

Revelation 2a – The Seven Churches: Part 1

Ephesus - The Era of Waning Love

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

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write - Ephesus means first or desirable. This is a good description of the Church in its first state, as they had received the doctrines of Christ in its purity. They also enjoyed the gifts of the Holy Spirit that had been poured out on the day of Pentecost Acts 2:1-4. It may well be called the Age of Apostolic Purity, an attribute highly desirable in God's sight.

John is instructed to write to the angel of this Church. We have already seen that the angel of the Church is none other than a messenger or leader/minister of that Church. (Revelation 1:16, 20) As these Churches each cover a period of time, (see Revelation 1:4, 11) it would then follow that it would be a message to all the ministers/leaders of Christ during the period covered by this Church. They in turn, would naturally pass it on to the entire Church.

We can also find certain aspects of these messages to the Churches that apply to us personally. Thus far we can see that these letters apply to a literal Church in the literal location, also to God's Church as a whole through a certain time period, and lastly it has a personal application as well. We will be mainly looking at the symbolic and personal.

Saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand - The one that is giving this message to John is the one that holds the seven stars in his right hand. We have found this to be Jesus himself. (Revelation 1:13, 16)

In Daniel 12:3 faithful teachers of the gospel are represented as stars, that shine forever and ever; and in Jude 13 false teachers are called *“wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”* *These spiritual stars shine as long as they remain in the right hand of Christ. When they stray from Him they become wandering stars, and eventually disappear in the darkness.”* ***The Seven Epistles of Christ, by Taylor G Bunch pg 99.*** Thus Christ has the leaders of His Church in His hand of strength, so long as they remain faithful to him. The right hand is the hand of power and authority. (Psalms 20:6, 18:35)

Christ draws the focus from the leaders to himself, the one that is in control of the leaders. This was done for a good reason as they had started to focus on the leaders more than Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 3:4-7) We need to be careful not to take our focus off Christ and place it onto a mere man.

Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks - We know from Revelation 1:20 that the candlesticks are the Churches. Christ has such a great love for his Church that he gave himself for it and purchased it with his blood. (Ephesians 5:25,

Acts 20:28) He it is that is seen to be amongst the Church, imparting blessings and light with his presence. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (Psalms 121:4) What an encouragement this would be to those of that era.

Revelation 2:2-3 *“I know your works, and your labour, and your patience, and how you canst not bear them which are evil: and you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars: 3 And have borne, and have patience, and for my name's sake have laboured, and have not fainted.”*

I know thy works - This Jesus says to each of the seven Churches, showing that he has complete knowledge of the deeds of his people whether good or bad. For all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:13) Nothing is secret or hidden to the eyes of God.

Thy labour, and thy patience - The early Christian Church was a working Church, they did not just profess to have the truth but proclaimed it. For Paul states that the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven, (Colossians 1:23) as they went everywhere preaching the word, and turning the world upside down. (Acts 8:4, 17:6) Remembering that this was started by just 120 persons (Acts 1:15) and went to the then known world.

But they were also patient in their labours. This means they had persevering endurance in spreading the gospel. What about us?

Thou canst not bear them which are evil - The Church in the days of the apostles would not countenance rebellion and open sin in the Church, you were either in or out in those days. We are never to encourage evil but to abhor it and not set it before our eyes. (Romans 12:9, Psalms 101:3)

Tried them which say they are apostles, and are not...found them liars - Obviously there were those who were claiming to be part of the Church, even professing to be amongst the teachers of the Church that were only deceivers. The early Church was still strong in truth, not tossed back and forth by every wind of doctrine and thus was able to try or test their claims, and search out their true characters and found them to be liars, thus removing them.

They had been warned and counselled by the apostles about this very thing, (Acts 20:29-31, 2 Peter 2:1) and to test them. (1 John 4:1) But what to test them against? To the law and to the testimony of the prophets that have gone before them. (Isaiah 8:20) Also Psalms 119:104 and Acts 17:11.

