

# THREE SEVENS OF SCRIPTURE

by W.W. Fereday

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*W.W. Fereday examines three significant groupings of seven in Scripture, uncovering patterns of divine completeness and spiritual truth.*

29 Chapters

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## Three Sevens of Scripture

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## Preface

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It has been observed that, if a person has a clear understanding of the seven feasts of Jehovah in Lev. 23, the seven parables of the kingdom of heaven in Matt. 13, and the seven addresses to the assemblies in Rev. 2 and 3, a comprehensive outline of the ways of God with men may be had. In this paper then, we shall, with the Lord's help, take up these three sets of sevens in their order. May our hearts be subject to God and to His truth as we take up these most interesting parts of His Word.

## Introduction

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As regards the scope of Lev. 23, it is very broad indeed. The Sabbath's being set forth at the very outset of the chapter, our thoughts are directed back to the time when God's dealings with man on the earth first began. After having prepared the earth for man's habitation and happiness, God placed man upon it and rested from His work; hence, Jehovah's Sabbath. The Sabbath therefore was given to man as a memorial of God's own rest in creation. His rest though was soon marred by the coming in of sin, whereupon He began working all over again. This time though, it was with a view to the bringing in of something far better than that which had just been spoiled. (See Gen. 1:31-2:3; 3:7-10, 17-19; and John 1:29; 5:17.)

After having set forth the Sabbath then, our chapter proceeds on through the seven feasts of Jehovah proper, beginning with the Passover feast and ending with the feast of tabernacles. The former takes our thoughts back to the beginning of Jehovah's dealings with Israel as a nation, and the latter takes them on to the end of those dealings...and even beyond.

As to this latter point, when God's dealings with Israel are over, His dealings with man on the earth will be over as well. At that point, the heavens and earth of Gen. 1:1 will pass away to make room for a new heaven and a new earth. This marks an altogether new beginning, called "the day of God" (2 Peter 3:12), typified by an eighth day added at the end of the seven days of the feast of tabernacles. (See Lev. 23:36, 39.) The feast of tabernacles then speaks of the final phase of God's dealings both with man on the earth and with Israel as a nation, and the eighth day of God's eternal day.

As regards the structure of the chapter though, it has five sections or divisions. Each one begins with the words "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying." (See Lev. 23:1, 9, 23, 26, and 33.) The first section consists of instructions regarding the Sabbath, the Passover, and the feast of unleavened bread; the second, the feast of firstfruits and the feast of weeks; the third, the blowing of trumpets; the fourth, the feast of atonement; and the fifth, the feast of tabernacles.

**Verse 5: the Passover Feast EV 23:5{the First of the Seven Feasts of Jehovah Proper Is the Passover Feast. the Passover Lamb Is to Be Slain at Evening on the Fourteenth Day of the First Month of the Year. Its Blood Is to Be Caught in a Basin and Applied With Hyssop to the Two Doorposts and Upper Lintel of Each House. It Is to Be Roast With Fire and Without the Mitigating Effect of Water and Is to Be Eaten Along With Bitter Herbs. at Midnight, Jehovah Will Pass Through the Land of Egypt and Visit Death Upon the Firstborn of Every House Where There Is No Blood. Where There Is Blood However, He Will Pass Over That House; Death Will Have Already Been There**

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Looking back on that first Passover night then, all the Israelites were spared; but there was not a single Egyptian house where the life of a firstborn was not taken. That night therefore marked the deliverance of God's people from their Egyptian bondage. Accordingly, they were to remember their deliverance once every year thereafter by keeping the Passover feast.

The Passover feast typifies that stupendous event, without which there could never have been any recovery at all from the ruin sin had brought in. Had that event not taken place, the accomplishment of our over-abounding blessing, with which God's own heart was occupied, could never have been realized either. That event was, of course, the death of Christ upon Calvary's cross, by which God has been infinitely glorified with respect to the question of sin. Accordingly, a righteous foundation has been laid down, whereby God, Who is holy, might come out in blessing to sinful men. (See Ex. 12:1-13; Luke 22:1-18; 1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Col. 1:19-22; and Heb. 9:8-10:22.)

**Verses 6-8: the Feast of Unleavened Bread EV 23:6-8{in Immediate Association With the Passover Feast, There Is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. During the Seven Days Immediately Following the Passover, No Leaven Whatever Is to Be Found in the Habitations of Jehovah's People. in the Scriptures, Leaven Always Typifies Evil, Whether Moral, Doctrinal, or Ecclesiastical; and Seven Is Always the Number of Perfection or Completeness**

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The feast of unleavened bread therefore typifies our death with Christ and the manner of life that becomes those who have died with Him. If Christ has suffered, bled, and died to put our sins away, then how can we possibly just go on sinning the way we always used to do? God has "condemned sin in the flesh," and if He has condemned it, then we should condemn it as well. (See Rom. 8:3 and 1 Peter 4:1.) After all, when Christ died, He died "unto sin" and we died unto it with Him. (See Rom. 6:10-11.) Together then, the Passover feast and the feast of unleavened bread typify the death of Christ relative to sin on one hand and our death to it with Him on the other. Death is the ultimate liberation from sin and sinning. Sin shall not have dominion over the man that has died. A dead man is "freed from sin." (See Rom. 6:7, 14.)

**Verses 9-14: the Feast of Firstfruits EV 23:9-14{Next, the Day After the First Sabbath Following the Gathering in of the Barley Harvest, Which Is Also the First Day of a New Week, a Sheaf of the Firstfruits Is to Be Brought to the Priest and Waived Before Jehovah. the Lord Was Put to Death on a Friday, After Which He Spent the Entire Sabbath in the Tomb. Then, Early the Next Day, the First Day of the Week, He Arose From Among the Dead and Became "the Firstfruits of Them That Slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). Accordingly, the Feast of Firstfruits Speaks of Christ's Resurrection From Among the Dead. It Was the Day He Gained the Victory Over Death and Everything That Was Against Us**

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What is meant though by waving the sheaf of firstfruits before Jehovah? Why is it done? As the Son was in His lifetime, the Father's delight, so is He now in resurrection life as well. Therefore, it gives the Father pleasure to have Him thus presented before Him. The former is seen in the meal offering of Lev. 2, and the latter in the sheaf of firstfruits in our chapter. Since death is in view in neither of them, but rather, life, they are both meal offerings.

