**THE REVELATION**

**An Outline for**

**Chapter Three**

**(complete)**

***SARDIS***

**The 5th Stage of the Church**

**1367 – 1517**

Sardis – “remnant” or “that which remains”. After the long persecutions and inquisitions of the previous stage of the Church, the Waldensians and Albigenses being largely driven into hiding in remote areas, the Lord has a message for the remaining Spirit-begotten Body members.

We have learned that this period was a prophetically marked time of 150 years (in the Trumpets), which led up to the Reformation starting in 1517 with Martin Luther’s work.

“**He that hath the seven spirits of God" –** an identifier of Jesus from the first Chapter. The seven spirits are the messages of Truth from God, each of the seven especially designated for that period of the Church, even though each Church period would be able to benefit from each message given. Seven represents the divine intention of a complete message or plan of the ages.

“**and the seven stars”** – again an identifier of Jesus from the first Chapter. Not only does Jesus receive the message or truths to be given to the Church but he authorizes the seven messengers that are to give those truths and at the beginning of each Church period. Once you become aware of this it is of the utmost importance to find out who is the messenger for your time! Do not disregard his message! Expect the messenger and his message (which really is from Jesus), to be opposed and misrepresented by Satan and his blinded servants.

“**the angel (messenger) of the church of Sardis”** – John Wycliffe. He lived from about 1320 -1384.

Note recent history:

Black death –

Social and political upheavals.

Magna Charta – basis of English parliamentary rule, opposed by Pope and King of England.

Start of religious learning with Colleges and Universities.

Read from “Sketches of Christian History” by S. M. Houghton pgs. 65 – 68.

He was from a well-off family, but a commoner. At 16 he was considered to be extraordinary in learning ability and entered a College at Oxford Universities. He quickly advanced in standing there, but he would use his free time to visit with the local peasantry and in their discussions he would translate, from Latin into English, parts of the Gospels to give authority to what he thought about all the Romish doctrinal and practical errors.

This accomplished his goal of translating the Latin Vulgate into English as well as keeping him in sympathy with the common people.

Notes from Westcott on Wycliffe and his Bible translation:

• He first translated the Revelation!

• Then the Gospels with commentary.

• Then the remaining books of the N.T.

• Soon the O.T. was started by a friend – Nicholas de Hereford, who being persecuted fled England. Thereafter, Wycliffe finished it.

• Translated from the Latin Vulgate, as this was what was available.

• Shortly after Wycliffe’s death a revision was made by John Purvey.

• There are 15 O.T. and 18 N.T. original versions existing today.

His English Bible revision was the only complete English Bible for about 100 years.

He systematically opposed Papal errors on doctrine, practice and social/political involvement, preferring to use the Biblical practice and teachings of the early Church.

His followers were known as the Lollards (a derisive term perhaps meaning “lazy”). They were men who were willing to forgo temporal comforts to travel England, teaching Biblical truths and Christian life, and sharing the New Testament teachings as their authority. They relied heavily upon John Wycliffe’s teachings and writings. They were mercilessly persecuted almost to extinction.

**“I know thy works, that thou hast a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”** –

There were true Christian followers of Wycliffe and later on other early reformers (Huss, Savonarola, etc.). However, the majority were Christian in name only as they were really opposed to Romish doctrine and influence for Political and Economic reasons. Hence, many had the NAME, but only a relative few had SPIRITUAL LIFE.

“**Be watchful (wake up), and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect (completed), before MY God.” –**

Note the anti-trinitarian expression as noted in the older manuscripts!

After the great persecutions and the ravaging effects of the Black Death Plague, the true Church was diminished and almost ready to vanish spiritually. Their work was not yet COMPLETED. No, they were to be the “morning star” of the Reformation, or “pre-reformation”, period in which the stage would be set during the next century and half for the Great Reformation work.

**“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch (wake up), I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” –**

II Tim. 3:13 – 15.

Acts 17:11.

John 5:39.

The true Church and the Great Company are all admonished to spiritually wake up to the importance of the Word of God for instruction. They are all encouraged to be faithful to it, even unto death.

The warning of Jesus returning as a thief reminds us of Matt. 24:43, as well as the lessons of Matt. 25: 1-13, the Virgin sleepers. Actually, this is a TIMELESS LESSON!

Repenting means to CHANGE COURSE.

“**Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled (soiled),**

**their garments and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” –**

These few would be the Little Flock. The majority would be Great Company or even Second Death, as only the spirit-begotten are considered to have garments (the robe of Christ’s meritorious sacrifice that gives us a reckoned justified standing or relationship with God), that started out White (pure – the righteousness of saints Rev.6:11, 19:8). The soiling or defilement is the contamination of accumulative sins that go without being repented of or striven against (adequately). Consider Rev. 7 washing.

