep close to Him and obey His truth, we shall prevail over all the power of the enemy.

—L. Busbee

JOHN

John, the writer of Revelation, was the son of a fisherman named Zebedee, and his mother's name was Salome. Compare Matt. 27:56 with Mark 15:40 and 16:1. His father, Zebedee was probably of Bethsaida, and with his sons James and John, followed his occupation on the sea of Galilee. The call of these

two brothers to the apostleship is related in Matt. 4:21, 22, Mark 1:19, 20, and Luke 5:1-10. John is generally supposed to have been about 25 years of age, when he began to follow our Lord.

It is evident that John was present at most of the things related by him in his Gospel; and that he was an eye and ear witness of our Lord's labours, journeyings, discourses, miracles, passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. After the ascension he returned with the other apostles from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem, and took part in all transactions previous to the day of Pentecost; at which time, he with the rest, partook of the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, by which he was eminently qualified for the place he afterward held in the Christian church.

Tertullian and others say, that Domitian having declared war against the church of Christ, in the 15th year of his reign, A. D. 95, John was banished from Ephesus, and carried to Rome, where he was immersed in a cauldron of boiling oil, out of which, however, he escaped unhurt: and that afterward he was banished to the Isle of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea, where he wrote the Apocalypse. Domitian having been slain in A.D. 96, his successor, Nerva, recalled all the exiles who had been banished by his predecessor: and John is supposed to have returned the next year to Ephesus, being about 90 years of age. He is thought to have been the only apostle who died a natural death; and to have lived upward of 100 years. Some say, having completed 100 years, he died the day following.

Jerome says that John continued preaching when he was so enfeebled with old age, that he was obliged to be carried into the assembly; and that not being able to deliver any long discourse, his custom was to say in every meeting, "My dear children, love one another!" Mary, the mother of Jesus, lived under his care until the day of her death: which is supposed to have taken place 15 years after the crucifixion.

—Clarke's Commentary

—o—

(NOTE TO TEACHER: Don't forget! We need your order for the next quarter by December 1st. Thank you for your cooperation.)

October 9, 1977

JOHN'S VISION OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST

Rev. 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Memory Verse: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Rev. 1:18.

Central Thought: Jesus is in the midst of His people — His eyes see all things and His words are sharp as a twoedged sword. He was alive and was dead, but is alive forevermore!

Word Definition: A *symbol* is "an object used to represent something abstract" or apart from a material object.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Remember, we are going to deal with symbols in studying Revelation. That which is portrayed will have another meaning. Also, we must remember that Jesus or God cannot be symbolized. The person that is seen in our lesson is said to be "one like unto the Son of man." Then at the end of the vision when

John, upon the rocky island of Patmos, fell down at His feet, Jesus spoke and told him who He was and what to do. Jesus also explained what some of the things in the vision meant.

Now, for a picture of the vision: we see a man standing in the middle of seven golden candlesticks with seven stars in his right hand. His hair was white as snow and his long garment went down to his feet. He had a golden girdle around his chest and his eyes were like a flame of fire. His voice was like the sound of many waters and out of his mouth went a twoedged sword. His feet were of "fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." His face was bright as the sun shining in its strength. (Read this again and get this picture in your mind as John saw it on the Lord's day while on the Isle of Patmos, as he turned to see who spoke to him with a "voice of a trumpet.")

Verse 20 tells us that the candlesticks symbolize the seven churches; the seven stars represent the seven ministers or angels of each church. Remember these symbols. In the next lesson, John will write to the angel, or minister, of Ephesus.

QUESTIONS:

1. Whose voice did John hear on the Lord's day while on the Isle of Patmos? Describe the speaker.
2. What does the white hair and the eyes being like a flame of fire symbolize?
3. What makes us know that Jesus never makes a mistake in His steps, or that we will be safe if we follow in His steps?
4. Talk about that which came forth from His mouth.
5. How did this affect John and what did Jesus say to Him?
6. Discuss the keys of hell and death that Jesus holds.
7. Discuss verse twenty.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

While out on the rocky, desolate isle of Patmos, John being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, turned to see the voice that spoke to him, "as of a trumpet." When he turned, he saw a great vision — so awe-inspiring that he fell down as one dead. Jesus spoke and made himself known unto him. John had walked with Jesus while He was here on earth, and I am sure that it was of much comfort to hear His voice again.

Let us get some of the precious thoughts from this vision. When we think of His hair being as white as snow, it makes us think of someone of great age. Jesus was "in the beginning." We read some of John's own words about Jesus: "In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God,

... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:1, 14. He truly "liveth, and was dead" but He said, "I am alive forevermore." He arose from the grave and lives with the Father in glory at His right hand.

"His eyes were as a flame of fire." Oh, surely He sees all things! Nothing is hidden from Him. Everything is "naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. 4:13. Every creature is seen and everything is known by Him. Surely, this is a serious thought! Jesus is watching you! He sees every motive that you have, every intention of your thoughts, and every act that you perform. Others might think they know what you will do but Jesus does know. Others may misunderstand you, but Jesus never does. Oh, it is wonderful to know that He is watching us when we are doing all we know to do to please Him! It's comforting to know that He sees our every tear, our every sigh, and our every pain. He loves and cares for His own.

That sword that goes out of His mouth is real! We read in Heb. 4:12, that the Word of God "is sharper than any two-edged sword." When God tells us to do something, His Word has to be obeyed just that way or we will be cut off. We can't play around and think we can fool God. We either live to His Word or we are in trouble.

Jesus' voice was as the sound of many waters. Oh, He speaks from eternity! We must listen to His voice. His feet are as brass. His steps are sure and His performance is stable. He never makes a wrong move. He is sure of His leadings and dealings with us, even though we may not understand them at first.

Jesus holds the keys to hell and death in His hand. Hell here means the final dwelling-place of the soul beyond the grave, where there will "be wailing and gnashing of teeth" and "a furnace of fire." Matt. 13:42. Jesus broke the power of death over humanity at His resurrection. Jesus ascended on high and is alive forevermore, thus He "became the first fruits of them that slept." I Cor. 15:20. What a Saviour!

—M Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In viewing the description of the Son of Man in our lesson, let us remember that we are looking at the glorified, ascended Christ. He has passed from the mortal sphere into the heavenly

realm. To be seen and described in mortal terms presents a picture that does not seem logical or desirable. The eyes being as "a flame of fire; his feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace; and a sharp twoedged sword coming out of his mouth;" — these are descriptions using terms that we can visualize with our human minds, yet we must realize that it is a spiritual vision that we are beholding. Just what each aspect means or refers to, can be personally and individually revealed to each heart who seeks the truth. I once heard of a missionary couple who were endeavoring to help souls in a foreign land. There was a woman in their midst who had believed the gospel and was coming to the services. This woman was generally counted as illiterate, ignorant and unlearned. The missionary couple went to visit this woman one day, and decided to read some of the Bible to her. The man thought to himself, "This woman is so steeped in ignorance, she will not be able to comprehend anything I read to her, so it does not matter just where I read." His Bible fell open to the 1st chapter of the Revelation and he proceeded to read. When he read the description of Jesus, the woman stopped him and exclaimed, "That is the Man who visits me every night!" This woman had already had a revelation from God. Christ can be revealed to everyone who earnestly seeks to know and love Him. In the Spirit He can be real and can minister to everyone on every part of the globe at the same time. The peoples of the world have the wonderful privilege to know the exalted and glorified Christ, who was once for sinners slain. He is alive forevermore, having conquered death and the grave. The sight of this glorified Christ struck fear and holy awe in John. Down at His feet he fell, like one dead. But here we see the same tender, loving nature that Jesus showed while on earth. He laid His right hand on John, and said, "Fear not!" How wonderful that we can come into the presence of Jesus and not be afraid!

—L. Busbee

October 16, 1977

MESSAGES TO EPHESUS AND SMYRNA

Rev. 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried

them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Memory Verse: And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. I Cor. 13:13.

Central Thought: God sees everything and nothing can be hid from Him.

Word Definition: *Tribulation* means "great misery or distress as from oppression: deep sorrow." *Blasphemy* means "profane or mocking abuse of God or anything regarded as sacred." —Web. Dict.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are studying about two churches today. One was good and the other had wrong things in it. The piercing eyes of Jesus, out of whose mouth went a twoedged sword, looked right down into the hearts of each one and told John to write to the angel or minister of these churches and tell them what they needed to do and also commended them for what He saw was good.

"Ephesus, mother of Asian churches, a city of 225,000 population, was metropolis and commercial center of 'Asia.' Its Temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the world.

"There, 40 years before, Paul had done his most successful work, 54-57 A. D.: such a multitude of converts to Christ that, almost overnight, the church became one of the most powerful influences in the city, and, soon one of the most famous churches in the world.

"In Ephesus John spent his old age; and, if not an active pastor, on account of his age, as last surviving apostle of Christ, he must have been a dominating influence among pastors.

"Ephesus was excavated by J. T. Wood, 1869-1874; British Museum, 1904-05; and an Austrian expedition, 1894 and 1930.

"Ruins of the Temple of Diana were uncovered; also ruins of the Theatre in which the great riot was held, Acts 19:29.

"Also, they found remains of a Roman Bath, constructed of marble, with many rooms: steam rooms, cold rooms, lounge rooms: an evidence of the luxury of the city.

"They also found a Temple which contained a statue of Domitian, the Emperor who called himself 'God', who had banished John to the Isle of Patmos, and who was persecuting Christians while these Visions of the book of Revelation were being given to John."

—(Halley's Bible Handbook)

Smyrna was about 50 miles north of Ephesus and was a beautiful harbor city, with much commercial trade. History does not inform us when the gospel was first preached in this city, but it was at a very early date and a large congregation was raised up. Polycarp was their pastor and suffered death by martyrdom about A. D. 167. Smyrna has survived the centuries and today is one of the largest cities in Asia Minor. Its modern name is Izmir.

Ephesus, as has been stated, was extinct until the excavation of some of its ruins.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Discuss the background of the Church at Ephesus and also their spiritual condition.**
- 2. What did the piercing eyes of Jesus, who looks into the hearts of all mankind, see that pleased Him?**
- 3. What did He see that displeased Him and how can this happen to us today?**
- 4. What will be the result for those who do not repent?**
- 5. Discuss the eighth verse.**
- 6. What did Jesus see and find at the Church at Smyrna?**

7. What happened to their pastor, Polycarp?
8. What is the second death?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The Apostle Paul suffered much to establish the church at Ephesus. Many believed on Jesus Christ and they had a bonfire of their books of curious arts and magic, which amounted to a value of 50,000 pieces of silver. This brought forth a great riot in the city, as the craftsmen who made images to the goddess, Diana, were afraid of losing their trade. Demetrius, a silversmith, said, "This Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying they be no gods, which are made with hands." Acts 19:18-20,24-28. Another place Paul was accused of "turning the world upside down" with his teachings of Jesus Christ as the Saviour and God as the true and living God. Thus, we see that the spiritual condition of the church at Ephesus was commendable. They had received the experience of salvation and sanctification. Paul gave them the command, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. 4:30. No wonder Jesus referred to their works, labor, patience, abhorrence of evil, and enduring many things for the sake of Jesus and not fainting. But we must remember that the devil doesn't want any congregation, as a whole, or any one in that congregation to keep spiritual. He is after every soul. Slowly and surely, the devil will steal the burning love and zeal for God out of the heart of every soul. (Put a frog in hot water and he will jump out. Put him in cold water and slowly heat it to boiling and he will die.) The devil stole the love of God out of their hearts. Jesus told John to write to them that if they did not repent and do their first works over, He would come and remove their candlestick out of their midst. They would be just a dead organization with a name only — just as many sect churches are today. It surely pays for each one to keep the love of God burning in his heart or he will be cut off from God even if he continues to have a form and ritual.