## Verses 15-22: the Feast of Weeks

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EV 23:15-22{Then, beginning with the first Sabbath after the feast of firstfruits, the people are to count seven Sabbaths—or 49 days in all. Then, on the day after the forty-ninth day, they are to count to themselves still one more day—that is, a fiftieth day. Fifty days after the sheaf of firstfruits is waved then, the feast of weeks is to be observed. Taking place, as it does, seven weeks after the feast of firstfruits, which occurred at the time of the barley harvest, this one takes place at the time of the wheat harvest. This feast is a feast like none other among the ordinances of the Israelites and is spoken of as a "new meat offering." It is therefore typical of a new thing that Jehovah will be doing. On that day, they are to wave two loaves of leavened bread baked in an oven before Jehovah.

Fifty days after the Lord's resurrection from among the dead, something happened, the likes of which had never happened before. On that day, something came into being that never had an existence before. It was the assembly. The Spirit of God was sent down from heaven on that day and took up His abode in the believers that were gathered together in Jerusalem. His presence being in them, they were all joined together as members of one body and were joined to Christ as their Head in heaven.

Nevertheless, since, in the Scriptures, two is always the number of adequate testimony, the two loaves are a figure for the assembly not in its "one-body character," but in its "testimonial character." Also, because the two loaves are a figure for the assembly itself, there is leaven in them as well. Although the believer doesn't have his sins on him anymore, he does still have the principle of sin within himself. It's worth noticing though that, as baking stops the action of leaven in bread, even so, the believer's death with Christ is sufficient to stop the action of sin within him. They are to be baked with leaven. (See also Lev. 7:12-13.)

As we have noticed above, the Passover feast and the feast of unleavened bread are intimately associated with one another. This is intended to illustrate the connection between the death of Christ and our death with Him. Such is also the case with the feast of firstfruits and the feast of weeks. These feasts are intimately associated with one another in order to show the connection between the resurrection life of Christ and our resurrection life with Him. The feast of firstfruits and the feast of weeks then are both meal offerings, derived from that which was sown in death and brought forth again in life. They are figures therefore of Christ and of those who are His own—not in death, but in resurrection life. It is the "more abundant life" of John 10:10. (See also John 12:24; and 1 Cor. 15:36.) This is why the Passover feast and the feast of unleavened bread are both found together in one division of the chapter, while the feast of firstfruits and the feast of weeks are also both found together in still another division of the chapter.

One remark needs yet to be made relative to this feast of weeks and its two wave loaves. Connected with that feast is Lev. 23:22, which is somewhat puzzling to some minds. When the people of God reap their fields, they are neither to go back and clean out the corners of their fields nor to go back and gather up the grains that have fallen to the ground from their already harvested

crops. As we have already seen, the two wave loaves are a figure for the assembly, which is God's heavenly people. These crops then are the firstfruits of that harvest from which the two wave loaves are made.

The question therefore is: Who are the crops that remain behind in the corners of the fields and those grains that have fallen to the ground? Are they a part of the assembly too? The answer is: No, they are not a part of the assembly; but, like the assembly, they are among the heavenly redeemed. After the assembly has been caught up to be with Christ in the Father's house above, then God will again take up His ancient people, Israel. Then, when Israel's Messiah returns, to set up His millennial kingdom, all who are alive in that day and have faith will go into the kingdom and will remain a part of His earthly people.

In the meantime though, many of His saints will have died, some of them having been martyred. Accordingly, even as Christ is returning to set up His kingdom, they will be raised from among the dead and caught up to join the heavenly hosts. Then, having been thus caught up, they will join Him as He continues His descent to set up His earthly kingdom. They will forever remain among the heavenly families and will be associated with Christ as He reigns over His kingdom. Thus, throughout all the ages of eternity, they will remain a part of the heavenly throng, but not a part of the assembly. Their position will be much the same as that of the Old Testament saints, who will be raised and caught up together with the assembly at the Rapture, but without becoming a part of the assembly. (See Rev. 6:9-11; 11:2-12; and 20:4.)

## **Verses 23-25: the Feast of Trumpets EV 23:23-25{on the First Day of the Seventh Month, Which Is the Time of Grape Harvest, Jehovah's People Are to Observe the Feast of Blowing of Trumpets**

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Prophetically, it will be a time of Israel's moral awakening. (See also Num. 10:2.) After the assembly has been caught up and taken out of this world to be with Christ in the Father's house, God will by His Spirit start working afresh in the hearts of His ancient people, the Jews. The blast of a trumpet is the figure used for the commencement of this work of the Spirit in their souls. Morally and in substance, it corresponds to the ministry of John the Baptist and to that of the Lord Himself after John had been cast into prison. (See Matt. 3:2, 5-6; and ch. 4:17.)

Having been thus aroused by the action of the Spirit in their hearts and consciences then, a faithful remnant among them will begin to repent of their moral departure from Jehovah, their God. It will mark the beginning of a work in their souls, but that work will not reach its perfection until they see Christ coming "in His glory" (Matt. 25:31 and Zech. 12:10). More on this however in the next feast below.

Now as to the significance of this being the time of grape harvest, everywhere in the Scriptures, Israel is typified as Jehovah's vine. When He comes to claim the fruit that is rightfully His though, they bring forth only wild grapes. This is what happened when Messiah came to them the first time; but when He comes to them the next time, their hearts will be willing and He will once again drink of the fruit of the vine. In the meantime though and until then, His interests are elsewhere-that is, with His assembly. (See Psa. 80:8-11;110:3; Isa. 5:1-7; Matt. 21:33-9; and 26:29.)

**Verses 26-32: the Feast of Atonement EV 23:26-35{the Feast of Atonement, Like the One Before It, Falls in the Seventh Month of the Year. on the Tenth Day of That Same Month, the Israelites Are Told Three Times Over They Are to Afflict Their Souls and to Do No Work in That Day. It Is a Feast of Atonement. If Any Is Not Afflicted or If Any Does Do Any Work in That Day, He Will Be Cut off From Among His People and Destroyed**

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In the meantime and little by little, the repentance that was begun by what is typified as the blowing of trumpets will have been deepening. Then, when Jesus appears in glory, they will behold the wounds of Him Whom they had pierced so many centuries before, and will realize it was He Whom they had rejected and crucified. That realization will produce a still deeper sense of guilt and repentance in their souls. Accordingly, they will afflict their souls as never before and will mourn for Him as for an only son. This will be the point at which the Spirit's work of repentance in their souls will have been perfected.

Their great sin of having rejected their Messiah and of having manipulated the Romans into crucifying Him, as well as all their subordinate sins, will then be forgiven; and they will be fully restored to Jehovah, their God. Today, they are "a vessel wherein is no pleasure" (Hos. 8:8; Matt. 26:29a); but in that day, He will "rejoice over [them] with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over [them] with singing" (Zeph. 3:17; Matt. 26:29b).