To eventually gain the reward of walking with Me – Jesus, in glory! What an encouragement for us all!

Walk in white means that the Saints beyond the vail will have their own righteous characters (having been previously developed while in the flesh), as New Creatures, that will then have perfect divine nature spiritual bodies that no longer need Jesus’ merit or garment to cover the falling human flesh.

**“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.” –**

Rev. 19:14. White garments.

Book of life. Consider:

• Rev. 13:8 – not of Little Flock. Lamb’s book of life.

• Rev. 17:8 – not of Little Flock.

• Rev. 20:12 – future after Little Flock is completed, this is the book of perfect human life for the faithful doers of mankind who successfully walk up the Highway of Holiness.

• Rev. 21:27 – perhaps Lamb has book of life for Gospel Age victors and one for Millennial Age overcomers.

• Rev. 22:19 – book of life, should be tree of life, see vs. 2 and 14. Regardless,

Dan. 12:1 – CTR has both human and Little Flock.

In verses 3:1, 4, 5 (twice), name is used. How better to demonstrate the uniqueness of each of the Bride Class. But as a whole and apparently as individuals, they are each presented by Jesus (Bridegroom), to his Father (vs. 2 his God), WHAT AN EVENT!

And introduced to the holy angels! Imagine our personal angels’ joy in seeing their special Charges presented before all!

No words can express the joy, the solemnity, the awe of such an experience!

***Philadelphia***

**Vs. 7**

 **Philadelphia** means “brotherly love” or “the love of a brother”. Perhaps a reference to the various reformers’ emphasis on the equality of Christian brotherliness as contrasted against the Papal hierarchy.

Time: 1517 – 1874, the starting date indicated by the “5 months” (5 x 30 = 150 years), from the start of the 5th Church as demonstrated in 5th Trumpet, Rev. 9:5, 10).

The time for the great Reformation period which would sweep over the Continent and the British Isles, lasting until the time of the Harvest at the end of the Gospel Age.

This Reformation period saw the development of many denominations arising, each following after their particular founder, and then most often continuing to evolve over the centuries.

However, these “daughter harlots” (see Rev. 17:5), although closer to Biblical truths than the “mother of harlots” – Papacy, yet they kept many key errors such as trinity, hell fire, human soul immortality, clergy and laity, and Church support and, when possible, involvement with earthly governments.

**Messenger:** Martin Luther. Much can be written about this pivotal character, but we will limit ourselves to relate here a few points:

1. He was considered to be extraordinarily bright.
2. He was educated but he left his studies for a legal career to follow that of a Church man.
3. He was a monk, then a priest and then a doctor of theology.
4. Outraged by the sale of indulgences, he wrote and posted on the door of the Church in Wittenberg Castle, the 95 thesis that questioned numerous Orthodox positions of the Papal Church, on October 31, 1517.
5. The 95 thesis and subsequently a number of tracts and booklets were printed and distributed all around Germany and the surrounding countries and eventually all of Christendom.
6. His defiance of the Pope and Papal authority became quite public in his sermons, writings, and his burning of the Papal Bull, excommunicating him. In 1521 at the Diet of Worms, before an assemblage of leading government princes and Church leaders, when asked to recant of his teachings and beliefs, he refused stating in a paraphrase as follows: “Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." ~ Martin Luther.
7. The Catholic Emperor Charles V. banished Luther and he subsequently was protected and hidden away by Frederick, the elector of Saxony. During this time he translated the New Testament into German, assisted by Melanchthon, and later the Old Testament.
8. Luther denounced transubstantiation, indulgences, the authority of the Popes and Church councils over Scripture and that the Popes were not to rule as being superior to government officials in matters of State.
9. His special insight into the forgiveness of sins — “the just shall live by faith”— emphasized the direct route of the repentant sinner to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as opposed to the need of priests, confessionals, transubstantiation or indulgences.

**These things saith he that is holy, he that is true…**

Jesus is the ONE who alone was completely “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners…”, Hebs. 7:26, in contrast with the Popes who claimed the title “holy father”.

Jesus is the true leader or Head of the Church, not the Popes.

**He that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.**

This phrase is found in Isaiah 22:20-25. Here Eliakim symbolizes Jesus. He becomes the everlasting father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Israel. He will be given the Key (control) of the house (government) of David (the beloved, the future righteous kingdom of Jesus). Laid upon his shoulder (he alone can bear the burden of responsibility for such an exalted office). He not only enforces God’s STANDARD OF CHARACTER that will either allow entrance or deny entrance into this kingdom (consider the New Jerusalem requirements found in Rev. 21:6-8, 24-27).