Jesus looked at the congregation at Smyrna and saw good there. He commended them for their faithfulness. Even if they were poor in this world's goods, they were rich. Jesus told Polycarp, their pastor, and the congregation that severe persecutions were ahead of them, but if they would be faithful unto death, He would give them a "crown of life." We know that Polycarp burned at the stake, but held his faith in God.

"The ten days doubtless are prophetic time and signify ten years, which was probably fulfilled in the terrible persecution that begun under the reign of Diocletian, and continued ten years, or from A. D. 302 to 312." (Rev. Exp. —Smith)

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The seven Churches in Asia are being inspected in these series of lessons. He whose eyes are as a flame of fire is walking up and down in their midst beholding every thing. Here He is giving His judgment.

Let us consider something else that we will find is a parallel example of what we are considering. A modern Grade "A" Farm Dairy of our time must pass periodic inspection by the government to be able to operate on a grade "A" basis. Every month the inspector has to come around and give a thorough inspection of the dairy equipment and premises. He comes in and observes the cleanliness, the order, and the obvious manner of operation. He carries a pad of inspection sheets on a clip board on which are listed and itemized all the details of the dairy. If he sees anything that is not up to standard of being clean and sanitary according to the law, he makes a note of this on his inspection sheet. If he sees a hole in the screen door to the milk house, he marks that down. If he sees that the milking units are not properly kept clean, he marks that down. Sometimes if there is not a specific effort in keeping certain items over which the milk flows clean, there will be a build-up of what is called "milk-stone." He has a way of discovering this, which is one thing that is easy to develop if one is not careful. When he is through with the inspection, the inspector leaves a copy of his findings hanging in a conspicuous place in the milk-house for the dairyman to see. On this inspection sheet it is stated that those items marked need correction and attention, and that if they are not corrected, there will be action against the dairy.

This is something like what the Lord is doing here to the seven Churches. And, may I also add, that the Lord inspects and observes us in like manner. If fault is found, we are given a chance to correct that. The Lord is fair. He will not condemn us without a chance for us to know and understand so that we can do something about it. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." He wants us to be "Grade A." He knows that what we uphold as His Church will go out to the world. He wants no defilement or contamination. When we are corrected or found at

fault, we ought not to chafe under it. We ought rather to rejoice and be glad that the Lord is showing us our need and giving us a chance to do something about it. —L. Busbee

The Martyrdom of Polycarp, with others at Smyrna

At this time, as there were the greatest persecutions excited in Asia, Polycarp ended his life by martyrdom. But I consider it all-important also to record his end in this history, as it is handed down in writings still extant. There is, however, an epistle of the church which he superintended, to the churches of Pontus, which shows what befell him, in the following words: "The Church of God at Smyrna, to that of Philomelius, and to all parts of the holy catholic (universal church), everywhere, mercy, peace, and the love of God the Father, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied. We have written to you, brethren, the circumstances respecting the martyrs, and the blessed Polycarp, who as if sealing it with his martyrdom has also put a stop to the persecution." After these, before the account of Polycarp's death, they give the account of the other martyrs, and show what firmness they evinced against the tortures they endured. "For," say they, "those standing around, were struck with amazement, at seeing them lacerated with scourges, to their very blood and arteries, so that now the flesh concealed in the very inmost parts of the body, and the bowels themselves were exposed to view. Then they were laid upon conch shells from the sea, and on sharp heads and points of spears on the ground, and after passing through every kind of punishment and torment, were at last thrown as food to wild beasts. They relate that Germanicus, a most noble youth, was particularly eminent as a martyr; who, strengthened by divine grace, overcame the natural dread of death implanted in us; although the proconsul was desirous of persuading him, and urged him from considerations of his youth, and entreated him, that as he was so very young and blooming he should take compassion on himself. He, however, hesitated not, but eagerly irritated the wild beast against him, all but forcing and stimulating him, that he might the sooner be freed from this unjust and lawless generation. On the glorious death of this one, the whole multitude amazed at the courage of the pious martyr, and at the fortitude of the whole race of Christians, began to cry out "Away with the wicked fellows, let Polycarp be sought." A very great tumult arising in consequence of these outcries, a certain Phrygian, seeing the beasts and the additional tortures

that threatened, was so overcome by fear and shaken in his resolution, that he finally gave up his salvation. The contents of the aforesaid epistle, show that this man had frowardly rushed forward to the tribunal with others, and not in a modest retiring manner; and yet when seized, he gave a manifest proof to all, that it is not proper for those in this situation, to brave danger by rushing blindly and rashly upon it. When hearing details about these things, the admirable Polycarp at first continued unmoved, preserving his firm and unshaken mind, and was determined to remain there in the city. But persuaded by the entreaties of those around him, and exhorting him to leave the city secretly, he went to a farm not far away. There he stayed with a few friends, night and day, engaged in nothing but constant prayer to the Lord, and imploring peace for all the churches throughout the world; for this had always been his practice. In this situation, three days before he was seized, in a vision at night, and during prayer, the pillow under his head seemed to him suddenly to take fire, and thus to be consumed. On this, waking out of his sleep, he immediately began to interpret the vision to those present, almost foretelling the event that was about to take place, and plainly declaring to those around him, that it would be necessary for him to give up his life in the flames for Christ's sake. Those, however, that were in search of him, making every effort to discover him, he was again constrained by the affection and love of the brethren, to go away to another part of the country. There the pursuers came upon him, not long after, and caught two boys there, one of which they scourged in order to direct them to the retreat of Polycarp. Entering upon him at a late hour of the day, they found him resting in an upper room. Although he might easily have escaped to another house, he would not, saying: "The Lord's will be done," and having understood also that they were come, he descended and addressed the men with a very cheerful and mild countenance, so that those who did not know him before, thought they beheld a miracle, as they beheld the advanced age of the man, the gravity and firmness of his countenance, and were surprised that so much zeal should be exercised to seize a venerable old man like this. He, however, without hesitation, ordered a table to be immediately prepared for the men; then requested them to partake of food largely, and begged of them only one hour, that he might pray undisturbed. As they gave him permission, he arose and prayed, so full of the grace of the Lord, that those present who heard him were

amazed, and many of them now repented, that so venerable and pious a man should be put to death. Beside these things, the above mentioned epistle respecting him pursues the narrative as follows:

"But after he had ended praying, and had in this remembered all that had ever been connected with him, small and great, noble and obscure, and the whole universal church throughout the world, when the hour came for him to go they placed him upon an ass and conducted him to the city. He was met by Herod, who was the inenarch (an officer to preserve public peace), and his father Nicetes; who, taking him into their vehicle, persuaded him to take a seat with them, and said, "For what harm is there in saying Lord Cesar, and to sacrifice, and thus save your life?" He, however, did not at first make any reply; but as they persevered, he said, "I shall not do what you advise me." Failing, therefore, to persuade him, they uttered dreadful language, and thrust him down from the car with great vehemence, so that as he descended from the car he sprained his thigh. He was not at all moved from his purpose. He eagerly went on and was conducted to the stadium as if nothing had happened. But as there was so great an uproar in the place that not many could hear, a voice came from heaven to Polycarp as he entered the stadium: "Be strong, Polycarp, and contend manfully." No one saw who it was that spoke; but the voice itself was heard by many of our brethren. When he was led forward, however, a great tumult arose among those who heard Polycarp was taken. At length, as he advanced, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp, and he answering that he was, he persuaded him to renounce Christ, saying, "Have a regard for your age," and adding similar expressions. But Polycarp, with a countenance grave and serious, and contemplating the whole multitude that were collected in the stadium, beckoned with his hand to them, and with a sigh he looked up to heaven, and said, "Away with the impious." As the governor, however, continued to urge him, and said, "Swear, and I will dismiss you. Revile Christ"; Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me wrong; and how can I now blaspheme my King that has saved me?" The governor still continuing to urge him, and again saying, "Swear by the genius of Cesar." Polycarp said, "If you are so vain as to think that I should swear by the genius of Cesar, as you say, pretending not to know who I am, hear my free confession. I am a Christian. But if you wish to learn what the doctrine of Christianity is,

grant me a day and listen to me." The proconsul said, "Persuade the people." Polycarp replied, "I have thought proper to give you a reason; for we have been taught to give magistrates and powers appointed by God, the honour that is due to them, as far as it does not injure us; but I do not consider those the proper ones before whom I should deliver my defence." The proconsul said, "I have wild beasts at hand, I will cast you to these unless you change your mind." He answered, "Call them. For we have no reason to repent from the better to the worse, but it is good to change from wickedness to virtue." He again urged him. "I will cause you to be consumed by fire, should you despise the beasts, and not change your mind." Polycarp answered, "You threaten fire that burns for a moment and is soon extinguished, for you know nothing of the judgment to come, and the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the wicked. But why do you delay? Bring what you wish." Saying these, and many other similar declarations, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was brightened with grace. He not only continued undismayed at what was said to him, but on the contrary, the governor, astonished, sent the herald to proclaim in the middle of the stadium, "Polycarp confesses that he is a Christian." When this was declared by the herald, all the multitude, Gentiles and Jews dwelling at Smyrna, cried out, "This is that teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods; he that teaches multitudes not to sacrifice, not to worship." Saying this, they cried out, and asked Philip the Asiarch, to let loose a lion upon Polycarp. But he replied, that he was not permitted, as he had already completed the exhibition of the chase in the amphitheatre. Then all cried out together, that Polycarp should be burnt alive. For it seemed necessary that the vision which he saw on his pillow should be fulfilled; when seeing it on fire while he prayed, he turned to those few faithful friends with him and said prophetically, "I must be burnt alive." The crowd collected wood and straw for this purpose. Presently the instruments prepared for the funeral pile were applied to him. As they were also on the point of securing him with spikes, he said, "Let me be thus. For He that gives me strength to bear the fire, will also give me power without being secured by you with these spikes, to remain unmoved on the pile." They, therefore, did not nail him, but merely bound him to the stake. He, closing his hand behind him and bound to the stake said: "Father of thy well-beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of

thee. The God of angels and powers, and all creation, and of all the family of the righteous, that live before thee, I bless thee that thou hast thought me worthy of the present day and hour, to have a share in the number of the martyrs and in the cup of Christ, unto the resurrection of eternal life, both of the soul and body, in the incorruptible felicity of the Holy Spirit. Among whom may I be received in thy sight, this day, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice as thou the faithful and true God hast prepared, hast revealed and fulfilled. Wherefore, on this account, and for all things I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, through the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son. Through whom glory be to thee with him in the Holy Ghost, both now and for ever. Amen."

After he had finished his prayer, the executioners kindled the fire. When it arose in great flames, we saw a miracle. The flames presented an appearance like an oven, as when the sail of a vessel is filled with the wind; and thus formed a wall around the body of the martyr. And he was in the midst not like burning flesh, but like gold and silver purified in the furnace. We also perceived a fragrant odour, like the fumes of incense, or some other precious aromatic drugs. At length the wicked persecutors, seeing that the body could not be consumed by fire, commanded the executioner to draw near to him and to plunge his sword into him; and when he had done this, such a quantity of blood gushed forth that the fire was extinguished. The multitude were astonished that such a difference should be made between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this one, bishop of the church in Smyrna, was the most admirable, apostolical, and prophetic teacher of our times.

—*Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*

October 23, 1977

MESSAGE TO PERGAMOS

Rev. 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught

Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Num. 22:21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

27 And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

28 And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

31 Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

35 And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

31:16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

Memory Verse: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? I Cor. 3:16.