**Verses 33-43: the Feast of Tabernacles EV 23:33-43{on the Fifteenth Day of This Same Month, When They Have Brought in the Fruit of the Land, Which, As We Have Seen, Is the Grape Harvest, Israel Is to Set Apart Seven Days for the Observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. on Each of the Seven Days of This Feast, They Are to Offer an Offering Made by Fire Unto Jehovah. They Are Also to Take Boughs of Goodly Trees, Branches of Palm Trees, Boughs of Thick Trees, and Willows of the Brook, From Which They Are to Frame Booths for Themselves. Then, They Are to Dwell in Those Booths for the Duration of the Feast**

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This feast typifies the rest that Israel will enjoy during the millennial kingdom, which will follow upon their restoration discussed in the feast of atonement above. Messiah's reign then will be one of righteousness and peace, the fear of God and His worship, material and spiritual blessings, harmony among men and animals, and liberation from sickness and disease. The world will never have seen a time like it before. Even Satan will be bound for its duration and will no longer be at liberty to deceive and entice men to evil.

Like the feast of unleavened bread, this one lasts seven days; but unlike that one, this feast will include an eighth day at its end. As we have seen, the number seven denotes perfection or completeness. In this feast, the seven days denote the entire period of the millennial reign of Christ. The eighth day then embraces that which follows that period of unequalled earthly rest and blessing and, therefore, goes on into and becomes the eternal state.

## Summary

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In its broadest view, this chapter takes our thoughts all the way from the beginning of God's dealings with men on the earth to the end of those dealings. In its narrower, but more detailed view however, it takes our thoughts from the beginning of God's dealings with His earthly people, Israel, to the end of those dealings... and beyond. It is most comprehensive indeed!

These latter dealings are comprehended in the seven feasts of Jehovah. They begin with the Passover feast, typical of the death of Christ; the feast of unleavened bread, typical of the deliverance from the power of sin His death gives to those who have died with Him; the feast of firstfruits, typical of the resurrection of Christ; and the feast of weeks, typical of the assembly and its resurrection life with Christ.

These are all either past or present. The following three feasts are yet future. They are as follows: The feast of trumpets, typical of the spiritual and moral awakening of His earthly people, Israel; the feast of atonement, typical of that people's repentance for their rejection and crucifying of Messiah; and the feast of tabernacles with its eighth day, typical of the millennial reign of Christ over the earth and that which follows—that is, the eternal state, the foundation of which was laid in the death and shed blood of Christ upon Calvary's cross. As to this latter, eternal state, it is what Peter calls "the day of God, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). The first heaven and the first earth will have passed away in order to make room for "a new heaven and a new earth." (See Gen. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:10, 12; and Rev. 21:1-6.) There will be nothing further to be accomplished. All God's counsel will have been brought to full fruition. His holy heart and mind will be altogether at rest. He will forever enjoy the company of His heavenly and earthly redeemed alike. A day in which all will be in conformity with the pure and holy nature of God, it will be a scene of unimaginable bliss and glory, where there is only light and love, and where joy will fill our hearts and song our lips. God's love will fill the place, the Lamb that was slain will be its Center, and the hearts of the redeemed will be forever bursting with joy and praise.

## Part 2 - the Seven Parables of Matthew 13

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AT 13{

### Introduction

In Matthew's gospel, the Lord Jesus is sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). From the beginning, both John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2) and the Lord Himself (Matt. 4:17) preach the nearness of the kingdom. Accordingly, they call upon the people to repent. Their hearts must be morally prepared by repentance if they are to receive the King when He appears. In addition, the Lord presents Himself to the people with many miraculous proofs of His Messiahship. Nevertheless, they refuse both Him and His testimony.

By the time we come to Matt. 12 then, things have come to a head. The Jews have gone so far as to ascribe the Lord's mighty works of power to that of Satan. (Matt. 12:24.) Therefore, when, in their unbelief, they ask Him for still one more sign, He tells them they'll get no sign but that of Jonah the prophet. (Matt. 12:38-40.) As Jonah had been sent to the Gentiles after having spent three days and three nights in the fish's belly, so the rejected Christ would turn to the Gentiles after having spent three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. In the process of time of course, both of these developments have taken place. Three days after He was crucified, the Lord was raised from among the dead; and He has now turned to the Gentiles.

Accordingly then, when the Lord was raised from among the dead, the Jews should have known; but as we know, even that wasn't enough to overcome their unbelief. (See also Luke 16:27-31.) To this day, it is rumored among the Jews that the Lord's disciples came by night and stole His body away and then claimed He had been raised from among the dead (See Matt. 28:11-15.). Today therefore, that is where things stand with that people.

In view of this state of things therefore, chapter 13 of Matthew begins with the Lord's going out of the house, a figure in the Scriptures for the nation of Israel. (As we have already noted, He had come to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" [See also Zech. 13:6.]). Having left the house, He goes to the sea, a figure in the Scriptures for the restless and unstable nations of the Gentiles. It is from there that He teaches His doctrine and sets forth the seven parables of our chapter.

In them, He speaks of the kingdom of heaven, but in a mysterious form—that is, as a thing hidden and unseen. (See Matt. 13:11.) This expression is intended to convey the idea that, unlike the kingdom the Lord would have set up if the Jews had received Him as their Messiah, it is presently a heavenly one and, therefore, spiritual and unseen. When Christ comes though "with power and great glory" to set up His millennial kingdom, it will be neither mysterious nor hidden, but rather, earthly and, therefore, visible and material. (See Matt. 24:30.) In the meantime then, the kingdom is a thing for faith and not for sight; hence, its "mysterious" character.

**Verses 3-8,18-23: the Parable of the Sower AT 13:3-8{AT 13:18-23{the Seed That Is Sown Is the Word of God. There Are Four Kinds of Soil Into Which the Seed Falls. They Are by the Wayside, in Stony Places, Among Thorns, and Upon Good Ground. in Each Instance, Those Places Are Really the Hearts of Men. When the Seed Falls by the Wayside and It Is Not Understood, the Fowls, Figurative of Satan or His Emissaries Come and Snatch It Away. When It Falls on Stony Ground Though, Because It Doesn't Have Depth of Root, It Springs up Quickly; but As Soon As the Sun Becomes Hot, Figurative of Tribulation or Persecution, It Withers Away and Dies. When It Falls Among the Thorns, Figurative of the Cares of the World or the Deceitfulness of Riches, It Grows up With Those Thorns and Is Eventually Choked off by Them and Becomes Unfruitful. When It Falls Upon Good Ground Though, Necessarily Figurative of a Heart in Which There Is Living and Active Faith, It Bears Varying Measures of Fruit, Some a Hundredfold, Some Sixty, and Some Thirty**

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The issue then is not whether this one or that one has faith and, therefore, divine life. Instead, it is the effect produced by the Word in any given heart. Any one of the first three may or may not be a believer. The last one however has to be a believer, because only a believer can bring forth fruit for God's glory and pleasure.