Jesus in glory will be like a nail upon which everything else hangs or depends upon. Yet, in this prophetic picture it is intimated that this sure nail is “cut down and removed”, this is out of order time wise, it is a reference to Jesus at the 1st. Advent when he was despised, rejected and killed by hanging on a tree by these very ones he will in the near future restore and bless in his Kingdom of peace.

The phrase “key” suggests a locked door. A door can symbolize different things, sometimes an opportunity, sometimes an understanding of truths and also that the appointed time for an action is to take place. Jesus has the key (authority), to unlock or open the Way for sinners to be restored unto God by his sin atonement. He has the authority to grant entrance into the New Jerusalem (the government of the New heavens and the New earth), but also, he can deny entrance to those found unworthy. This is demonstrated in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matt. 25.

In our consideration of Rev. 3:7 and 8, Jesus in vs. 7 is expressing his authority for salvation, life eternal, the high calling – he is “the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” John 14:6.

“I am the Door”. John 10:9.

When the Bride is complete, he has the authority to “shut the door” to the wedding. Matt. 25:10-12.

No Popes or any other Church authorities have this power! Jesus alone has been given this kind of power and authority. Compare John 5:22-27.

**Vs. 8**

**I know thy works, behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it…**

Again, Jesus expresses his personal involvement with his Body members.

In one sense this might refer to “the just shall live by faith” truth doctrine that God, through Jesus’ ransom sacrifice, made reconciliation to Him by faith in this arrangement, an individual matter not requiring any man or Church intervention.

 In another sense this might indicate that this was the time for the great Reformation work to proceed, no Popes, Emperors or Church council condemnations could stop it! The reforming work would continue until eventually there would be a “cleansed Sanctuary” Class of true believers outside of the influence of orthodox doctrinal and practicing errors. This would be just in time for the great harvesting work of the next or 7th stage of the Church.

**For thou hast a little strength…**

These reformers started out as simple but zealous individuals (compare Daniel 11:34), taking on the might of the Holy Roman Empire! Fearlessly working by faith in the Word of God and His promises.

**And has kept my word and has not denied my name.**

Yes, the reformers put the Word of God as superior to Church teachings. This was considered to be heresy, punishable by excommunication. And they did not abandon Jesus’ name (his supremacy), in all matters of Christian life and faith. Also compare Rev. 3:13.

**Vs. 9**

**Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie…**

This depicts the Tares, the nominal Christians, who gathered in the Papal denomination. Satan, like the King of Tyre over the Prince (line of Popes) of Tyre (Ezk. 28), is the real master mind behind Papacy. Compare Rev. 2:9.

Furthermore, like the religious Jews who persecuted the early Christians, so, too, Papacy was persecuting heretics/true Christians in the name of religion.

Jesus emphatically assures his true disciples that the Papal claims are but lies, deceptions.

**Behold, I will make them to come and worship (NAS “bow down”) before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.**

A precious promise indeed! The Lord promises that *he will make them* (those of the persecuting, nominal Church), in the kingdom, to have to acknowledge, and seek forgiveness for their terrible acts against the true Body members of Christ. How just and ironic! Those that demanded that the Reformers (like with Luther), should RECANT of their errors and SEEK MERCY from the nominal Church, these will then have to do exactly that, confess the errors of false doctrine and practice, and REPENT to those they banished, excommunicated and tortured!

They will have to *bow down*, in contrition and humiliation before the reigning Saints.

Jesus again emphasizes his personal love and appreciation for these devout, faithful, courageous men and women who would be willing to endure such sufferings for the truth’s sake.

**Vs. 10**

 **Because thou hast kept the word of my patience (NAS “perseverance”), I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try (NAS “test”), them that dwell upon the earth.**

*Note: Reprints 5718, 5981.*

*II Volume pg. 361 “Evidently, in the near future, as a part of its trouble, and even before the severity of the great trouble of this “day of wrath” has burst upon the world and wrecked the entire social fabric of earth (preparatory to the new and better one promised under the true Christ), there will be a severe hour of trial and testing of the truly consecrated Church, much as it was in the days of Papacy’s triumph…”*

*Manna Oct. 16 “…It must not surprise us, however, if a dark hour is before us, if the time shall come when the stormy winds will be so fierce that many will cry out in fear and trembling. Let us learn well the precious experiences of the present time, so that then our faith shall not fail us – so that in the darkest hour we shall be able to sing and to rejoice in him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood, and to sing the song of Moses and he Lamb.”*

 The Greek word for “patience” is *“huponomee”.* It has the meaning of constancy or cheerful endurance. This denotes an attribute of character development more than just the usual word for patience which is used commonly for the lesser inconveniences of daily life.

 *Huponomee* is developed under stress and pressure. It is part of the fruitage of long-suffering. This word being used here in context suggests the extreme endurance of the Reformers and those that faithfully held to the Scriptures during this time of great upheaval and the abandoning so many long held beliefs, traditions and superstitions.