Central Thought: Those who sin will be cut off with the sword of the Lord.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Pergamos was an ancient city 50 miles north of Smyrna. It was the political capital of Asia. It was famous for its library of 200,000 volumes, second to Alexandria. Parchment, a writing material vastly superior to Egyptian papyrus, was invented there.

They also had Emperor Worship, where incense was offered before the statue of the Emperor as if he were a god. Many times, this meant death to the Christians if they refused to offer incense to the Emperor. The city had an altar to Jupiter and many other heathen gods. They worshipped a god in the form of a serpent, called the healing god. They had the terrible teaching of Balaamites and Nicolaitanes. It was headquarters for many false teachings of sacrificing to their gods and practicing fornication. Surely it was the "seat of Satan." These false teachings infiltrated into those who were in the congregation of the church at Pergamos. They were trying to mix their false teachings with the true doctrines of Christ. They were wanting to practice the sexual vices of the heathen worship.

See article on the "White Stone" for further information about the 17th verse of our lesson.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who told John to write the angel, or pastor about the congregation at Pergamos?
2. Why was Pergamos called the place "where Satan's seat is?"
3. What good did the flaming eyes of Jesus see there?
4. Discuss Balak calling Balaam to curse the Israelites and the evil he caused, also how God used drastic means to instruct him to do right.
5. Are we to keep still when wickedness abounds around us?
6. Discuss the white stone, and its spiritual meaning.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We are living in an ungodly age. My soul is stirred as I look and see so much ungodliness. Society is condoning fornication in such a way that it is openly committed. In the catalog of sins that the Apostle Paul mentions in Gal. 5:19 as the "works of the flesh," adultery heads the list and then fornication. It's been covered up in the past, but now it's in the open. I feel we need to openly declare that it is sin. Young people will boldly live together and not be married. They will openly admit it and never seem to think anything about it. It is a terrible sin

and an abomination in the sight of God and His children. In the days of Lot, it says that his "righteous soul was vexed daily" by the awful sins he saw. So it is today with the child of God, and he needs to cry out against it. Just because others are doing it, that doesn't make it right. Young people, take a stand against such wickedness and live clean and pure lives. God has that grace for you, even in this wicked world.

The piercing eyes of Jesus looked down upon the congregation at Pergamos and He saw wickedness abounding. Unless they repented He was coming to cut them off with the sword. Just as the Israelites were punished for their fornication and adultery in their day, just so, those who were committing sin would be punished unless they repented. Jesus told John to rebuke the ones who were attending the church at Pergamos, and were committing evil, trying to mix the doctrines of Christ with the evil doctrine of the Balaamites and the Nicolaitanes. God was displeased and would pour out His wrath against them unless they repented. Yet, some had proved faithful. Antipas had been a faithful servant of the Lord unto death. Others, at that time, had held their faith in God. God doesn't want us to condone evil among us or in our congregation. It needs to be taught against, yet we love the soul of those who are doing evil. They can never come out of evil unless the way to do right is taught.

When we think of that wicked city, all the influences used to allure toward sin, by neighbors, friends, business associates, etc., which young people and adults had to fight against, we know that today God will give us grace to live right, just as He expected those who professed His name to live right in that day. God will see everyone through to the end of this life with victory, if they will cling to Him and be willing to follow in His footsteps. —M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

One of the things the church of Pergamos had that was foreign to Christ was that the doctrine of Balaam was being upheld. It is stated in our lesson that Balaam taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. Here is the only place in the Bible that reveals the manner in which Balaam counseled Balac in his attempt to overthrow Israel. The account in Numbers fails to clearly show this. The historian Josephus has this to say about it. Balaam failed to curse Israel as Balac desired, so he was told to leave and that

without the honours that had been promised. Just as he was taking his leave he sent for Balac and his princes, and spake thus with them: "I am obliged without the will of God to satisfy you. It is true that no destruction can seize upon the nation of Israel, for the providence of God is preserving them from any misfortune; nor will permit any calamity to come upon them whereby they may all perish. There may be small misfortunes that will befall them for a short time, but from these they will revive and flourish again. If you have a mind to gain a victory over them for a short space of time, you may do so by following my directions. Set out in view of the young men of Israel some of your most beautiful and most handsome daughters, and cause them to force and conquer the admiration of all who behold them. Send them to be near the Israelite camp and allure the young men into their company, winning their affection. Then instruct the young women to suddenly take their leave, and if the young men entreat them to stay, lay upon them the demand to come and serve your gods and leave off the worship of their God. By this means God will be angry at them. When Balaam had suggested this counsel, he went his way.

This is just what happened. Israel fell a prey to this trap and in the final wind-up of the affair 24,000 were destroyed for their sin. This is a warning to us today. Satan is not going to overpower us by force, persecution, or pressure. He stands a greater chance by enticement and allurements through the lust of the flesh. How we need to be on our guard. Josephus goes into great detail of this, and although Israel in the end of the matter triumphed over the enemy, 24,000 had been lost. God help us to be on our guard against the devices of Satan.

—L. Busbee

WHITE STONE

The letter to this church also closes with an exhortation and a promise. Hidden manna and a white stone in which is inscribed a new name are rewarded the overcomer. The interpretations of this white stone have been various, but the difficulty seems to lie in determining which ancient custom is meant. The most satisfactory to my mind is that contained in the following account by Mr. Blunt:

"In primitive times, when traveling was rendered difficult from want of places of public entertainment, hospitality was exercised by private individuals to a very great extent, of

which, indeed, we find frequent traces in all history, and in none more than in the Old Testament. Persons who partook of this hospitality, and those who practiced it, frequently contracted habits of friendship and regard for each other, and it became a well-established custom among the Greeks and Romans to provide their guests with some particular mark, which was handed down from father to son, and insured hospitality and kind treatment whenever it was presented. This mark was usually a small stone or pebble, cut in halves, upon each of which the host and the guest mutually inscribed their names, and then interchanged with each other. The production of these stones was quite sufficient to insure friendship for themselves or descendants whenever they traveled again in the same direction; while it is evident these stones required to be privately kept, and the names written upon them carefully concealed, lest others should obtain the privileges instead of the persons for whom they were intended." So those who have obtained salvation and are overcomers through the blood have received the sure pledge of Christ's eternal friendship (which those who know not God cannot receive) and are invited to partake of all his hospitalities, even to "eat of the hidden manna," which is experienced by the truly sanctified.

—Rev. Explained by F. G. Smith

October 30, 1977

MESSAGE TO THYATIRA

Rev. 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins

and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

Psa. 149:5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;

9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Memory Verse: Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matt. 18:18.

Central Thought: God's Word is powerful and will bind and loose souls.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Thyatira was famous for its magnificent Temple of Artemis, another name for Diana. It is thought that Jezebel was a prominent woman, with a great following in the city, yet was a devotee of the god, Diana. Since she was very influential, and some manuscripts assert she was the wife of the bishop of the church at Thyatira, she was suffered to introduce her false teachings, trying to corrupt the true religion by using her authority and harassing the Christians. Not all of the Thyatira pastors accepted her teaching, yet trying to be liberal thinking that it would possibly help bring the whole city to the name of Christ, they accepted her as a fellow-pastor. For their compromise they received a stinging rebuke from Jesus. He was greatly displeased.

In the Old Bible there was another wicked woman named Jezebel. The King of Israel, Ahab, married her and she caused

him to sin against God. He built altars to her god, Baal, and let her have her priests. Many in Israel sinned and God was displeased. He sent a famine in the land and finally Elijah called them together to choose whom they would serve, God or Baal. God answered prayer, and sent fire down and burned up the sacrifice. Of course, no fire came when the 400 priests of Baal prayed to him, so Elijah ordered them to be killed. Jezebel was angry and sought Elijah's life.

Jezebel also had Naboth killed so Ahab could get his vineyard, and did many other wicked things. Her punishment was described and later came to pass. (I Kings 16:31-33; 17:1; 19:1,2; 22:15-25; II Kings 9:30-35.)

False prophets are abounding today, the same as in Bible times, so we need to beware.

M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Jesus refer to Himself when He sent His judgment to the church at Thyatira?
2. What did they have that was commendable?
3. Discuss the evil that Jezebel did and her way of achieving her influence to work evil.
4. Discuss how God gives space to repent to people today.
5. What is the "rod" and how does it bind and loose souls today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

During the last few years wickedness has been abounding more and more in our society. False prophets are deceiving people and many are following them. People are openly declaring they do not believe there is a God. Many live like they will live forever and disregard the fact that they will meet God at the end of life. Some teach that they will return to this life in another form and some teach you just die like dogs without having a hereafter. We have too many facts to prove there is a hereafter for people to disregard it, yet many do. This does not alter the fact one bit. God has let some get a glimpse of the hereafter, while He has given us the Bible to read. We need not be in the dark concerning facts.

We think of the great mercy of God, as we read about God giving Jezebel "space to repent." We think of the parable that Jesus gave in Luke 13:6-9. A fig tree did not bear fruit for three years and the owner (God) said, "cut it down." But the dresser (Jesus) wanted to dig about it one more year and then, if it did not bear fruit the owner (God) could cut it down. Surely that

was mercy! Could it be possible that some who profess the name of Christ around us are in their fourth year? Could it be possible they are not listening to the dealings of Christ with their soul? Sometimes He lets drastic things touch lives to wake a person up. If that doesn't work, then He has to cut that person off. Oh, how sad! God, for Christ sake, will do all He can to help us make heaven. If we miss heaven it will be because we did not want to go to heaven.

The rod is the Word of God. God's children have kept that Word and have it in their hearts and minds. They are commissioned to give it out to the people. By giving out God's Word they rule the nations. If people obey that Word (which is like a twoedged sword) given out by the saints of God, they will be loosed from their sins and be ready to meet God. If they disobey it they will be bound, and in the end, will be cast into hell. Oh, how sad! The saints base the word of truth they give out upon the greatest authority that can ever be found. It is the Word's of Jesus Christ. —M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is to be noticed that at the end of each individual address to the particular congregation, a promise is given to those who overcome. It would not mean near as much to Christ for us to serve Him in this life if there were nothing to overcome in our pursuit to love and please Him. There is much to overcome in the way of the devices and ways of Satan that he seeks to work against us. Many people stumble at little things and allow the devil to deceive them in trifles. The way cannot be made easy and convenient. It is a perilous voyage and journey that leads to the celestial city. There is grace to overcome all the obstacles that Satan throws against us, if we will keep close to the Lord and obey His voice.

Take note of the things promised to those who overcome. To those in Thyatira He promised to give them power over the nations. This power and authority over the nations and the rule over them with a rod of iron was what Jesus was given of the Father, set forth in the second Psalm, and mentioned several times in the New Testament. This power over the nations that Christ had and wills to give to all who overcome and keep His works unto the end needs to be properly understood. It is not a literal trampling and breaking of men in a fleshly sense. It is first a spiritual dominion and power wielded to subdue sin and the flesh and arrest the affections of man subduing him to Himself. To those who resist and refuse to yield

to the power of the gospel, there is a final breaking to shivers that will be fulfilled. Oh, the end of those who obey not the gospel of Christ! Words cannot tell the extent of the terrible punishment that they will be found worthy of receiving. In a spiritual sense it takes place even now. The holy and pure life of a true saint of God is reproof and condemnation to those who work unrighteousness. In the end the saints will judge the world right along with Christ. Noah by his faithfulness to God condemned the world in which he lived. We are a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. May God help us to diligently give heed to the Word of the Lord lest we be in that number who will be broken to pieces, and cast away forever.