**Verses 24-30, 36-43: the Parable of the Tares AT 13:24-30{AT 13:36-43{This Parable Is the First of Ten Parables That Are Said to Be Likenesses of the Kingdom of Heaven. Six of the Ten Are Found in This Chapter and the Remaining Four in the Following Passages: Matt. 18:23-35; Matt. 20:1-16; Matt. 22:1-14; and Matt. 25:1-13. As Might Be Expected, Since These Parables Have to Do With the Kingdom in Its Mysterious Aspect, They Have to Do Primarily With This Present Dispensation, During Which God Is Taking Out a Heavenly People for Himself**

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Although the explanation of the parable of the tares does extend on into the millennial kingdom, the parable itself is a characterization of what is taking place morally in the world at this present time. A man sows good seed in his field. Then, as men (not the householder) sleep, the sower's enemy comes and sows tares among the wheat. The wheat and the tares both grow up together and the householder's servants offer to take the tares out from among the wheat. Fearing they might uproot the wheat as well as the tares though, he tells them they should leave them alone. When the wheat is fully mature, he will have his reapers gather the tares into bundles for the burning; and the wheat will be gathered into his barn. At the time of harvest then, he will send forth the reapers to cast the tares into the furnace for the burning.

At this point, the Lord Himself explains the parable to His disciples alone. He, the Son of man, is the sower; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one, which professing to be Christians, are nevertheless without faith; the enemy is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age in which the Lord was then speaking; and the reapers are the angels.

He goes on to explain further. At the end of the world (or "the age" in which He was then speaking), the Son of man will come and will send forth his angels to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and do iniquity. The unbelieving apostates, left over from the "assembly age," will then be taken, one here and one there, and cast alive into the lake of fire for the burning. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (See also Matt. 24:40-41.) After that, the heavenly saints will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father as they reign with Christ above the earth for a thousand years. (See Rev. 21:9-22:4.)

**Verses 31-32: the Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed AT  
13:31-32{the Lord Compares the Kingdom of Heaven With a Grain of  
Mustard Seed, Which Is the Smallest of Seeds, but Grows Into the  
Greatest of Herbs. a Man Sows It in the Field, and It Grows Into Such  
a Great Tree That Even the Birds of the Air Find Ample Lodging in Its  
Branches**

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Already in this chapter, the Lord has given us enough information to understand the force of this parable. The field, as we have already seen, is the world, and the birds, wicked emissaries of Satan, come to subvert the truth of God's Word in the hearts of men (See also Gen. 15:11 and 2 Sam. 21:10.). They use whatever means they might in accomplishing their ends. One of their commonest tactics is to corrupt the truth while maintaining the form of the Word itself.

Now, what is there in the New Testament that might answer to these symbolic representations? On the day the assembly was first formed, there was only a handful of souls present—perhaps, 120. Then, as a result of Peter's preaching, some 3000 more souls were saved and added that same day. As time passed and the gospel seed was sown throughout the region and on to the uttermost parts of the earth, more and more souls were added to those first few thousand. Since then and down through the centuries, we have no way of knowing how many more souls have been saved. At any rate though, there have doubtless been millions and millions of them and, perhaps, more. What started out very small therefore has grown disproportionately into a great multitude of saved souls.

At the same time though, there have also been many souls, who, though not saved, have nevertheless professed to be Christians. Accordingly, what began as the house of God and the assembly, composed of a few real believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, has now grown into a great house, consisting not only of real believers, but also of false professors as well. (See 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:19-20; 3:1-5.) As men became careless then, and even perverse, moral, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical evils were introduced into the house, where they were allowed to flourish until it became a great house. As such therefore, the house of Christian profession has become very large indeed and highly corrupted in both doctrine and practice. What is left of this house after the true assembly's rapture to heaven will be characterized as "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18:2).

**Verse 33: the Parable of Leaven in Three Measures of Meal AT 13:33{This Time, It Is a Woman That Is Featured. She Hides Leaven in Three Measures of Meal (Flour) Until the Whole Thing Is Leavened. Again, the Word of God Is Its Own Interpreter. Throughout the Scriptures, Leaven Is Employed As a Figure for Evil, Whether Moral, Doctrinal, or Ecclesiastical. It Is so Whether in the Political, Legal, or Rational Arenas of Thought and Action**

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Furthermore, as already observed, it is a woman that introduces leaven into this loaf. It is however not permitted that a woman teach or exercise authority over a man, whether in the assembly or elsewhere. (See 1 Cor. 14:34-5 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12.) Now then, in the New Testament Scriptures, the assembly (whether true or false) is depicted everywhere as a woman. Doubtless therefore, this woman represents any system that takes the place of being the assembly and, therefore, of a woman. Nevertheless, she assumes the place forbidden to women and becomes a teacher of spiritual things. (It is often said, "the assembly teaches this or that." The assembly, however, doesn't teach, it is taught. It is taught by the teachers given it by its ascended Head. See Eph. 4:11) In doing so then, she introduces both doctrine and practices that are contrary both to God and to His Word.(See Rev. 2:18-23.). Thus, evil is introduced into the profession of Christianity, which evil will continue on and will spread until the whole thing is leavened.

The ultimate realization of this condition of things though will take place only after the rapture. At that point, every true believer will have been taken out of the world and up into heaven, leaving only those whose profession of Christianity is false. Then, while there will still be that in the world that claims to be Christian, the profession will be altogether empty. There won't be a single true believer left in it. Accordingly, the entire thing will have become leavened and an object for the judgment of Christ (See Rev. 17-18 in their entirety.).

**Verse 44: the Parable of Treasure Hidden in a Field AT 13:44{in This Parable, the Kingdom of Heaven Is Likened to Treasure Hidden in a Field, Whose Whereabouts and Existence Is Altogether Unknown to Anyone. Then, a Certain Man Finds It and, Having Hidden It, Goes and Sells All He Has, in Order to Buy the Field, so He Can Get the Treasure That's in It**

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Once more, by now, we know what the field is. It's the world. There's a treasure in it however, which has never before been seen, but which a man now discovers and will spare nothing to get it. He sells everything he has and spends all, in order to possess the treasure his heart craves.