“The word of my patience” might be better understood as “the patience which my word inculcates”.

Yes, the Word of God having both the instructions and examples of Jesus, have taught us how to develop this aspect of character. Certainly it implies having great faith in the LORD’S over ruling providences, come what may.

So then being spared from having to live during the “hour of temptation” is a great blessing, yet it also demonstrates that they did not need this additional trial period, for they had enough in their own period of time.

In a rather unusual manner, the Hour of Trial is really for the next stage of the Church, Laodicea. So, we will now consider the remaining verses of the Philadelphia period before considering the Hour of Trial in depth.

**Vs. 11**

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

The Lord states that he “will come quickly”, and indeed in the following 7th stage he is present, knocking on the door (vs. 20)! In stages 1, 3, 4, 5 and here in 6 (2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11) the Lord states his returning to encourage his future Bride that he is indeed coming back for her! This is intended to create a sense of spiritual urgency.

 “hold that fast which thou hast” is reiterated from the 4th stage of the Church (2:25). Clearly, we can lose whatever progress we have made if we cease to try every day to “set our affections on things above”. As Br. Russell observes, it is the easiest thing in the world to just let ourselves slip back into the worldly current of daily life and allow our spiritual vitality to lag. As Jesus warned, the good things of this life might swallow up (like weeds and thorns) the good seed planted in the good soil of our hearts. Or, as he said elsewhere, to bury our talent(s) in the ground.

 “That no man take thy crown”. Here we learn that there is a crown set aside or apportioned for each of the spirit-begotten when their consecration vows are accepted by God.

Crowns can denote victory, success and rulership, authority.

Some examples for the Church:

I Cor. 9:25; II Tim. 4:8; Js. 1:12; I Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10.

In this context the “crown” refers to the hope of reward offered to the overcomers of the Gospel Age, the 144,000 immortals, the mystical Body of the Christ. They will reign as kings with him for the restoring of mankind and the destruction of all unrighteousness.

So then, when a person is spirit-begotten they have one of the 144,000 crowns set aside for them. If they are faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10) they will be resurrected to the divine nature, having immortality along with the authority as a king to reign with Jesus and sit down with him in his throne (Rev. 3:21).

However, if they prove unfaithful with no hope of being a member of the elite class of immortals, the apportioned crown is removed from them and offered to another one who will be spirit-begotten to “run the race set before them”. Yet, it does not mean a total loss of spiritual life, if they still prove worthy as a disciple of Christ, a “virgin” though foolish, they might gain a lesser victory as a member of the Great Company class, attaining spiritual life like the angels, mortal beings. Consider Rev. 7:9-17 and I Cor. 3:11-15.

Lastly, if they turn out to be unfaithful and unrepentant, they will lose any hope of a future life, hence dying the second death – the condition of oblivion. Consider Hebrews 6:4-8.

**Vs. 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.**

 We observe that “my God” is used four times in this one verse. How plainly is Jesus expressing that he is inferior to God Almighty! That he is not God the Father but is the Son of God.

 Overcomers have the reward of being considered as a “pillar in the temple” of Jesus’ God. A pillar denotes strength, for pillars are used in construction to support the ceiling and/or roofs of buildings. The temple of God would represent the meeting place of God with mankind. It is a holy, sacred place (condition), that God creates and sets apart to both receive worship and to dispense instructions and encouragements.

 In the symbolic sense, consider: Jer. 1:4-8, 17-19; I Kings 7:21 and the marginal names and location, Gal. 2:9, I Tim. 3:15.

 When we are impressed by the depth of meaning in this proffered reward, it helps us to realize how “well grounded” in the truth we need to be, both in doctrine, principle and conduct.

 Pillars supply the support for the roof that protects all those underneath. So then, in God’s temple, the Christ in glory will be the means of supporting (by having successfully lived the disciple’s life now (leaving examples), and by teaching mankind in the Mediatorial Kingdom, the means by which they can successfully walk up the “highway of holiness” and gain life eternal in perfect harmony with God, Jesus and their fellow human family.

 **Go out no more…**

Yes, what a hope! No longer to have to roam as a homesick pilgrim! Having attained the long sought for prize of not only having immortality but also a *POSITION OF RESPONSIBILTY* in the fully established Kingdom of God.

 **…write upon him the name of my God…**

The Divine family name which only the 144,000 receive. See Rev. 14:1.

 …**The name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God…**

 A city symbolizes a government, sometimes a country or a people. This city of God is the new heavens and new earth promised (II Pet. 3:13, Hebs. 13:14, Gal. 4:26, Hebs. 12:22). It has two phases to the new government (Kingdom), heavenly (spiritual), “which is above”, and earthly (for restored humanity).