—L. Busbee

November 6, 1977

MESSAGES TO SARDIS AND PHILADELPHIA

Rev. 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Memory Verse: Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Rev. 3:11.

Central Thought: We need to watch and pray or we will let the things of this world take our crown.

Word Definition: *Defile* means to "make filthy; pollute; to corrupt."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Sardis was one of the most powerful and richest cities in the world during the 6th century. Even in Roman times, it was famous. It was beautifully situated on the Patolus River in the middle Hermus valley, at the foot of Mt. Tmolus, and was once the capital of the kingdom of Lydia, the place of residence of Croesus and other Lydian kings.

The church was threatened with sudden visitation but it is not known in what manner it would come to pass. The city has lain in ruins for centuries, the modern village of Sart composed of a few huts inhabited by seminomadic Yuruks alone remaining near the ancient site.

(See article on Philadelphia at end of lesson.)

QUESTIONS:

1. Did Jesus find anything to commend in the church at Sardis?
2. What was He going to do for the "few names" who had not defiled themselves?
3. Philadelphia had much to be commended for and what would Jesus cause those who were liars to do?

4. How can we let "no man take thy crown?"
5. Where did the new Jerusalem come down from and what about the old Jerusalem?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Let us learn some lessons from these churches we have been studying. Their history was preserved for a special reason. We need to take warning lest the same things happen to us. If we do not keep the love of God burning in our hearts we can be just like any one of these seven churches. How awful for Jesus to come and take away the candlestick out of the midst of the church! We want to be "fervent in spirit," watching and praying, keeping a burning love in our hearts for God and for the souls of mankind.

Sardis had just a few who had not defiled their garments but they were about dead. They needed to be revived. But those few, who had not defiled their garments, had their names written in heaven. Jesus would confess all those who loved him before the Father and the holy angels. What a glorious thought! Can you hear Jesus telling the Father and all the holy angels about you? Oh, may God help us to be faithful in all things! We want to be known in heaven, that place where we will live eternally.

We love to read about the church at Philadelphia. We hear words of encouragement and promise because they had not denied His name. Jesus knew all about them and their works. He made them a number of special promises because they had held their faith and confidence strong in the Lord. Before them was an open door and no man could shut it. Their enemies might come hard against them but they would be preserved. They would overcome, and by their faithfulness, they would be able to help others find the Lord as their personal Saviour. Faithfulness counts for so much. Living up to what the Bible teaches has a great bearing upon others. Many will profess to be the Lord's, talk a lot about what God does for them, etc.; but when their life is watched, they do not live up to what they talk about or profess. Teaching and living the life will have its effects. The church at Philadelphia was to be able to help many souls find Christ.

We all want to be pillars in the Church of God; but to be a pillar, we must overcome the world and all the temptations of the enemy of our souls. We have been born into the new Jerusalem which came down from God out of heaven. We are not looking to live in that old city in Israel called Jerusalem.

We have something so very much better. Today, we are "come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." Heb. 12:22,23. We are a lively stone in the building of God, which is "an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:20-22.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I once saw a motto hanging on the wall of a certain chapel, which impressed me greatly and I have thought much about it ever since. It said: "If every member of this church were just like me, what kind of a congregation would this church be?" Perhaps we could ask another question. "If Jesus were to write a personal letter to the congregation of which I am a member, what kind of a letter would it be?" Then let us each one individually ask ourselves this question: "If Jesus would write a special letter personally to me, what kind of a letter would it be?" These are thought-provoking questions.

The Lord has not promised to write us each one individually such a letter or to send to every congregation a letter such as He does in our lesson. But we do have His precious Word and loving commandments and also we have the account of what He was when He was here, and we can follow in His steps and be just as sure of pleasing Him as it would be if He would write or visit us each one personally. Yet we each one need to be stirred and challenged and moved by special visitation from the Lord, or be stirred by exhortation from others lest we fall into the error of the wicked. That is why we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but we should exhort one another daily, and so much the more as we see the day of the Lord approaching. We should give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. We should always be open for reproof, correction, or instruction. It is very evident that no matter how hard one tries to be perfect, there is always a possibility that he might be missing the mark somewhere. It is a fool that imagines that he or she is so perfect that they never need counsel or correction. To each of these churches Christ is expressing their true condition. To all but two (Smyrna and Philadelphia) He is directing counsel that is calling for repentance and correction on their part. He said it not to condemn, but rather to help them to see their error so they could do something about it.

It is very important then for us to examine ourselves earnestly and study to show ourselves approved unto God.

—L. Busbee

PHILADELPHIA

Another promise to this congregation (Philadelphia) was, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." Some dreadful calamity is here predicted, during which the power of God would be mercifully manifested in granting this church a special preservation. Some suppose it to have reference to a great general persecution throughout the Roman empire, during which the Christians of Philadelphia would be spared. This may have been the fact; but whether it was or not, we have no means of information. When we come to consider the symbols of chapter nine, in which the delusive error of Mohammedanism is set forth, we will see what a period of sore trial this delusion was to the Eastern churches. It is also a fact that, in the midst of this abounding heresy, the church of Philadelphia was preserved as was no other church of Asia. When the followers of Mohammed were sweeping like a whirlwind over the Eastern empire, ravaging everywhere before them, Philadelphia remained an independent Christian city, when all the other cities of Asia Minor were under the power of the Saracen sword. It held out against the Ottoman power until the year 1390 A.D., when it surrendered to Sultan Bayazid's mixed army of Ottoman Turks and Bysantine Christians (?). This was six years after the death of Wickliffe, "the morning star of the reformation," who opposed the corruptions of the Papacy, gave the world the first English translation of the Bible, and sowed the seeds that soon grew and produced a Huss, a Jerome, and a Luther. So God preserved the Christians of Philadelphia in the East until He began raising up others to herald His truth in the West, whose labors soon ripened into the glorious Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. . . .

To inquire further into the history of this church, Philadelphia still remains with a population of about fifteen thousand. It contains a number of places of public worship, a resident (Greek) archbishop, and several inferior clergy. Mr. Keith, in his "Evidence of Prophecy," speaks of the then presiding bishop, and says that he acknowledges "the Bible as the only foundation of all religious belief" and admits that "abuses have entered into the church, which former ages might endure, but the present must put down." It is also a

singular coincidence that the modern Turkish name of the city, Ala-Shehr, signifies "city of God."

This description of the church of Philadelphia I will bring to close by adding the following extract from Gibbon, recorded in his noted history entitled "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." It is of especial value since the writer, being an avowed infidel, cannot be convicted of misconstruing historical facts in order to favor Christianity.

"The captivity or ruin of the seven churches of Asia was consumed [by the Ottomans] A.D. 1312, and the barbarous lords of Ionia and Lydia still trample on the monuments of classic and Christian antiquity. In the loss of Ephesus the Christians deplore the fall of the first candlestick of the Revelation. The desolation is complete; and the temple of Diana and the church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveler. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes. Sardis is reduced to a miserable village. The God of Mohammed without a rival is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus; and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant sons defend their religion and freedom above fourscore years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies of Asia, Philadeplphia is still erect—a column in a scene of ruins—a pleasing example that the path of honor and safety may sometimes be the same." Vol. VI., p. 229.

—*The Revelation Explained*, F. G. Smith

November 13, 1977

MESSAGE TO THE LAODICEANS

Rev. 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Memory Verse: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Rev. 3:20.

Central Thought: Be either cold or hot, because lukewarmness brings deception.

Word Definition: *Lukewarm* means "barely warm; tepid; lacking of warmth of feeling or enthusiasm." *Wretched* means "very unhappy; miserable, unfortunate."

LESSON BACKGROUND

"Laodicea was one of the wealthiest cities of Asia Minor. It was built upon some low lands, and occupied an important situation in the center of a very fertile district. It was famous for its money transactions and for the beautiful soft wool grown by the sheep of the country, which facts are both alluded to in the messages of verses 17 and 18. During the reign of Tiberius Caesar it was entirely destroyed by an earthquake, but its wealthy inhabitants rebuilt it immediately. A Christian church was soon planted there for Paul makes the request that his epistle to the Colossians be read in the church of Laodicea and that his epistle to the church of Laodicea (which was not included in the New Testament canon) be read unto them. Col. 4:16.

"Nothing remains of that proud, wealthy city of Laodicea. . . . Not even a Turk has any fixed residence on the spot. Its ruins alone remain in their desolation, 'rejected of God, deserted of man, its glory a ruin, its name a reproach.' The Encyclopedia Britannica says, 'Its ruins are of wide extent. . . . There is no doubt, however, that much has been buried

beneath the surface by the frequent earthquakes to which the district is exposed.' F. G. Smith in his research says, "Smyrna and Philadelphia, where Christ found nothing to condemn and to those churches He uttered only words of comfort and promise, remain until the present day and are the brightest spots on the whole scene, standing like erect columns in the midst of surrounding ruins. . . . I do not wish, however, to give too much prominence to the cities themselves in the fulfilment of these prophecies, yet it is a singular fact the subsequent history of the cities themselves has accorded in a remarkable degree with the nature of the prophecies uttered. It may be that God has preserved Smyrna and Philadelphia because of the piety of their ancient inhabitants."

QUESTIONS:

1. What did riches do to the church which Apostle Paul planted in the rich city of Laodicea?
2. Why did Jesus say that He wished they were either cold or hot?
3. What did He counsel of them to buy from Him?
4. What does God do to those whom He loves?
5. Where is God knocking and what does He want to do when He enters?
6. What lessons have we learned from studying these seven churches of Asia?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Let us take warning from these churches we have been studying and see that we live a life which is "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." God is no respecter of persons and He will cut off those who do not serve Him from their hearts. Living for God is not a hit and miss thing. We must take time to be holy and put Him first in our lives. He will come quickly if we are not faithful and we will be cut off.

The Laodiceans were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." What a sad spiritual condition they were in! Even though they were in such a sad condition we find that Christ pleads for them to repent of their ways and let Him come into their hearts and sup with them. Oh, the love of Christ is uncomparable! While we are in this life He will do all He can to see if we can be made ready for heaven. How sad it is that so many reject all of His pleadings and of course then justice will fall and we will be cut off. I am glad I can know that Christ is living in my heart, aren't you? Oh, the richness

of the spiritual blessings that fall upon the soul of that one who is clear before God! Nothing in this world can compare with it. Yet, so many are like the Laodiceans who were seeking this world's goods and were reveling in having them. They had forgotten the true riches of salvation and were not getting the true gold from the Word of God and letting it work in their lives to bring them spiritual blessings and treasures in heaven.

Their love for God had cooled off. They had a profession. They were lukewarm. They just glided along and drifted, thinking they probably would make it into heaven. They probably attended services but were sleepy, halfhearted in their singing, or any kind of worship. As they went out the door they forgot about Christ as they plunged into their daily duties. Jesus says that He wishes they would be either cold or hot. A sinner knows he is a sinner and you can tell him to repent, but a lukewarm person, with a profession, will justify himself and therefore reject any help.