Surely, Christ is the man; and you and I are the treasure. So great was His love for each one of us individually that He gave up everything He had, in order to get us for Himself. The cost though was so great that it also paid for the purchase of the whole world. Accordingly, He not only has sole rights over us, but He also has sole rights over the whole world too, as well as over everybody that's in it. Moreover, so complete is His ownership of all things that, believers and unbelievers alike are His possessions and come under His lordship. (See 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Peter 2:1; etc.) Therefore, when He sets up His earthly kingdom, it will be, in effect, His redemption of the possession already purchased. (See Eph. 1:10,13-14.)

**Verses 45-46: the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price AT 13:45-46{in the Previous Parable, the Treasure Found Has All Individual Vessels of God's Mercy in View. in This One Though, the Kingdom of Heaven Is Compared to Just One Thing, a Single Pearl of Great Price. ("Many Members, yet but One Body" [1 Cor. 12:20.]) a Certain Merchantman Is Looking for Goodly Pearls; and When He Finds This One, Its Beauty Is Such That It Ravishes His Heart. He Goes and Sells All He Has, in Order to Buy It for Himself**

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There is no field here, no world, but just the pearl. (Note, however, that a pearl is harvested from the seas, typical, as we have already seen, of the restless nations of the Gentiles.) Even before the foundation of the world, the assembly was in the eternal counsel of God and will continue when there is no longer any world left at all. (See Eph. 1:4; 5:25-7; and Rev. 21:2.) There is nothing more precious to the heart of Christ than His assembly, which is His body. In heaven and throughout all the ages of eternity, His bride will hold the nearest place to Him. There will be the earthly redeemed; but while near, they will not share the closeness that will be hers. What is more, even in heaven, there will be various families of angelic beings and redeemed souls; and while they will all enjoy His presence, none of them will enjoy the nearness that she will enjoy.

**Verses 47-50: the Parable of the Net Cast Into the Sea AT  
13:47-50{the Kingdom of Heaven Is Likened to a Net Cast Into the  
Sea. Then, When It Is Full of Every Kind of Fish, They Pull It to Shore  
and Put the Good Fish Into Vessels and Cast the Bad Away.  
Likewise, at the End of the World (or "the Age" in Which the Lord  
Was Then Speaking), the Angels Will Sever the Wicked From the  
Just and Cast the Former Into the Fire. There Shall Be Wailing and  
Gnashing of Teeth**

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As always, the Word of God is its own interpreter. As we have already noted, the sea is a commonly used figure in the Scriptures for the restless, turbulent, and unorganized masses of Gentile nations in contrast with the land, a figure for a settled sphere of things, where order is maintained. Further, when the Lord first calls Peter and Andrew to follow him, they are fishermen mending their nets. He tells them that, if they will follow Him, He will make them "fishers of men."

The net therefore is the "gospel net." The gospel has been going out to the Gentiles now for nearly 2000 years. As to the fish, which are of "every kind," they are men from all nations, not merely those from among the Jews. Those who separate the good fish into vessels and cast away the bad fish are those whose responsibility it is to exercise discerning oversight in the local assembly. (Not everybody that professes to be a Christian really is a Christian.) The "vessels" are the local assemblies themselves. Then, after the assembly has been raptured away and the end of the Mosaic age arrives, then it will be that the angels will sever the wicked from the just and cast the former into the lake of fire.

**Summary These Parables Give Us the Full Range of Events From the Time of the Lord's Ministry Here on Earth to the Time of His Setting up of the Millennial Kingdom and of Its Heavenly Side. None of Them However Takes Us Beyond the Millennium or Into the Eternal State. What Began on Pentecost As a Very Small Thing Has Now Grown Into a Great Edifice, Where Wicked Men Find Accommodations for Themselves and for Their Corrupting Influences Upon the Truth of God. Evil Doctrines and Practices Have Already Leavened the Loaf of Christian Profession, Whose Leavening Will Be Total After the Rapture. at His Appearing Though, When He Comes to Set up His Earthly Kingdom, the Lord Will Both Judge and Destroy the Entire Thing**

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Nevertheless, in the meantime, God is also working. He acknowledges what He is doing as His own workmanship. There is the treasure, found by Christ in the world, the acquisition of which has also resulted in His obtaining present and future ownership of the whole created universe. Furthermore, there is that one pearl of great price, so costly and ravishing in the beauty of its oneness that He gives all He has to gain it for Himself. Finally, there is the gospel net as the means by which men are brought into blessing; and there are the solemn implications for those who will not have it.

Now, last of all, God has not given us this outline of things merely to satisfy our natural intellects or idle curiosity. He has given these things to us that our hearts might be affected by them. Therefore, may He grant our hearts to understand them in such a way as to have a moral effect upon our walk and ways. (See again vs. 8, 23.) The way in which we receive them will have its eternal consequences. True Christians are not of this world or its moral order. They are a heavenly people and, therefore, have nothing to say to this world, whether political or religious. They are, after all, only "strangers" in this world and "pilgrims" passing through an alien land on their way to their eternal home above. (See John 14:2-3; 17:16-18; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Heb. 3:1; 11:8-16; 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11-12; and Rev. 3:10.)

## Part 3 - the Seven Epistles to the Assemblies in Rev. 2 and 3

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EV 2:1-3:22{

### Introduction

Rev. 1:19 tells us the book of Revelation has three divisions and reads as follows: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter [or after these things]." These divisions are chapter one, chapters two and three, and chapters four through twenty-two. Rev. one gives the things John had seen and which he describes in that same chapter. Rev. two and three consist of seven epistles written to seven assemblies then existing and located in Asia Minor. Rev. 4 through 22 give the things that will take place "after these things"—that is, after the things concerning the assembly as covered in Rev. 2 and 3.

In this section of this paper, we shall, with the Lord's help, focus on what is covered in the second division of the book alluded to above—that is, Rev. 2 and 3. In these chapters, beginning with Ephesus and going on through Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, the seven local assemblies in Asia Minor are addressed. They were seven actual assemblies existing at the time in what is known today as Turkey.

These epistles bear three distinct characters. First, each one addresses the outward and inward conditions prevailing in the assembly to which it is addressed. Second, they have their moral voices for our own hearts and consciences in the day in which we live. They give the progressive stages in the moral decline our own souls may take if we are not watchful. Third, together, the seven epistles give us the assembly's moral history from the end of the first century to the end of its earthly sojourn at the rapture.