 “Coming down out of heaven” demonstrates that the Christ, the spiritual seed of Abraham must be developed and completed before they can begin the work of opening the highway of holiness for mankind to progress on. Hence the new heaven must come first, then the new earth. See Rev. 21:1, 2, 10. So then, the new Jerusalem is the government of The Christ that God gives for the Mediatorial phase of the Kingdom, for the rehabilitation for the natural seed of Abraham, Israelites indeed, and through them and the Princes of the earth, the Ancient Worthies, the remainder of mankind will have the opportunity to learn how to submit themselves to the law of righteous and the golden rule.

 **…and I will write upon him my new name.**

 Again, see Rev. 14:1 from the NAS. “Having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.” Again, it might reference the Immortals’ family name, along with the Bridegroom’s name, (as is common, which goes all the way back to Eden). But, of course, as a name indicates authority, so, too, here it represents the highest family authority and signifies God’s approval of these 144,000 victors.

**Vs. 13**

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

 Once again, as with all seven church period messages, they end with this admonition to have a ready heart and mind to learn the intended instructions, admonitions and encouragements for each stage.

**Back to vs. 10:**

**Hour of temptation (trial), which shall come upon all the world, to try (test) them that dwell upon the earth.**

**THE HOUR OF TEMPTATON (TRIAL), TO TRY THEM THAT DWELL UPON THE EARTH.**

This word “hour” denotes a period of time. It can symbolically represent a long period as well as a very short period of time.

1. The long period would start in 1874 with our Lord’s return and continue through to the conclusion of the time of trouble in which this old heavens and earth pass away in destruction.
2. The short period might start with the enforced MARKING OF THE BEAST AND HIS VITALIZED IMAGE and continue through to the conclusion of the trouble with which this Age closes.

It is reasonable that both periods of time, longer and shorter, are meant to be understood. It seems self-evident that the longer period of temptation, beginning in 1874, has certainly been seen and that the shorter period is still before us is demonstrated in Scripture, particularly in the Revelation.

Before considering these two periods in more detail we want to look at the closing words in vs. 10:

“**which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”**

The phrase “upon all the world” implies that this temptation would be world-wide in some sense, and not just in a very limited geographical area.

The next phrase “to try or test them that dwell on the earth” represents that although the temptation environment would be world-wide, the special focus of the trial aspect would upon those of the symbolic earth. The earth represents people under religious restraints. That is, the earth is contrasted with the “sea” Class of peoples which are NOT under any religious restraints. These are often depicting Anarchists. Consider Rev. 13:8, 11, 14.

The “earth” Class of people are pictured as being more stable in nature as compared to those of the restless “sea” Class.

An “earthquake” represents social revolution, an upheaval of a formerly stable society that recognized RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY.

So then, this special trial, or testing period, is especially meant to be upon all who claim to be Christian and that recognize some religious authority as outlined in the Word of God. This would include NOMINAL CHRISTIANS AS WELL AS THE TRUE, SPIRIT-BEGOTTEN CHRISTIANS.

While the causes and effects of this hour of temptation would be upon all the world, including the worldly, non-religious, the LORD means to only test those that claim to be Christian, that is the Wheat and the Tares.

1. The longer hour:
2. The impact of higher criticism on Christian faith.
3. Darwinism and the unproven theory of evolution, even of humans, which led to a great falling away of confidence in the Word of God and the ensuing slide into ever greater moral decay and confusion.
4. The parliament of religions which introduced pagan and heathen religious beliefs to the American public.
5. Spiritism and the investigation into the paranormal. This coincided with the gradual release of the fallen angels in 1874 with the start of the “great day” Jude 6.
6. Increase of knowledge, dispelling superstitious blind faith in the nominal church teachings.
7. The advent of technology that has brought a vast mixture of helpful and hurtful possibilities to every aspect of society.
8. Social media, again a technology that can bring both joy, information and closeness as well as trials of comparison, a sense of loneliness and depression.
9. Materialism – the pursuit of better and more, replaces contentment with what we have. Jesus warns us that there are two masters, and we can only serve one. Paul explains that the love of money is the root of all evil (whether or not we have money).

This long hour of temptation was further identified by Paul in II Tim. 3:1-5. “In the last days perilous times shall come…”.

Again, Jesus in Luke 21:34-36 warns us to be sober regarding the worldly influence.

1. The shorter hour:
2. Future event, as shown in the enforced marking by the Vitalized Image (Federated Protestantism), and the Beast (Papacy), in Rev. 13:15-17. See 4th Volume foreword, pages ix, x and xvi.
3. Rev. 17:12 -14; an hour of power by Church and State to persecute the Body Members of Christ still in the flesh.
4. Luke 22:53, an hour of darkness upon our Master, the Head of the Church, will likely be repeated upon the Feet members.
5. Daniel 3:1, 15, 24, 25, a picture of enforced worship of an image during a specific “hour”, or face persecution at the instigation of the religious leaders.
6. Manna for August 11 – “a second attack”.
7. Conclusion: the longer period has been and still is an ever increasing trial upon our faith. The shorter period will be the culminating, short but most intense hour of trial for the spirit-begotten. Jesus states in Matt. 24:24, that it deceives all but the very elect.