Christ still had some love for them and stood at their heart's door and knocked. Oh, He wanted to come in and sup with them. What a blessing to sit down at the table with Christ as the Psalmist said, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." On that table are large dishes of forgiveness, love, kindness, peacemaking, mercy, and all the things that a person needs when their enemy comes against them. Christ is there to keep the dishes well filled so it is precious to partake of love, joy, meekness, humility, and all that we need to cause our souls to grow and flourish in the lovely things of God.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This church of Laodicea had become lukewarm evidently according to Christ's judgment in our lesson because of (1) lack of spiritual riches, (2) failing to be covered with the righteousness of Christ, and (3) the blindness and hardness of their hearts. Their lack of spiritual riches could very well have been caused from their prosperity and ease. Prosperity has always been hard on spiritual welfare. It is not necessary for it to be thus. There have been those who have been blessed with material wealth who have been faithful to God. But they are few. The general trend for those who are abounding in material wealth is to become lax and careless toward spiritual things. Jesus even warned us about this, saying, "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of Heaven!" We are in a time of great prosperity today in our world. We see a great

spiritual decline, also. The majority of people are so taken up with the material cares and riches that they have no time for eternal things. The prosperous and easy way of life had no doubt caused these people to neglect to seek Christ for a living relationship with Him and to be covered with His righteousness. Thus their hearts were blinded and darkened.

Jesus told them what to do. "Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." We cannot buy anything of Jesus with money. We buy of Him with our faith, with our humility, with our taking up of His cross, with self-denial, with loving and earnest submission to His commandments. This will bring spiritual riches upon our souls. "Buy of me . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Oh, how we need to be covered with the Lord Jesus and not have the flesh showing itself! This is not physical nakedness that He is speaking of here. It is rather living to the flesh and its desires that needs to be covered with the righteousness of Christ. We need to have the mind of Christ and be led by the Spirit of God. "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." This is the last one mentioned, but it is not the least. Oh, how we need our eyes enlightened! This is not natural eyesalve that He is calling for. It is the Spirit of God that we need to receive in our hearts and yield to in all things. He can and will enlighten our eyes so that we can see the spiritual, unseen, eternal riches of Christ.

—L. Busbee

Samuel Morris

The reason for the appalling spiritual decline in our churches, and the rapid growth of false doctrines is clearly set forth in this leaflet, viz the Holy Spirit has been neglected. See Rev. 2:5.

Samuel Morris was a Kru boy. He was an African of the Africans, a pure negro; when I first knew him he was probably about twenty years of age. He was a resident of Liberia, where he was employed among English speaking people as a house painter, and where he first found the Lord. A missionary girl came from the far west to go out under Bishop Taylor, and, as I was secretary for the Bishop, I received her. I had become intimately acquainted with the Holy Ghost and, of course, was full of Him.

I talked from the abundance of my heart to her of Him. I told her if she would receive Him she would be a success in Africa, and would not be sick, lonesome, nor wearied. He would be her strength, wisdom and comfort, and her life would

be a continual psalm of praise in that dark continent. She hearkened—desired—consented—asked, and He came—an abiding presence. She departed, filled with the Spirit. Her companion missionaries thought she would be a failure, as she kept herself aloof and would sit alone, talk, cry, and laugh; they thought she had left a lover behind, and therefore her actions. She had her Lover with her; hence her peculiarities. She had reached her station, sat down to her work—contented, blessed, and happy.

This Kru boy, Samuel Morris, heard of her arrival, and walked miles to see her and talk about Jesus. She was filled and overflowed with the Holy Spirit, and was glad to pour out of Him on Samuel.

He became enthused, and he desired and was determined to know the Comforter Divine. Journey after journey was made; hour after hour was spent in conversation on the darling theme; when she, wearied with a constant repetition, said: "If you want to know anymore you must go to Stephen Merritt of New York; he told me all I know of the Holy Ghost."

"I am going — where is he?"

She laughingly answered: "In New York." She missed him; he had started. Weary miles he traversed before reaching the ocean. As he arrived on the shore, a sailing vessel dropped her anchor in the offing, and a small boat put ashore; Samuel stepped up and asked the captain to take him to New York. He was refused with curses and a kick, but he answered, "Oh, yes, you will." He slept on the sand that night, and was again refused; the next morning, nothing daunted, he made the request again the third time, and was asked by the captain, "What can you do?" and he answered, "Anything." Thinking he was an able-bodied seaman, and as two men had deserted, and he was shorthanded, he asked, "What do you want?" meaning pay. Samuel said: "I want to see Stephen Merritt." He said to the man in the boat, "Take this boy aboard."

He reached the ship, but knew nothing of a vessel of the sea. The anchor was raised and he was off. His ignorance brought much trouble; cuffs, curses, and kicks were his in abundance; but his peace was as a river, his confidence unbounded and his assurance sweet. He went into the cabin to clean up—and the captain was convicted and converted; the fire ran through the ship and half or more of the crew were saved. The ship became a Bethel, the songs and shouts of praise resounded, and nothing was too good for the uncouth and ungainly Kru boy.

They landed at the foot of Pike Street, E. R., and after the farewells were said, Samuel, with a bag of clothing furnished by the crew (for he went aboard with only a jumper and overalls, with no shoes), stepped on the dock. Stepping up to the first man he met, he asked: "Where's Stephen Merritt?" It was three or four miles away from my place, in a part of the city where I would be utterly unknown, but the Holy Spirit arranged that; one of the Travelers' Club was the man accosted, and he said: "I know him; he lives on Eight Avenue, on the other side of town. I'll take you to him for a dollar."

"All right," said Samuel, though he had not one cent.

They reached the store just as I was leaving for prayer meeting, and the tramp said: "There he is!"

Samuel stepped up and said, "Stephen Merritt?"

"Yes!"

"I am Samuel Morris; I've just come from Africa to talk to you about the Holy Ghost."

"Have you any letters of introduction?"

"No, I had no time to wait."

"Well, all right; I am going to Jane Street prayer meeting. Will you go into the mission next door? On my return I will see about your entertainment."

"All right."

"Say, young fellow," said the tramp, "where is my dollar?"

"Oh, Stephen Merritt pays all my bills now," said Samuel.

"Oh, certainly," said I, as I passed the dollar over.

I went to the prayer meeting—he to the mission. I forgot him until, as I put my key in the door, about 10:30, when Samuel Morris flashed upon my remembrance. I hastened over, found him on the platform with seventeen men on their faces around him; he had just pointed them to Jesus, and they were rejoicing in His pardoning favor. I had never seen such a sight. The Holy Ghost in this figure of ebony, with all its surroundings, was indeed a picture.

Think, an uncultured, uncouth, uncultivated, but endowed, imbued, and infilled African, under the power of the Holy Spirit, the first night in America winning souls for Emmanuel—nearly a score. No trouble now to take care of him. He was one of God's anointed ones. This was Friday. Saturday he stayed around. Sunday, I said, "Samuel, I would like you to accompany me to Sunday school. I am the Superintendent, and may ask you to speak." He answered, "I never was in Sunday school, but all right." I smilingly introduced him as one Samuel Morris, who had come from Africa to talk to their

Superintendent about the Holy Spirit. I know not what he said. The school laughed, and as he commenced, my attention was called, and I turned aside for a few moments; when I looked, and lo, the altar was full of our young people, weeping and sobbing. I never could find out what he said, but the presence and manifested power of the Holy Spirit was so sensible that the entire place was filled with His glory.

The young people formed a "Samuel Morris Missionary Society," and secured money, clothes, and everything requisite to send him off to the Bishop Taylor University at Fort Wayne, Ind. The days that passed while waiting to go were wonderful days. I took him in a coach, with a prancing team of horses, as I was going to Harlem to officiate at a funeral. I said, "Samuel, I would like to show you something of our city and Central Park." He had never been behind horses nor in a coach, and the effect was laughable to me. I said, "Samuel, this is the Grand Opera House," and I began to explain, when he said, "Stephen Merritt, do you ever pray in a coach?" I answered, "Oh, yes, I very frequently have blessed times while riding about." He placed his great black hand on mine, and turning me around on my knees, said, "We will pray," and for the first time I knelt in a coach to pray. He told the Holy Spirit he had come from Africa to talk to me about Him, and I talked about everything else, and wanted to show him the church, and the city, and the people, when he was so desirous of hearing and knowing about Him. He asked Him if He would not take out of my heart things, and so fill me with Himself that I would never speak, write, preach, or talk only of Him. There were three of us in that coach that day. Never have I known such a day—we were filled with the Holy Ghost; and He made him the channel by which I became instructed and then ended as never before.

Bishops have placed their hands on my head, once and again, and joined with elders of the church in ordaining services, but no power came in comparison. James Caughey placed his holy hands on my head and on the head of dear Thomas Harrison as he prayed that the mantle of Elijah might fall upon the Elishas—and the fire fell and the power came, but the abiding of the Comforter was received in the coach with Samuel Morris—for since then I have not written a line, spoken a word, or preached a sermon only for or in the Holy Ghost.

Samuel Morris was an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit for the greater and grander development of

Stephen Merritt in the wonderful things of God. He went to Fort Wayne. He turned the University upside down. He lived and died in the Holy Ghost, after accomplishing his work; and as a Holy Ghost man or woman never dies, so the life of Samuel Morris walks on earth today, and will live as long as I remain, and will never die. At his funeral three young men, who had received the Holy Spirit through his instruction, dedicated themselves to the work of God in Africa to take the place of Samuel Morris.

—An abridged story of the life of Samuel Morris

November 20, 1977

THE THRONE OF GOD

Rev. 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

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

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

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

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

9 And when those beasts gave glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Memory Verse: Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Psalm 89:14.

Central Thought: Holiness, righteousness, worship, praise, honour, reverence and beauty surround the habitation of God's throne.

Word Definitions: *Throne:* a seat of power and authority. "He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." These two stones were in the mind of the writer a good comparison with the purity, beauty, and value that shone out from the view of the throne of God. Jasper is a crystal stone. To gaze upon something of great value captures admiration, wonder, and awe, and at the same time fills one with desire to possess. *Elders:* The Greek word means "older" or "senior." In the normal functions of life those who are older and more experienced and acquainted with procedure and proper management are leaders. It is that way in the function of the church. There were 24 seats before the throne upon which sat 24 elders clothed in white with crowns of gold on their heads; 24 is double 12. There were 12 tribes of Israel, and there were 12 apostles of the Lamb. The "four beasts" would best be rendered "living creatures." *Sea of glass:* The term *glass* does not necessarily mean glass in the sense that we generally use the term. Its initial and base meaning is transparency. A crystal clear body of transparent substance with nothing hidden was spread out before the holy throne of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The message to the seven churches in Asia was just the beginning of God's revelation to John. John is now ushered in the Spirit into the sacred and holy presence of the Almighty seated upon His great throne. The throne of God is the center of everything that John sees. There is much similarity and likeness in this vision to what Ezekiel saw. Compare with Ezekiel 1. The four living creatures, the throne and the color surrounding the throne are quite strikingly similar in both visions. The sea of glass ties in very well with the cleansing laver of the Mosaic tabernacle and the molten sea of Solo-

mon's temple. We are looking at things that hold dear and important meanings to us. Let us each one give diligent heed and observe this holy scene, and the Spirit of God can and will give us understanding.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is John seeing this vision in an earthly realm?
2. Who sat on the throne?
3. What does the rainbow remind you of?
4. What were the seven lamps referring to?
5. What were the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders in our lesson doing?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

When you are looking at objects or material things there is a sizing up and evaluation going on as you look at them. Many such things of earth are very shallow in the extent of their value, and after observing them, we are ready to pass on to something else. But it is not so when you are beholding such things as we have in our lesson today. These are eternal things, and their meaning to us can be quickened to our minds and hearts and hold new and sacred value to us again and again. As we look upon the throne of God we are impressed in heart in many different directions. We think of the Scripture that says: "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." Psa. 103:19. We are persuaded that none can resist God's power and authority in reality. His kingdom is triumphant.