As to the structure and components of these epistles, each one opens with an address to the angel of the assembly to which it is written and closes with a word of encouragement to the overcomer in its midst, as well as a word of admonition to hear what the Spirit says to all the assemblies. Between its opening and its closing, the Lord commends what He can and outlines the moral conditions prevailing in the assembly He is addressing and prescribes what is needed in view of those conditions. The "angel" of a given assembly is, doubtless, a personification for the assembly itself and, perhaps, for any responsible individual in its midst. The "overcomer" is one who rises above the moral conditions prevailing in that assembly. In every way then, these epistles hold great interest for our hearts and are most instructive as we consider their moral content.

**Chapter 2, Verses 1-7: Ephesus EV 2:1-7{Some 30 Years Before the Revelation Was Written, Ephesus Was an Assembly, Whose Moral and Spiritual State Had Been Such That It Could Be Entrusted With the Very Highest of All Assembly Truth. a Short Two Years Later Though, Paul Feels It Necessary to Charge Timothy With Seeing That No Other Doctrine Is Taught There. (See 1 Tim. 1:3-4.) Then, Some Two Years After That, He Acknowledges the Tears That Timothy Was Shedding in That Very Locality. (See 2 Tim. 1:3-5.) It Would Appear Then That Decline Had Set in Early and Had Progressed Rapidly Among Those in Ephesus**

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To begin with then, the Lord presents Himself to the angel of the assembly at Ephesus as holding the seven stars, which are the seven angels of the seven assemblies, in His right hand and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which are the seven assemblies themselves. (See the imagery of Rev. 1:12-13, 16, and 20.) He is the One Whose authority is still recognized as supreme among those who bear responsibility in the assemblies. (The right hand is the hand of power.) Here, He is not seen as the Head of His body, but the Judge among those who are His light bearers in this world.

Outwardly, everything in Ephesus is still being conducted in a righteous and orderly manner. Although evil has found its way into its midst, it is discerned and dealt with in an upright way. False apostles are uncloaked; and the practice of Nicolaitanism, which the Lord hates, is hated by the assembly as well.

Nevertheless, the Lord, Who knows the hearts of His people, discerns a thing not readily detected outwardly. (What a word for us!) The assembly's first love for Him has cooled, and He knows and feels it. Accordingly, He warns it to remember what its love for Him had been at the beginning and to repent and do the first works-that is, those works done out of a burning love for Himself. Otherwise, He will come to it and take away its candlestick out of its place... manifestly, a thing He has now done.

The promise given to the overcomer then is a most precious one indeed. He will be given to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Christ, who is both the Head and Center of the creation of God (as Adam had been of the former one) and Who is the Giver of eternal life, will Himself be the overcomers eternal portion. (Cf. Gen. 2:7-9 and 3:22-4 with 2 Cor. 5:14-21.)

Historically, Ephesus corresponds to the assembly at the end of the first century. When compared with the moral and spiritual stature of that same assembly three or four decades before, the

decline is remarkable. As can be seen by reading Paul's epistle to them, they were, at that time, in a state suited to the receiving of ministry that has no equal anywhere else in the Scriptures. By this time though, the assembly as represented by them had left its first love; and that was the beginning of the assembly's decline ever since.

**Verses 8-11: Smyrna EV 2:8-11{in Addressing the Angel of the Assembly in Smyrna However, the Lord Assumes Quite a Different Character. He Is the First and the Last and the One Who Was Dead and Is Alive Again. (See the Imagery of Rev. 1:17-18.) in Revealing Himself Thus to the Assembly, He Is Addressing Himself According to the Trials That Are About to Come Upon It. He Is the Divine One, the One Who Has Ever Been and Who Will Ever Be, and, Having Become a Man, the One Who Has Gone Through the Extremity of Satan's Power and Has Come up Out of It in Victory**

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That assembly's lot is one of tribulation, persecution, and poverty. What is more, it is troubled by some, whether Jews or Gentiles, who claim they hold the place of being God's people by right of inheritance. Furthermore, the devil is about to bring upon them a period of severe, but measured persecution. Nevertheless, He urges it not to fear; but to be faithful unto death if need be, even as He had been. Having gained the victory over death Himself, He would give it a crown of life.

The overcomer will not be hurt of the second death, a sweet and precious promise to one who is about to face death at the hands of vicious and violent men. (See Rev. 20:14-15.)

Historically, Smyrna corresponds to the assembly in the second and third centuries. During these two centuries, several campaigns of persecution were mounted against the Christians. Of course, Christians had been persecuted almost from the very beginning of Christianity. Nevertheless, having been written toward the end of the first century, these epistles look on ahead to those of the two succeeding centuries. ("Ye shall have tribulation ten days.")

In view of the assembly's departure from its first love then, these persecutions were allowed in order to drive the hearts of the Lord's people back to Himself. Accordingly, they resulted in fruit for the Lord's glory, honor, and pleasure (See John 15:18.). There was a fresh renewal of His people's lost fervor toward Himself, a restored sense of their heavenly calling, and a corresponding adjustment in their testimony. Not only did Satan fail in his attempt to stamp out Christianity, but his efforts actually accomplished the reverse. The faith of the Christians was thereby strengthened and their numbers increased. Christianity flourished!

**Verses 12-17: Pergamos EV 2:12-17{This Time, the Lord Presents Himself to the Angel of the Assembly in Pergamos As Having a Sharp Two-Edged Sword Proceeding Out of His Mouth. (See the Imagery of Rev. 1:16; Also Heb. 4:12.) Whether in Matters of Doctrine, Practice, or State of Soul, It Is by the Word of God That We Are to Discern and Correct Even the Minutest of Irregularities**

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Of necessity, the assembly had always been in the world, where Satan's throne is set; but until now, the world has been kept out of the assembly. In Pergamos, however, both Satan and the world have now found their way into the bosom of the assembly itself. Nevertheless, despite the conditions prevailing there, the Lord commends it for its faithfulness in holding fast His name and not denying His faith. He also recalls the faithfulness of Antipas, His faithful martyr, who had been slain among them, where, solemnly, Satan dwells.

Nonetheless, there are some in its midst who hold the doctrine of Balaam and, accordingly, have introduced spiritual fornication into the assembly in the form of idolatry. In an effort to increase the number of their converts, heathen unbelievers have been brought in with their idols and idolatrous practices and holy days, which latter two have been called by Christian names. Adding Judaism to these elements then, the result is an unholy admixture of Judaism, paganism, and Christianity. (For the principle, Cf. 2 Kings 17:28-41.)