***LAODICEA***

**Vs. 14**

 **And by the angel (messenger) of the church of the Laodiceans write:**

 Laodicea means “tried” or “judged people”. Yes, it is the time of the Harvest of the Gospel Age. Both the nominal Church and the true Church were to be judged, by the returned Lord Jesus.

 The start of this church period is 1874 A.D., the time for the anti-typical Jubilees to begin the start of the Restitution of all things, for which our Lord was sent by his Father to begin and oversee its progress (Acts 3:19-21).

 Also, it was the 1,335 Days (actual years), by which those who understand it’s meaning are blessed (Daniel 12:12).

 It was the conclusion of the 6,000 years from the entrance of sin and death in 4126 B.C. This is a confirmation of the starting time for the process of the removal of the effects of the Adamic curse.

 1874 A.D. was also the 1,845 year Parallel of the presentation of the Bridegroom and Reaper to Israel in 29 A.D.

 1874 A.D. was 30 years after the Millerite’s disappointment in the Second Advent of Christ in 1844 A.D., exactly 1,845 years parallel to the First Advent premature expectation of Messiah in 2 B.C., 30 years before Messiah’s actual ministry in 29 A.D at his baptism and receiving spirit-begettal.

 This is the seventh and last of the great Church development epochs during the Gospel Age. The Bride of Christ is completed. The Bridesmaids (Great Company) are completed. the Spirit-begotten of this Age are all dealt with, including the Second death individuals, leaving only the nominal Church class of Tares to be “burned”, that is destroyed as “Christians”, but saved as humans to have an opportunity to gain life by successfully walking up the Highway of Holiness during the Mediatorial reign.

Since this is the conclusion of all that is Christian in name, both true and imitation or nominal, we are not surprised to read in this message certain portions are more directed to the true while some portions are directed more to the nominal, although we can see that all the expressions are instructive to the true Church.

 The messenger is Charles Taze Russell (b. 1852 – Oct. 31, 1916).

Others have written more complete and detailed accounts of Br. Russell’s life and influence. However, we will satisfy ourselves here with the following summation of his extraordinary life and work.

He was born and raised in a Christian home, mainly Congregationalist. His mother died when he was 8 years old. When he was a teenager he had his faith in the Bible shaken by an infidel friend, who he had tried to convert to Christianity. This friend had raised such good questions that they stumbled Charles, who was honest hearted. He realized that the Dark Age doctrines and creeds could not be harmonized. He studied the various Denominational teachings and concluded that they were unjust and unloving. He investigated Eastern philosophies and found them even less satisfying to a reasonable mind.

Being a believer in God and honest hearted, he continued to seek out answers and by the LORD’S overrulings he dropped into “a dusty, dingy hall” where a small group of Adventists were meeting and heard there enough of a reasonable presentation of Scripture that it re-enkindled his enthusiasm to return to an energetic study of the Bible itself, with his mind unshackled.

Studying the Bible in that light he could see harmony coming forth from the Bible as never before, and by 1872 they understood Ransom and Restitution blessings for all as well as the concept of the two salvations, heavenly and earthy. In 1874 he was immersed with his father and sister. From 1878 through 1881, Br. Russell as a young man found himself caught up in a fierce maelstrom of controversy regarding the Ransom. As a result, in 1879 he started the “Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence” magazine as a defense for the Ransom and hailing the Lord’s Second Presence. In 1881 he wrote a book entitled “Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices”, with the purpose of defending, from the types and shadows, the understanding of Christ Jesus as a Ransom sacrifice. Therein he defined Jesus’ sin-offering experiences and also how his Body members, the Church, could share in those sin-offering experiences by following in the Master’ footsteps.

He went on to write the six volumes of “Studies in The Scriptures”, between the years of 1886 – 1904. It is a systematic study of the Bible with the intended purpose of explaining God’s plan for blessing the entire human family and how the consecrated Christian can participate with Him in the furtherance of that goal.

In a book entitled “Where Else but Pittsburgh”, written in 1958 by a non-Bible Student named Mr. Swetnam, we find a very powerful summation of Br. Russell’s life work:

• He traveled over a million miles.

• Delivered more than 30,000 sermons, almost always without notes, generally about 2 hours in duration.

• He wrote over 50,000 book pages.

• His newspaper sermons appeared twice weekly in 1,200 newspapers, usually on the front page, with over 15,000,000 readers.