The four and twenty elders and the four living creatures must evidently sum up to stand for the redeemed of all ages. We think of Psalms 65:4, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." Those who are counted worthy to stand before the Lord are greatly blessed. This should be the desire of our hearts to be able to enter into the presence of God and receive His favor. The four living creatures had the likeness of a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle. You might be inspired to see four periods of time here represented. What impresses me is the four different aspects of God's kingdom in our hearts and lives. The lion represents power and dominion. The lion is the strong "king of beasts." God's grace gives us power to subdue all things to the will and pleasure of God. The calf (corresponding to the ox in Ezekiel's vision) represents service and sacrifice. The ox is used as a symbol of labour, and the calf was offered in ceremonial sacrifices. The man denotes intelligence and a rational soul.

God expects us to be wise and full of understanding. The flying eagle denotes faith, triumphant faith that soars above all doubts, troubles, and confusion. Thank the Lord, all of these things mean much to us in the Christian life.

Think of that sea of glass! Purity, clearness, holiness, Christ-likeness are all referred to here. No defilement or corruption can abide before the throne of God. No sin can enter there. God wants our hearts and lives as pure as this sea of glass. God desires for us to hear the voice of Him who sits upon the throne. Let us draw near to Him. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What a beautiful scene we see, in the spirit, with the Apostle John! The greatness of our God as He sits upon the great throne surrounded with great beauty, as is displayed in our lesson, brings joy to our hearts. The Apostle Paul says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:16. As we think of the symbols of beasts, or living creatures, the twenty-four elders as representing the redeemed host of people "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" before the throne, engaged in worshipping God unceasingly, casting their crowns before the throne, saying, "Holy, holy, holy," we want to join in the praises with them. Surely, all praise and honor is due the great God of all creation. He has given us many blessings and has created "all things" for His pleasure. We want Him to receive joy and pleasure from us, His creation.

As we kneel upon the "sea of glass" before the great throne, we know that everything in our hearts and lives is open before our God. From that throne we can receive power over all of our enemies, and the devil, and we know that victory belongs to us. With wings of power we can surmount the problems of life. We can have patience and be humble as we face life. God will give us wisdom as we seek Him and we can have perception as only God can give. Thus is the symbol of the four beasts with wings before the throne.

In this great scene we see the greatness of the power of our God as portrayed by the lightnings and thunderings proceeding out from the throne. With confidence we draw near unto our God because we are dressed in the white robes of righteousness and join the redeemed in saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" —M. Miles

SYMBOLS

Symbols are drawn from every department — from animate and inanimate creation, from animal life and human life, from the visable universe below and the heavenly world above, and also from some objects of fancy to which there is no corresponding object in existence, such as Daniel's four-headed beast, or the one in the Revelator's vision with seven heads and ten horns; but in the selections of the same a proper correspondence of quality is kept up. The symbols that are chosen to set forth the great spiritual affairs of the church are such as are in themselves nobler than those selected to describe the political affairs of kings and empires, because in the divine estimation the church is of infinitely greater importance and occupies a more honorable position than worldly kingdoms. Thus, a beautiful virgin bride is chosen to represent the church of God; whereas a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns is chosen to symbolize the Pagan Roman empire. The glorious body of God's reformers is set forth under the symbol of an angel from heaven, with his face as the sun, his feet as pillars of fire, and a rainbow upon his head; whereas the Saracen warriors of Mahomet are locusts upon the earth, with stings of scorpions. The department of human and angelic life is chosen to set forth the spiritual affairs of the church, while the department of nature and of animal life represents the political affairs of nations. To this general rule, there is at least one exception. Certain things connected with God's chosen people under the old dispensation are considered proper symbols to represent similar things or events in the New Testament dispensation, without special regard to the department from which they are drawn. Thus, the temple, altar, incense, candlesticks, holy city, etc., of the former age, though not taken from the department of human or angelic life, are nevertheless, clearly used to represent affairs of the church, the analogy in the case being apparent because of their former prominence as connected with the Lord's covenant people.

Again, when the symbol selected is that of a living, active, intelligent agent, it represents an analogous intelligent agent. Likewise, the actions of the former plainly denote analogous actions in the latter, and the effects produced by the actions of the symbolic agent signify analogous effects produced by the actions of the agent symbolized. To make it clearer: agents symbolize agents, actions symbolize actions, and effects symbolize effects. If this be not true — if agents can symbolize actions and effects as well as agents, or if actions can

symbolize agents and effects — then all is an inextricable maze of confusion, and well may we repeat the words uttered by a certain minister to the writer, "The book should have been called *Mystification*, not *Revelation*."

The same principle of analogy is carried out in another particular. Whenever the enemies of God or destructive agents were intended, objects of a corresponding desolating character are chosen as their symbols; whereas the peaceful triumphs of the cross, as exhibited by God's chosen people, are described under symbols of an equally benign and gentle character. Thus, the anti-christian, persecuting power of Rome is described as a ferocious, wild beast, stamping everything beneath its feet and spreading desolation on every side. The Vandal hordes of Northern barbarians, who under Genseric overran the Western Roman empire early in the fifth century, are symbolized by a volcanic mountain cast into the sea and spreading its streams of molten lava in every direction. The fearful pest of Moham-medanism is a dense smoke issuing from the bottomless pit and darkening the heavens. The Saracens of Mahomet are swarms of locusts appearing upon the earth, with scorpion stings, tormenting men five months, or prophetically, one hundred and fifty years. On the other hand, a church is a candlestick; its pastor, a beautiful star; the whole church, a virgin bride; the glorious assembly of God's reformers, a rainbow angel, etc.

From the foregoing it will be seen that symbols are not words, but things, chosen because of some analogous resemblance to represent other things; and by a careful study of the nature of the symbols themselves we can ascertain where to look for their fulfilment. In the present work no attempt has been made to prove the interpretations given merely by the authority of learned names (for they can be arrayed on every side of a passage), but the nature of the symbols themselves has been developed; and the reader will be able to judge how nearly the known laws of symbolic language have been followed.

It will be necessary, however, to notice another exception to the rules given, although it can scarcely be said to form an exception — it rather proves the very position taken. Undoubtedly, there are some few objects whose nature forbids their symbolization, there being no object in existence of analogous character that can be chosen as their representative. God, evidently, can not be symbolized; for where is the individual in heaven or on earth that can stand as His representative? "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare

unto him?" Isaiah 40:18. Man cannot represent Him, angels, cannot; for whenever they appear on the panoramic scene, they denote distinguished agencies among men. There may be certain symbols connected with His person, setting forth His divine attributes and proclaiming the eternal majesty of His name; but He Himself is described as "One sitting upon a throne," before whom the created intelligences of earth and heaven fall down and worship unceasingly, but no symbol of Him is given. The same exception also applies to the person of Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. While the human aspect of the Saviour, as exhibited during the incarnation in His sacrificial death, may be properly symbolized by a lamb, as in Chap. 5, there is no created intelligence in God's great universe that can be chosen to represent, in His true, essential divinity, Him who does not deem it robbery to claim equality with God. There may, likewise be certain symbols connected with His person to give us at least a faint impression of His divine character and infinite majesty; yet when He appears upon the symbolic scene, He distinctly announces, "I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore." "He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." So whenever the divine Christ appears on the symbolic scene, He comes in His own name, and we need look for no symbol of Him.

—F. G. Smith, *The Revelation Explained*

—o—

NOVEMBER 27, 1977

THE LAMB TAKES THE SEALED BOOK

Rev. 5:1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it

had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Memory Verse: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Rev. 5:12.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ was the only One who was found worthy to shape and order the course of the destiny of man, in that He gave His precious life's blood to save mankind from the power of sin.

LESSON BACKGROUND

John is about to behold a panoramic view of the course of the Church and the workings of God in the midst of the earth for future generations. The fulness of time has come, but there are many foes. He will see that the Church that Jesus purchased with His own precious blood will be triumphant.

John was one of the apostles who drew very near to the heart of Christ while He was here on earth. John leaned on Christ's bosom at supper. He stood by the cross while Jesus was being crucified. And now he is chosen to receive this special revelation which no man heretofore has been found to see and to know. The mystery of the coming ages and what they held for the people of God is to be unfolded before his view. The book that we see in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne has been generally viewed as the plan of salvation. Let us extend our vision of what this book represented as to include the extent of the age of mankind and the gospel day. Christ alone was given the privilege to take the book and loose the seven seals. It was He who had brought salvation and victory to mankind. He alone was worthy. The host of heaven was greatly interested in what the book held, for lo! when the Lamb of God who was Jesus the Christ took the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell on their faces before the Lamb. There, with the prayers of the saints of ages past coming up before God, a new song was sung to Christ. God is greatly concerned with His people in this wicked age. He foresaw all that we are going through. He gauged the power of His grace to cause us to triumph. Hear the song of the four beasts and the elders. It is thanksgiving for the great plan of salvation. This helps to prove that the four beasts and the four and twenty elders represent the redeemed of all ages. But look at the hosts surrounding the throne and the beasts and the elders. Ten thousand times ten thousand! That is the greatest number that the writer could express. And then thousands of thousands! That is even more. It is an innumerable host of angels. They cannot sing the redemption song, but they can extol the Lamb that was slain. The scene is now set for the future of the ages to be revealed.

Books in the days of John were strips of parchment or other material rolled up. The book in the symbolic vision in our lesson "consisted of a roll containing seven pieces each one rolled and sealed separately, so that the outer seal could be broken and the contents of the strip read without disturbing the remaining ones."

As we study today's lesson, let us keep in mind the vision of the throne in our last Sunday's lesson and all that were there.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was there no one found worthy to open the book?

2. Who is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," and why was He called thus?
3. How is it that He was called a Lion, and then a Lamb?
4. Why was He alone worthy?
5. Of what significance were the odours from the golden vials?
6. What was the Lamb that was slain worthy to receive?
7. What can this all mean to us who are saved today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The ages which were to follow the advent of our Lord to this earth were clearly foreseen of God. Mankind as a whole and most believers were originally unaware of what the course of history would reveal. But God knows all things from the beginning. It is evident that the purpose of this series of revelations that were given to John at this time was to pull the curtain of the future back and reveal in symbols and similitudes just what was in store for the people of God who were going forth in this world. At first, it seemed that the book was hopelessly sealed from mankind. John wept much at this, as we can see in our lesson. He was interested and concerned with the work of God. What joy filled his heart when he was informed that One worthy had been found. I am sure that he recognized in this mighty One his risen Lord and Friend. It is Jesus to the rescue again! All power is given unto Him in heaven and earth. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ was generated to mankind the power of an endless life. A thousand years to Him are as but one day, and one day as a thousand years. He inhabits eternity. Therefore, what seemed great and impossible to John was easily accessible to Christ. It surely paid Jesus to have submitted to the Father's will. Now He has a name that is above every name. He has ascended on high and led captivity captive. We are now living in the end of the gospel age. His coming is drawing nigh. Are we passed from death to life? Have we been made a partaker of His great and wonderful salvation? Whether we are able to grasp the depths of the revelation that is being given to John, let us be sure that we lay hold on His grace and power for our souls. He is the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David," brought salvation to us. Him shall all men be gathered who will be saved. His foes will be made His footstool. All things are put under His feet. And yet, He is a Lamb. Yes, as a Lamb He went to the cross and opened not His mouth in threat or retaliation against His persecutors. Oh, what a beautiful and inspiring scene! He is

now before the throne of God ready to unseal the book and reveal the future of the Church!

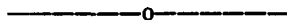
—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What a sad world this would be if Jesus had not stepped forward and "took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." As heaven and earth were searched for someone to take the book, John wept. Oh, if we had been there we would have wept, too. Today we rejoice because the "Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David," brought salvation to us. He has broken every chain and does give us the victory again and again. As we go forth in His name, we can overcome every obstacle that we face. There is power in His name and power in His blood it cleanse every soul that will humble himself before Him with a godly sorrow and a broken and contrite heart. Through Him habits can be broken and the body can be brought under subjection to His will. The lusts of the flesh can be crucified and the cause for wicked tempers can be eliminated. Praise God to whom all honor is due, and blessing, honor, glory, and reverence be unto our Lord and Saviour!