Not surprisingly therefore, there are also those in its midst, Nicolaitans, who set themselves apart as possessing a superior level of spirituality, but whose practices are corrupt. There had been such in Ephesus too; but in Ephesus, their evil, which had been detected and judged, had been practiced only and not taught as a doctrine. In Pergamos however, having been tolerated over a period of time, the practice has now become a thing accepted and openly taught as a doctrine. Therefore, He warns that, if it does not repent, He will come suddenly and fight against those men with the sword that proceeds out of His mouth.

To him that overcomes then, the Lord will give to eat of the hidden manna and will give him a white stone with a new name known only to him who receives it. The overcomer in Pergamos is one who, like the Lord when here on earth, has taken a low and humble place in the midst of high and lofty pretensions and has suffered for it. With such a one, He will identify and share the enjoyment known in fellowship only to co-sufferers and give him a secret sense of His own delight and approval, even that which He knows with His Father. It would be a sweet fellowship known only to one who had been granted that favor.

Historically, Pergamos corresponds to the assembly in the fourth century. It was then that Constantine professedly converted to Christianity. He stopped the persecution and elevated the Christians to a privileged class. He bestowed large homes and vast parcels of land upon

Christians and even appointed many of them to high offices in his government. Christianity was not merely tolerated, but became the favored religion of the day, which was a deathblow to the assembly's heavenly testimony in this world.

**Verses 18-29: Thyatira EV 2:18-19{in Addressing the Angel of the Assembly at Thyatira, the Lord Identifies Himself As the Son of God, Whose Eyes Are Like a Flame of Fire and His Feet Like Fine Brass. (See the Imagery of Rev. 1:14-15.) the Angel of That Assembly Has Allowed a Certain Woman, Whom the Lord Calls "Jezebel," but Who Calls Herself "a Prophetess," to Teach and Seduce His Servants to Commit Spiritual Fornication. Having Already Given Her Space to Repent, He Knows She Has Not Done so. Therefore, Unless She and Those Who Commit Adultery With Her Do Repent, He Will Cast Them Together Into a Bed and Into Great Tribulation and Will Kill Her Children With Death. All the Assemblies Will Know Then That He Is the One Who Searches the Reins and Hearts of Men. He Gives to Everyone According to His Works. Everything Is Found Out, and Nothing Is Overlooked**

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As to the faithful ones in that place though, He places no further burden upon them. They are not, as others have sought in vain to do, to bring about reform in that wicked system. Rather, they are simply to continue steadfastly faithful to the light they already possess till He comes.

The Lord's promise to the overcomer in that system then, whose aim has always been the exercise of worldly power over the nations of men, is particularly suitable. That promise is that He will give the overcomer just such authority when He Himself exercises His own right to do so. In the meantime, He gives him the hope of the morning Star, which is that which appears in the skies just before the dawn of a new day. That day will be the bright and glorious millennial day, and the morning Star the Lord Himself coming for the assembly just before that day begins. In that day, that power will be absolute and palpable in the overcomers hand. To the believer in that system with its worldly and carnal ambitions, but who awaits with quiet patience its fulfillment, such a promise must be exceedingly precious and encouraging.

Historically, Thyatira corresponds to the assembly from the fourth century on to the present time. Morally, she grew out of Pergamos, which paved the way for her; and she dominated Europe almost without relief until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was then that the light of the gospel was re-ignited in what is commonly called "the reformation movement" (See Sardis in the next chapter.). Till then, she ruled over kings and nations with both military and ecclesiastical might under the title of "The Holy Roman Empire." She will continue on beyond the rapture until she is definitively judged. (See Matt. 13:33; Rev. 2:25-8; 14:8; 16:19; and chs. 17-18.)

**Chapter 3, Verses 1-6: Sardis EV 3:1-6{the Lord Addresses the Angel of the Assembly at Sardis As the One Who Holds the Seven Stars in His Hand. (See the Imagery of Chapter 1:16, 20.) This Time, He Does Not Say, As He Did When Addressing the Angel of the Assembly at Ephesus, "in His Right Hand." This Omission Is Not Without Significance. the Right Hand Is the Hand of Power and Authority; and While the Angel in Sardis Still Acknowledges Its Connection With Him, It No Longer Acknowledges His Authority Over It**

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Nevertheless, despite its spirit of independence, He is still the One Who "holds the seven Spirits of God." All fullness resides in Him; and whether the angel recognizes it or not, He is the only source of spiritual supply for what the assembly really needs. Where there is faith, this is a most precious and encouraging assurance indeed.

The assembly there has a name that it lives; but spiritually, it is lifeless and without vigor. (Many there do not even possess divine life at all.) What it does have though is ready to perish; and so, He warns it to remember how it had received and heard and repent. It had received the Word of God with divinely-given faith; but beyond that, it hadn't given it its proper place in its heart. If it doesn't watch therefore, He will come upon it the way a thief comes upon his victim—that is, in an hour it doesn't expect him.

Still, even in Sardis, there are some that have divine life and have not become personally defiled by what surrounds them. They will therefore walk with Him in white, because they are worthy. The overcomer then will walk with Him in white raiment, and He will not blot his name out of the book of life, but He will confess His name before His Father and before His angels.

Historically, Sardis corresponds to the assembly after "The Reformation Movement" had lost its initial freshness and vitality. It is therefore that which grew out of what had originally broken away from Thyatira, when the truth of justification by faith was first recovered. At its inception, the Reformation was a fresh and mighty work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men and could only be said to be "a divine work." Gradually however, earthly ways and cold ritualism set in; and it became largely formal, perfunctory and even political.

Although Sardis was not characterized by Thyatira's corruption, it had given up what it once stood for; hence, the charge that it had a name that it lived, but was dead. Today, it is what is called "mainstream Protestantism" and is last seen when it embraces that idolatry that will hold all Europe and the western world in its grip. (See Rev. 16:15.) There are however some among them whose hearts are devoted to the Lord and whose lives reflect a holy zeal for Him and His interests. They are the overcomers.

**Verses 7-13: Philadelphia EV 3:7-13{in Addressing the Angel of the Assembly at Philadelphia, the Lord Doesn't Draw on the Imagery of Rev. 1 at All. Instead, He Presents Himself According to What He Is Intrinsically—That Is, Holy and True. As Such Then, It Gives Him Pleasure When He Finds Such Moral Features in His Own, Which Features Are Fruits of His Grace. (That Is His Standard for Them.)**

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He is also sovereign, opening and shutting as He wills and no man frustrating His will. Accordingly, He has set before the assembly in Philadelphia an opened door, and no man can shut it. Otherwise, there would be no opened door there at all. All is and must be from Him and nothing from man.