• Furthermore, he personally responded to approximately 800 correspondences a month.

• He organized and implemented a Pilgrim service to assist newly interested as well as long established brethren literally around the world.

He himself traveled around the globe in large part to assess the impact of the world’s missionary work.

• He was considered an honorary Pastor to over a thousand Bible Student Congregations, but he never interfered with any business or election of elders and deacons in any Congregation except the one he personally attended, and that by his own vote.

• His writing of the October 1916 Forewords to each of the six Volumes of the “Studies in the Scriptures” series were his parting Pastoral messages that has kept those Volumes pertinent to our day.

• He died or “graduated from the school of Christ”, while he was in service on a pilgrim trip.

• In his personal life he experienced physical pain and discomfort regularly. He suffered numerous relationship losses. He spent his entire fortune in service to the Truth. He endured constant criticism and verbal abuse by Clergy and Lay people, blinded by their Denominational errors.

With confidence we suggest that Br. Russell was pictured in the following verses:

Ezekiel 9:2: the man with the writer’s inkhorn.

Matthew 24:45-47: that wise and faithful servant, who was made ruler over all his (Jesus’), goods.

Revelation 3:14: the messenger to Laodicea.

Revelation 17:1: one of the seven messengers that identifies the great Harlot.

Finally, it is only fitting that our returned Lord Jesus would want to use a servant to feed his fellow servants the present truth then due, who was NOT of the Clergy Class, nor a theologian, but rather someone who had previously left Churchanity with all of its false doctrines and unscriptural practices (like the Nicolaitans spirit).

**“…these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness…”**

The Amen, Jesus uses this word to denote his “trustworthiness” and “surety” as a faithful and true witness to the truth of the message he is giving. “Amen” is a Scriptural expression used to represent a solemn “yes”.

“Amen” is used in II Corinthians 1:19, 20 to demonstrate that the promises of God are assured because Jesus was faithful even unto death and is the basis of all our hopes. There is no wavering or doubt in the following message.

“The faithful witness” is an expression identifying Jesus from the first chapter – Rev. 1:5, as well as in Rev. 19:11.

**“…the beginning of the creation of God.”**

A direct contradiction to the erroneous doctrine of the Trinity. Upon our Lord’s return, he provides the “meat in due season”, of which the philosophy of the ransom price is fundamental. This means that understanding that God is separate and superior to the Logos (who would become the perfect man Jesus), is necessary to comprehend the justice of God in demanding a perfect human life right for the perfect human right to life forfeited by Adam’s sin of disobedience. It is a substitution, “a life for a life”, balancing of just and love.

The rendering of John 1:1-3 in Wilson’s Diaglott, the Greek recension by Dr. J.J. Griesbach and interlined with a literal word for word translation, wherein the corresponding English is placed directly under each Greek word, is on the left and follows:

“In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a god was the Word. This was in a beginning with the God. All through it was done, and without it was done not even one, that has been done.”

In support of this rendering we quote in part, from the following authority:

“Technical Papers for The Bible Translator” Published under the editorial supervision of the United Bible Societies Sub-Committee on Helps for Translators. Vol. 28, No. 1, January 1977.

“If translation were a matter of substituting words, a possible translation…would be, “The Word was a god”. As a word-for-word translation it cannot be faulted…”.

A simplistic way of understanding this is that when we see “the Word”, it is referring to the Logos (later to become Jesus), and when we see “the God”, it is referring to The LORD GOD ALMIGHTY.

This use of “a god” can be found in Acts 28:6 and 12:22.

The absence of the definitive article allows for the proper translation of “a god”.

Summary of John 1:1-3: the Logos was with God the Father (how can God be with himself?), and he was God’s first creation, through whom He created all other things. This is confirmed in Colossians 1:15-18, I Corinthians 8:6 and Hebrews 1:2.

It is probable that the doctrine of the Trinity will be a major issue for the Feet members, as it is readily used by both Clergy and lay people alike to be a litmus test as to whether or not one is a “true Christian”, or a member of some cultic non-Christian practice.

The word “beginning”, in the Greek means “created”, not source of creation (per Vine’s Greek Word Dictionary).

Strong’s #746 “commencement”.

**Vs. 15, 16:**

**I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.**

Again Jesus states that he is aware of the labors or efforts by so many that claim to be Christians. It is a time period where there is much less persecution than in the previous stages of the Gospel Age.

The Lord prefers that people would either be “cold” that is, not claiming to be his disciples or “hot” that is, zealous disciples. Sadly, the predominant condition is “lukewarm” – claiming to be a disciple but really only nominal believers.

Being spued out of Jesus mouth represents that he has no use or interest in these imitators. They have no right to be his spokespeople. Being spit out indicates a startling dramatic action! This emphasizes just how UNDESIRABLE this condition is.