Notice that the four and twenty elders who worshipped the Lamb had "golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints." Doesn't that cause you to rejoice to know that our prayers are bottled up in heaven? Maybe we have been praying for years about something but we need to be encouraged to know that those prayers are not in vain. One of these days, God will pour all of those prayers out and the answer will come. Maybe He will pour them out upon that loved one for whom we have prayed for many years and he will be touched to seek the Lord. What rejoicing there will be in heaven when that one repents and also in the earth by those who have prayed!

—M. Miles



December 4, 1977

THE EARLY MORNING CHURCH VERSUS PAGANISM

Rev. 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

12:1 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:

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 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.

4 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.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

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.

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.

Memory Verse: 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. Rev. 12:11.

Central Thought: From the day of Pentecost the early morning church came forth bright and clear, evangelizing triumphantly, but was contested and opposed by the Pagan leaders and emperors who sought to quench the holy flame of the church by persecution and death.

LESSON BACKGROUND

A white horse bearing a rider going forth to conquer, followed by a rider on a red horse with a sword to kill and take peace from the earth, is the scene that is unfolded by the opening of the first two seals. This was the early morning Church going forth preaching the gospel to a world steeped in darkness and idolatry. It can be nothing else. From the twelfth chapter we draw a scene that corresponds to this one. This time the early morning Church is a woman clothed with the sun (Christ) and the moon (law system) under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars (twelve apostles of the Lamb). Being with child, she cried, travailing in birth. This was the Church in its missionary flame of service going forth to rescue a fallen world. The gospel was being preached in power and hungry souls were finding the Pearl of Great Price. But there is something else. A great red dragon stands ready to devour the child that the woman is about to bring forth. This great dragon corresponds to the rider on the red horse who had the great sword to kill and devour and take peace from the earth. This was the agency that the devil was working through when Christ and the apostles started the early morning Church. It was the power of Pagan Rome. It was the system of idolatry with which the peoples of the Roman Empire were entangled. Much of it was worship and honour and devotion to the emperor. The Christians refused to pay such homage to man. Their allegiance was to Christ alone and above all else. As the Church went forth conquering, the souls of men were at its heart, but the devil's agent, Roman Paganism, did all it could to stamp it out. Many Christians were immediately put to martyrdom and death because of their decision for Christ. It was a perilous time to claim to be a Christian. One did so at the peril of his life. But we find the Church prospering and growing in this time. The child that the woman brought forth stands to represent the converts of the early morning Church. Many were martyred, and were caught up to paradise to reign

with Christ. But the Church was triumphant. Not only were the martyrs caught up to God and to His throne, but the teachings of Christ found many who were seeking for a better way. Paganism slowly lost its grip on the masses. One of the last Roman emperors, Julian, was sorely wounded on the field of battle, and before he died he picked up a handful of crimson, bloody dirt and flung it skyward, crying, "Oh, Gallilean! thou hast conquered!" Praise the Lord, the Church was and is triumphant forever! —L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why can we easily conclude that the rider on the white horse and the woman clothed with the sun represent the early morning Church?
2. Why does Satan seek to destroy the Church?
3. In what way does the Church conquer?
4. What does the child whom the woman brought forth represent?
5. What does the sun and the moon and the crown of twelve stars represent?

SYMBOLS

"The symbol is that of a victorious warrior, on a white horse, being drawn from the civil and military life of the Romans. The symbol is one of dignity. It does not consist of some inanimate object such as a sea, etc., neither is it a wild ferocious beast; but it is that of a living, intelligent being, and he, as denoted by various insignia, a conqueror. (It's not Christ on the horse.) Christ always appears on the symbolic stage in His own character, unrepresented by another. This symbol is a faithful representation of the early triumphs of Christianity in its aggressive conflict with the huge systems of error with which it had to contend." The red horse and rider symbolized Paganism.

In chapter twelve, "the three principal objects of this vision are the woman clothed with the sun, the man-child born of her, and a red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. These, being drawn from nature and human life, would point us both to the church and to the state for their fulfilment. The woman is an appropriate symbol of the Church of God. The moon is a fit symbol of the old covenant. The seven stars are a symbol of Christian ministers. (Rev. 1:19.) The dragon is the pagan worship and government. The man-child symbolizes the mighty host of new converts that the early church by her earnest travail brought forth." Isa. 66:7,8; Heb. 12:22,23; Acts 1:41-47.

—F. G. Smith, *The Revelation Explained*

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Each one should earnestly study and ponder in prayer our lessons from the book of Revelation, so that the Holy Spirit can have a chance to apply and reveal the truth as it is needed. Our lesson today is Church history. World history blends with the account. The Church has had to come through the bloody seas of martyrdom. But God has sustained His truth and the power of His salvation is yet triumphant to save souls today from all sin. Satan has always found agents and individuals that he can work through to oppose the truth. The powers of idolatry and infidelity were strong in the Roman world. Rome had its gods, Greece had her gods, and multiplicity of gods in the world had brought much confusion and sorrow. Some had begun to wonder if there really were gods who were kind and sympathetic towards mortals. So much of mankind was suffering from sorrow and poverty and disappointment that they longed for a religion that would afford them solid hope of life after death. Such was the world that the light of faith in Christ shined into. This is the reason why so many embraced the teachings of Christ and the apostles. Herein is found the cause for which people so freely gave their lives at the stake and in the amphitheatres before the hungry lions. They had hope of life after death. This meant more to them than all that Rome in her glory could offer them. Rome was beginning to deteriorate anyway as a society and a nation. Corruption was setting in. The Germanic tribes from the north were threatening the security. Thus many souls found the consolation and freedom in Christ and the gospel day for which they were longing. The gospel of Christ is still the power of God unto salvation. It yet can lift a man from ruin and wrong and give him hope and victory over sin and death. There must be faith in the unseen. The just shall live by faith. How the devil hated this great plan of redemption! How the new-born faith was persecuted and hated! But it seemed that the more the Church was persecuted and the more Christians were killed, the more it grew and the more numbers were added. Truly, the blood of the martyrs was the "seed of the Church." Satan's plan to destroy the Church had failed. But he has another plan that shall be unfolded in our next lesson.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples to "go into all the world and preach the gospel." He tried to prepare them for opposition. He said that He was sending them forth as

"sheep among wolves," but that He would give them "power over all the power of the enemy." After they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they did go forth and preach the gospel. Souls were saved and five thousand were soon added to the church by the Lord.

The white horse with its conquering warrior and the woman are symbols of the early morning church of God. (Later we find that a vile harlot is taken as a representative of the church apostate.) The man-child symbolizes the mighty host of new converts of the early church. In Isa. 66:7,8, we read about the prophecy of this. "Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." According to Paul, those who were converted to God through Jesus Christ constituted "one new man" in Christ. Eph. 2:15. What a glorious account! The new church was on fire for God and they were dedicated to the cause of winning souls. They had all things in common and went forth as one, conquering and to conquer. They faced their fierce enemy, the red horse and its rider, also symbolized as the dragon, with confidence. They had faith in God to see them through.

Today we face opposition and it is getting stronger all the time. We need to be encouraged because God will see us through just as He saw those in the early church through their opposition. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." John 16:33b.

—M. Miles

December 11, 1977

THE GREAT APOSTASY AND RISE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Rev. 6:5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power

was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Memory Verse: Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. II Thess. 2:3.

Central Thought: After Paganism was overcome by the gospel and put down, Satan emerged as a foe to the true Church of God under the cloak of religion.

Word Definitions *Apostasy:* a falling away, a defection from the truth. *Blaspheme:* To vilify, or make vile, to make base or slanderous expressions, to defame.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There can be little question in the minds of the attentive student of the Bible and Bible history that the scenes we have before us in our lesson today truly stand for the great falling away of men from the early morning Church standard of truth unto the awful condition of Roman Catholicism. It is a fact there came a falling away from the truth that was preached by the Lord and His apostles. A new system arose. This was a different system and spirit of church worship. The Roman empire was crumbling away beneath vice and immorality. Their strength was being absorbed by corruption within, while the Germanic tribes from the north were beginning to overrun the empire. It was a troublesome and serious time. One historian states that the Bishop of Rome thought up a desperate plan to save civilization from being destroyed by devising a system of worship that would allure the half-civilized Germans into the Church. He succeeded in doing so, but at the same time lost sight of the real spirit of Christendom. This resulting apostasy did not just happen overnight. There were many things that led up to this. Persecution had ceased, especially since one of the Roman emperors himself, Constantine, had professed faith in Christ, and had banned persecution and made Christianity the religion of the empire. It was not a reproach or hardship to be a Christian any longer. This relaxing and ease that had replaced the hard and challenging days of the past had an adverse effect upon the spiritual lives of the people. The church leaders became elevated and exalted. This paved the way for man-rule to come in. This power that then took over the church world is the beast that John saw coming up out of the sea. It is the black horse followed by the pale horse. Many corruptions set in on the professed church: money and man-rule and superstition. False doctrine followed. Those who refused to go along with this system of worship were persecuted and martyred. The Roman Catholic Church is stained with the blood of the saints. This is a serious charge, but history will prove it to be true. The dragon (Paganism) gave him (the beast, Catholicism) his power and authority. Catholicism took over the job of opposing the work of God. This was to continue for forty and two months. $42 \times 30 \text{ days} = 1260 \text{ days}$. This referred to 1260 years God allowed this evil power to hold sway over the world. But the Church was yet triumphant. The true saints were being sheltered and sustained although there were but a few here and there who had the courage to serve the Lord in the Spirit.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Had the great falling away been prophesied?
2. Who is back of every departure from the truth?
3. Did God plan this great apostasy, and if He had had His way would it have been?
4. Is it possible for us to apostatize today?
5. What are some of the ways that we can fail of the grace of God and fall away?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is not our purpose and effort in these lessons on Revelation to pinpoint each and every detail in explanation. We do not claim to be able to do that, anyway. But we are very much persuaded that the issues that were of old which caused the great falling away from the doctrine of Christ are yet issues that we must face today if we are to be the real people of God. Pride is something that will damn and ruin the soul of man. It not only affects the individual, but it has a way of contaminating others and spreading like a cancer through the masses. When the leaders of a church apostatize, the laity will be swayed to follow suit. Pride and fleshly 'show are treacherous and dangerous foes of the Christian. In his individual experience he is to strive to be humble and take the example of Jesus for his pattern. He must diligently pursue his course and never turn back. There must be time taken to be holy, and a constant remembrance of what is written in the Word. Spiritual blindness and hardness of heart can set in if we are not careful. We must love the truth, and measure to it, line by line. We must never allow ourselves to have pleasure in unrighteousness. We must be instructed as to what sin is, and hate it. Oh, if we can keep our first love and the faith that was once delivered unto the saints unto the very end, how blessed it will be! Let us also remember that it is not God's will that any should perish. It is not His will that men go into apostasy. Man is a free moral agent. He can do as He pleases. If he chooses to serve God, he may and that with all the grace Heaven can afford. But if he chooses to go his own way, God will not stop him. Thus the dark age of apostasy came upon the world, not because God so desired or willed, but because man willed it so. Each succeeding generation as a whole fell in line with it. On and on it went. Yes, there were a few who sought the Lord and found Him precious to their souls, but they were few and far between. As we view our world today, we find the masses still in the grip of this terrible darkness. People are suppressed and held back

from the knowledge of God and His truth. The minds of mankind are degraded. Oh, that we will shine as the people of God so that others can see the truth in all of her beauty! It will surely have its effect. If we refuse to walk in the light of God's Word, that will have an effect on others, too. May God give us a vision of His blessed way and keep us walking therein.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The pale horse and the beast, that arose from the sea, to whom the dragon gave his power, seat, and great authority, represent the same thing. They are symbols of Catholicism or the Papacy. The Catholics took parts of the Christian religion and parts of the idol worship and put them together and with the government behind them, they had great power. All of this came to pass because of the great falling away and the false prophets coming in among God's children and leading many away from the truth. The Apostle Paul prophesied this would come to pass in II Thess. 2:3,4. The "man of sin" is the papacy and shows "himself that he is God." He feels he has the right to forgive sins, etc.