As regards strength though, the assembly at Philadelphia has but little of it. If it is strength that Christ can acknowledge however, then it is the fruit of His grace alone. He therefore commends the assembly on one hand, for having kept His Word and, on the other, for having not denied His name. In Pergamos, the danger had been not one of denying His name, but rather, one of denying His faith. On the other hand, in Sardis, the danger was one of not keeping His Word once it had been received. In Philadelphia though, the assembly has both kept His Word and not denied His name; hence, His commendation.

Now then, the Word He refers to as "My Word" is the Word of God; but in particular, it is the Word of God as it attracts the heart and attaches it to the person of Christ Himself and, especially, as Head of His body. (Cf. Col. 2:19 and 3:11, 16.) As to "His name," a man's name is all that he is whose name it is. Therefore, the name of Christ is tantamount to the person of Christ Himself. It is everything that He is. (See Matt. 18:20.)

Still, this little company is, no doubt, held in contempt by that which answers to "the synagogue of Satan," first seen morally in Smyrna. Nevertheless, He will make those of that exalted body to come and do homage before its feet and to know that He had loved it. Unlike that great ecclesiastical system, it had been willing to await with humble patience the appointed time of His reigning, rather than vainly hastening it on by reigning without Him (See 1 Cor. 4:8; Rev. 2:26-7; and 20:1-6.). Accordingly, He urges the angel of the assembly at Philadelphia to hold fast that which it has and not to let any man take its crown.

The promise to the overcomer then is exceedingly precious indeed. It bears reading in its entirety: "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" [Rev. 3:12].

How personal is the overcomers portion! The Lord gives him to know and enjoy the blessedness of the relationship He had Himself known and enjoyed with His own God. If the overcomer has had but little strength in the day of weakness, He will be a pillar in the temple of His God. If he has had to go out from the systems of men and from his beloved brethren who remain in those systems, in that day, he will go out from them no more. Instead, he will enjoy heavenly fellowship with all his brethren for all eternity. Finally, having a part in that heavenly city throughout the coming millennial day, he will have a part in it in the eternal state as well. (See ch. 21:1-2.)

Historically, Philadelphia corresponds to a work of God among His people during the first quarter of the nineteenth century and will be maintained until the assembly's rapture.

As the reformation was the fruit of the Spirit's mighty acting in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, I have no doubt but what that which answers to Philadelphia was also the fruit of the Spirit's mighty acting in the nineteenth century. In the early part of that century, the Spirit of God began a fresh work among the Lord's people. He resumed gathering souls to Christ and to His name, even as He had done at the very beginning of the assembly's history. At the same time, He began restoring to them "the whole counsel of God," much of which had long been lost or forgotten (Acts 20:27). Accordingly, there was a happy season of power, great joy, and rejoicing, as well as a remarkable increase in numbers.

Now then, there is most assuredly such a thing as what might be called "Philadelphian ground." In view of the failure that has come in in the meanwhile though, any corporate pretension to being it would be presumptuous indeed. (See the historical section under Laodicea below.) The most any company can say is that it believes it is on that ground; but it cannot claim categorically to be on it.

Similarly, an individual, even if he is on that ground, cannot claim to be "a Philadelphian." He can say only that he'd like to be one; but he cannot claim to be one. What the Lord is looking for is not merely ecclesiastical position, as important as that is, but rather, reality of heart and those moral features that answer to His own. It is a man's moral character that makes him what he is and not the ecclesiastical position he occupies. The Lord therefore is the One Who will determine who is and who is not "a Philadelphian."

**Verses 14-22: Laodicea EV 3:14-22{in This Last of Seven Epistles, Even As in the Previous One, the Lord Does Not Address the Angel of the Assembly at Laodicea by Drawing on the Imagery of Rev. 1. Instead, He Addresses It As Being the One Who Is "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God." He Is Everything the Angel of the Laodiceans Should Be, but Is Not. As "the Amen," He Is the One, in Whom, All God's Counsel Is to Be and Will Be Made Good. As "the Faithful and True Witness," He Is the Antithesis of What the Angel of the Laodiceans Is in This World. As "the Beginning of the Creation of God," He Is in Resurrection the Head of That New, Eternal Creation, Where All Is of God and Where, Unlike in the First Creation Under Adam, Nothing Will Ever Fail. (See Again Rev. 2:7; 2 Cor. 5:14-21.)**

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If the assembly at Ephesus sets before us the assembly's departure from its first love, then this is where that departure must inevitably lead; and it is where it has led. The assembly at Laodicea has become lukewarm and, therefore, what is noxious to the Lord. Accordingly, He is about to spew it out of His mouth. Oblivious to its real condition before Him though, it is lifted up with pride and self-complacency. Therefore, He tells it what its condition really is before Him and counsels it to come to Him for what its condition requires. Nevertheless, He assures it that it is whom He loves that He rebukes and chastens.

Because of the state of the assembly at Laodicea, there is nothing for it on a collective basis, but only on an individual one. Therefore, because He is standing outside, He knocks at each individual heart's door to be let in. If any man opens the door, He will come in and will sup with that man and that man with Him. Sweet fellowship! This is the very thing the Lord craves and the heart that is restored needs.

To the overcomer, He promises he will grant him to sit with Him on His throne, even as He sits with His Father on His throne. In His millennial kingdom then, the overcomer will be publicly associated with the Lord in His rule over the nations.

Historically, Laodicea corresponds to the assembly from about the middle of the nineteenth century and continues on down to the assembly's rapture. It has often been observed that Sardis grew out of what remained of the reformation movement, which had originally broken away from Thyatira, and that Philadelphia has emerged out of Sardis and that Laodicea has grown out of Philadelphia.

Notwithstanding the great and gracious working of the Spirit of God in Philadelphia, pride eventually came in to spoil the happy conditions enjoyed there. (See the historical section under Philadelphia above.) Accordingly, the coming in of this element necessitated the Lord's chastening hand; hence, Laodicea, which is, as much as anything else, a moral state. Of course, Satan has been all too ready to seize upon these failures and to exploit them to the Lord's further dishonor and to the shame and detriment of His people.

**Summary the Book of Revelation Was Written Toward the Very End of the First Century. Each of the Assemblies Addressed Actually Existed at the Time They Were Addressed. the Moral and Spiritual Conditions As Described in Their Respective Epistles Actually Existed Too. Furthermore, Although We Are Living so Long After They Existed, We Too Are to Hear What the Spirit Says to Them. Often, the Individual Christian's Moral and Spiritual State Follows the Same General Pattern of Decline That Theirs Did. Finally, the Moral and Spiritual Decline Traced in These Assemblies Also Describes the History of the Assembly Itself Down Through the Intervening 20 Centuries**

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D. K. Graham 6/19/06

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