**Vs. 17, 18:**

**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: 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 the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.**

The nominal Church, spiritual Babylon, is cast out. The Lord calls His people (the spirit-begotten), to “come out of her” Rev. 18:1-4.

No longer is there the possibility of being “reformed”, for that time is over. No, the “old heavens and old earth” are in the process of passing away with a great noise. (See Jeremiah 51:6 – 9, II Peter 3:10 – 13).

One of the adverse effects of living during the “hour of temptation” is that for many Christians they have an abundance of temporal or earthly prosperity and can suffer from materialism, mistaking material wealth as if it is an indicator of having spiritual wealth. And so, many of the nominal Churches teach. If the laity is prosperous then the clergy might be prosperous as well.

Even though millions follow the “prosperity gospel” message, yet it is the lack of encouraging SACRIFICE and the lack of promoting CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT, that all too often is the problem. Attending Sunday service for an hour and making a weekly donation in the offering plate is considered the “norm” for having a “reservation in heaven”.

It is not unusual for many Church goers never to hear of the “blood of Jesus”, cleansing them from sin. But if they do, then it is presented that they are “guaranteed” an entrance to heaven. They are not encouraged to regularly study the Bible, but if they are, it is always with the Denominational pre-interpreted simplistic explanatory books.

Nominal Christianity is wretched, miserable and poor in true spirituality and holiness. The masses have been led to believe that if they just go to a Church, they are saved. Many Churches are merely Christian themed social gatherings, trying to encourage people in their day to day lives, without asking them to change very much.

But this condition has left the Tare Class blind to the reality of their situation, blind to present truth now available.

• They are poor in that they have not dedicated their lives to serve the Lord daily.

• They are naked, a shameful condition of not acknowledging the need of Jesus’ sacrifice. So often higher criticism of the Bible leaves the people in confusion on such an important matter. Instead they often believe in evolution.

• But Jesus offers the solution: buy of me (Jesus), at great personal expense, “all that one has”, in complete consecration to be dead to self and alive toward God and Jesus. To lead a life of FAITH, (I Peter 1:7), in this way one can hope to gain the “gold”, the divine nature.

• To buy (purchase by a living faith), in the white raiment, the robe of Christ’s righteousness to cover our sinful nature. This is a prerequisite in order to have an acceptable consecration.

• And obtain the eye-salve of the holy spirit, to “see” with the mind’s eye of faith, what the true plans and purposes of God really are.

• We might sum this up as Jesus encouraging a living consecration, true discipleship.

• A life of faith, even through trials.

• Daily seeking forgiveness for our failings through the meritorious blood of Jesus.

• Daily studying and reflecting on the Word of God to “see” how to live in harmony with Him.

**Vs. 19:**

**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten (discipline NAS): be zealous therefore and repent.**

In this verse we see the change from a more broad message to all that take the name of Christian, to the individual believer.

Jesus loves the simple and sincere, the honest hearted. He understands that the Wheat and Tares were to grow together, to some extent, throughout the Age, but now is the time of Harvest, “come out her (nominal Church systems), MY people”. This is an individual matter and the Lord is willing to work with and assist all those who will “follow his voice”, and be zealous – energetic in their change of life, from a merely formalistic/ritualistic faith to a living and vitalized faith of daily life.

**Vs. 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 (dine), with him, and he with me.**

Again, this is an individual matter. The Lord’s Parousia (presence), is now a reality during this seventh stage of the Church, just as in the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25), all of the spirit-begotten will be made aware of the Lord’s return. His knocking may be in the form of the signs of the time, Bible chronology or the understanding of the fulfillment of prophecies. It is then for such an “awakened” believer to discern the Lord’s voice, Jesus’ encouragement to seek him further in their understanding, to be led to the Father, through the Son.

This “opening the door”, of mind and heart is what will be required of any who hope to make progress in the Narrow Way during this time.

The eating together is shown in Matt. 24:44 – 47, “meat in due season”, a “carcass” to feed upon, Luke 17:30 – 37. This spiritual food is necessary to withstand all the deceptions of the Adversary and the worldly-wise. It is the Divine Plan of the Ages.

**Vs. 21, 22:**

**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.**

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

Yes, the promise is to the overcomers, those who overcome all the temptations and enticements, the deceptions and worldly concerns, that they might successfully run the race set before them.

To sit upon the throne with Jesus implies a number of things:

1. That they would be of the Bride Class, united to their long sought after Bridegroom.
2. That they would be kings, ruling with Jesus over restored humanity and assist them up the “Highway of holiness”, to life eternal.
3. That they will be part of the divine, royal family, whose great Patriarch is the Lord God Almighty Himself.

The closing verse completes the seven reiterations of the “seven spirits before the throne of God” Rev. 1:4, 4:5, 5:6.

End.