The rider on the horse was named, "Death." Surely, at this time many, who would not bow down to the false teachers, were put to death. "Millions lost their lives at the instigation of the apostate church of Rome. . . . For nearly three centuries the civil power of Pagan Rome had been employed to crush the cause of God."

Counting 30 days to the month times 42, would equal 1260. Each day, signifying a year, brings us to 1260 years. The apostasy was in full swing about A.D. 270 and the 1260 years brings us to 1530 A.D. That is the time Luther completely broke away from the Catholic Church and the "first Protestant creed was the Augsburg Confession in 1530 A. D.

Thank God, there were some who would not bow down. They had their names written in the book of Life. During the dark ages of Romanism a people existed who were owned by the Lord. God has always had a church, although at times the people were few in number and had to go underground to worship Him.

—M. Miles

December 18, 1977

THE IMAGE TO THE BEAST

Rev. 11:3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Memory Verse: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Romans 8:14.

Central Thought: Man-rule took the place of Holy Spirit leadership and inspiration in Protestantism causing the same spiritual apostasy that had brought on the Papacy.

Word Definitions: *Papacy:* The reign of the Roman Catholic Pope, the so-called "Visible Head of the Church." *Protestantism:* The movement among men to come out of the Catholic Church, "protesting" her sins and errors. *Catholic:* The word is defined as meaning "universal." Actually in one sense every saved person is a member of the universal church. But the Roman Catholic Church bore no fruit although called the true Church. Thus the name became as did become the names of many Protestant groups, just a name without the true sense of meaning.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are now beholding in our lesson the age of Protestantism. John Huss, Martin Luther, Zwingle, and many other reformers spearheaded the great movement that broke with the Roman Catholic Church. The zeal of God and flame of faith burned bright for a time, but the light was not clear and in its fullness. Eventually as time went on, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God were denied their rightful place in guiding the souls of men. These are the two witnesses spoken of in our lesson. They were the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, and this comes from the vision of the prophet in Zech. 4. We find the two olive trees portrayed there meaning the Word and the Spirit. These are the two witnesses that lay dead in the street of that great city which SPIRITUALLY are called Sodom and Egypt. This was the place SPIRITUALLY where Jesus was crucified. In other words, the same spirit that prevailed in the hearts of men causing them to deny the Spirit and the Word their rightful place (figuratively killing them) was the same spirit that worked in the hearts of the leaders of Israel causing them to crucify the Lord Jesus. This same spirit can do likewise to us today if we are not on our guard. This scene corresponds directly with the other part of our lesson in chapter 13. After this first beast came up out of the sea (representing masses of people), there came up another beast out of the earth. Notice carefully his description. The first beast (Catholicism) had received a deadly wound, but that wound was healed. Catholicism received a great wound when men of God rose up against her in the Protestant reformation. But that wound was to be healed. How do you think it could well be healed? This second beast is none other than the apostasy of

the Protestant reformation. It made an image to the beast. The image to the beast was a likeness of the error and evil of the beast. This all involved the expelling of Holy Spirit leadership and Holy Spirit anointing in the Word of God, and the replacing of these with man-rule and man-authority. Humanism, materialism, money promotion, false doctrine, contentions, divisions, strife, and many other fleshly things accompanied the apostasy among the sects. True saints who held out against the errors and sins of the professed church were once again persecuted and many were slain. If we could comprehend this fact, and see that what God is really dealing with in the book of Revelation is the apostasy of professed Christians in the church age, we could understand it better and it would be a great challenging and warning message to us.

We can see that the image of the beast and the mark of the beast has to do much with the same thing. It is the grieving away and absence of Holy Spirit rule, leadership, anointing, inspiration, and the replacement of this with humanly devised worship. Paul warned the Colossian saints about this very thing in 2:18-23. It is a warning to us today. —L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who are the two witnesses?
2. Why were they clothed in sackcloth during the 1260 years of Papal night?
3. Where were they killed and their bodies lain? Who else was crucified there?
4. What did the second beast teach the people to do?
5. What does the image of the beast refer to? Are we in danger of it today?
6. Is the mark of the beast a literal mark put upon the natural man?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We are warned of Paul in Eph. 5:30 — “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” To grieve the Spirit of God is to break the seal that God has placed over us to keep us unto the end. When the seal is broken and the Spirit is grieved away, we can be open for any kind of spirit regardless of how false and erroneous it may be. Every child of God should not tarry long without seeking to be filled and anointed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God fills the heart and life and in His anointing, guidance, power, instruction, comfort, and joy, He is the only safeguard we

really have against the forces of the devil. Great care should be taken to keep Him in our hearts. If we ever sense that we have grieved or disobeyed the Holy Spirit, we should be quick to make amends and correct ourselves according to His pleasure. This world in the present age is a dangerous place to sojourn. Our only safety lies in the overshadowing mercy of God revealed in Christ and applied to our hearts by the working of the Spirit with us. Ages past have seen the rise and fall of many movements, most of which started out in the inspiration of the Spirit, but which lapsed into lukewarmness, idolatry, covetousness, formality, man-rule, and many other apostasies. If we endure unto the end and leave this world with the same love, faith, devotion, life, and character that Christ started us out in, we will have done well. This is the theme of the Book of Revelation. This is the triumph of the saints. This is the work of God. Let us be strong and valiant for the truth. Let us lean upon the Holy Spirit and obey His leadings. He knows best. Our human wisdom is far inferior to what living for God demands. Let us take heed to the lessons learned from the generations of the past. Let us be wise unto salvation, and follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As previously stated, we mark the change of things at the Augsburg Confession in 1530. This became the first Protestant creed. History verifies this fact. The beast finished his reign of forty-two months or 1260 years. So now another beast appears which possessed great power. This beast is Protestantism, and through it the two witnesses, which are the Word and the Spirit, were murdered. The time was three and one half days or three and one half centuries. That makes it from 1530 to 1880 A.D.

Many sects arose in those Protestant years, all protesting against Catholicism. We studied in the History of England that during the reign of Mary Tudor, frequently called, "bloody Mary," that two hundred and eighty-eight were burned alive in England. In France the violent Oppede slew 800 men in one town, thrust the women into a barn filled with straw and reduced the whole to ashes. In Italy opposers were slain by the thousands. In Paris, in three days, six to ten thousands were slain. On and on the records show that the Catholic Church brutally killed those who would not bow down to her.

We thank God for those who were willing to give their lives so we could have the Word of God today. They have not died in vain. We want to value the precious truth of God's Word and

live daily by it. May God stir our hearts to greater diligence and may we carry a soul burden. Many need God and are dying without a Saviour. What are we doing to rescue the perishing?
—M. Miles

December 25, 1977

REJOICING WITH THE ANGELS

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

Matt. 2:11 And when they [wise men] were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell

down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Memory Verse: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matt. 1:21.

Central Thought: Our rejoicing is greater than the angels because we have experienced salvation, the greatest gift to this world through Christ.

Word Definition: *Swaddling clothes* were long narrow strips of material, which were used to wrap around a baby.

LESSON BACKGROUND

A Roman census consisted of two parts. "1. The account which the people were obliged to give in of their names, quality, employments, wives, children, servants, and estates. 2. The value set upon the estates by the censors, and the proportions in which they adjudged them to contribute to the defence and support of the state, either in men or money, or both."

The town was so crowded, and there was no room in the inn. Joseph wanted to take Mary off the street for the night so they asked to stay in the manger.

According to the general custom of the Jews they kept their sheep out in the desert during the summer and brought them home before the first rain, which generally started in October or November. As the shepherds had not brought the sheep home it is generally thought that Jesus was not born on Dec. 25th. We know that He was born one day so since Dec. 25th is used we will do the same. We just can't honor our Lord too much and we need to honor Him every day. Oh, surely all praises and honor are due our Lord and Saviour!

In Micah 5:2 it was prophesied that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem.

The Bible does not say that three wise men came from the east but it is generally thought there were three because they gave three gifts, but there could have been more than three or just two.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Where was it prophesied that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem?

2. Speak of the most sublime things of heaven that are joined with the lowest.
3. What was the world given through that Babe who laid in the manger?
4. Speak of others besides the angels who were afraid when they came into the presence of heavenly beings or the spirit of God, such as Adam and Eve.
5. Are there other places where there is no room for Jesus?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a glorious thought that love brought Jesus to this world! Love caused the greatest thing that heaven could give to be given to this world. No other love is as great as the love of our Lord and Saviour. Some men have died for friends, but no one has ever died for their enemies but Jesus. Love caused Him to be willing to take on flesh and blood and live in this world, be mistreated while He did good, and go to the cross and die such a horrible death. What a great Saviour! Even while He was on the cross, naked, crowned with thorns, exposed to sorrows, yet at the same time He shook the earth, and eclipsed the sun. Oh, yes, He died for you and me and love caused this to be. Should we not love Him with all of our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies?

Sin separated man from God. God did everything He could to bring peace between Himself and man. He caused the highest and the most sublime to be joined with the lowest. Jesus, the Son of God, took on flesh and blood and became the Son of man. When he was laid in the manger, again heaven was moved and the angels established communion with the lowly shepherds. They made them know the way to the cradle of the Saviour of the world.

Heaven could not keep the good news that Jesus had come to this world in the form of a Babe. Heaven broke open and a multitude of angels appeared with great rejoicing. The heavens echoed and re-echoed with praises and today we join in those praises. Today we can know the joys of being forgiven of our sins and be in touch with heaven. There is no greater joy in the world than what salvation brings to that repentant heart. Surely, there is no gift in the world greater than the Gift that God gave to those who will believe on Him for the forgiveness of sins. We can say with the Apostle Paul, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift." II Cor. 9:15.

We think of the fear that came upon the shepherds as they were in the presence of the angels. No doubt they felt so

unworthy. When sinners come into the presence of their judge they are trembling as they feel the weight of their sins and also the need for mercy. We think of Adam and Eve, who had sinned and how they hid themselves. It is a fearful thing to come before the Lord and rightly so. He holds our eternal destiny in His Hand, yet through His plan we can be ready to meet Him and come before Him with confidence.

—M. Miles

Suppose



Suppose that Christ had not been born,
That far-away Judean morn.

Suppose that God, whose mighty hand
Created worlds, had never planned
A way for man to be redeemed.

Suppose the wise men only dreamed
That guiding Star whose light still glows
Down through the centuries.

Suppose Christ never walked here in men's sight,
Our blessed Way, and Truth, and Light.

Suppose He counted all the cost,
And never cared that we were lost,
And never died for you and me,
Nor shed His blood on Calvary—
Upon a shameful cross.

Suppose that having died, He never rose,
And there was none with power to save
Our souls from death beyond the grave.

As far as unsaved sinners know,
These things that I've supposed—*are so!*

—M. S. Nicholson