3. Hast borne, hast patience, for my names sake hast laboured, not fainted - The early Church endured without weariness, nor fainting, in the spreading of the gospel whilst under persecution from the Jews and Domitian.

Revelation 2:4-5 *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do the first*

works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent.”

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee - Even though the Church was a truth Church, one that tested the claims of people against God's word, worked tirelessly in spreading the truth, and could not bear to have evil amongst them, God still had something against them.

Thou hast left thy first love - A person's first love is generally very strong, devoted, and unselfish. But the early Church had left this, as their zeal began to wane and their devotion, thus selfishness became more prominent, for where iniquity doth abound the love of many shall wax cold. (Matthew 24:12) Their first love was beginning to wax cold which was leading them to cherish worldliness, which John gave counsel against to the early Church, (1 John 2:15-17) also Paul. (Romans 12:1-2)

If we were asked when our greatest love for Christ was, what would be our answer? If it were not the present moment there would be a problem, for our greatest love should not be last year or month, not even yesterday, but right now, this present day.

5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen - They were counselled to remember from where they had fallen, the unselfish love and devotion that they use to manifest toward their Saviour. Carefully recall the former relationship with God and think upon it. This we to must do if our first love for God starts to wane or go cold.

And repent - Once the true position is given and the error pointed out, there needs to be a call to repentance. Repentance is the foundational work when coming to Christ (Hebrews 6:1) and it is the goodness of God that leads us to this very act. (Romans 2:4) True repentance is a turning away from sin, as those who confess and forsake their sin will find mercy, (Proverbs 28:13) but those that refuse to repent will perish. (Luke 13:3)

And do the first works - The early Christians were told to go back and do the first works they had previously shown in their lives. This was the first love that they had, the self-sacrificing love and devotion. Love is shown by the deeds we perform, this is why love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10) For love is full hearted obedience, and if we love Christ it will be shown by the keeping of His Commandments. (John 14:15)

Or else I will come quickly, and remove thy candlestick - If they did not repent and come back to their first love, God was going to come quickly and remove their candlestick.

God's Church, which are His people, are to be as shining lights, (Matthew 5:14, 16) shining the light of truth (Psalms 119:105, 130) to the world of darkness. We can not do this by ourselves as all our righteousness is as filthy rags, (Isaiah 64:6) we can only shine out the truth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is also represented as the 7 lamps of fire. (Revelation 4:5) If the early Church was to not repent and return to its first love, God would remove from her the light of truth and the Holy Spirit. Thus it

shows that a Church can be devoid of the Holy Spirit, for the candle of the wicked shall be put out. (Proverbs 24:20) Our love for Christ must be supreme. (Matthew 10:37-38)

Revelation 2:6 *“But this you have, that you hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”*

Hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes - Notice how they did not hate the Nicolaitanes but the deeds performed by them, so to it was with God. God hates the sin but loves the sinner.

The preaching of grace without law, was the sin of the Nicolaitanes and it led to a sensuality amongst those who accepted it, which was an abomination in God's sight. Thus although the first love was lacking, the doctrinal purity of the Church remained steadfast, which God commended. It is not often we read that God hates anything, but this doctrine of grace without law is one thing he does. We will look at this more closely under the Church of Pergamos.

Revelation 2:7 *“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith - That is, to heed the counsel given. The hearing here is the hearing in faith, for if faith is not mixed with the word that we hear it will not profit us. (Hebrews 4:2) This faith will lead us to follow the counsel as faith and works go hand in hand. (James 2:17, 20)

In verse 1 we saw that it is Christ giving the message to the Church. Here it is the Spirit giving the message. This is not a contradiction as the Spirit was sent to testify of Christ, (John 15:26) thus the Spirit is Christ's representative on earth. He it is that will lead and guide us into all truth, John 16:13. We can only be led if we heed the call, for Christ the good Shepherd and the Spirit call to our hearts to follow. (John 10:27, Revelation 22:17) If you hear His voice, harden not your heart, (Hebrews 4:7) for through continual refusal to hear and obey will lead to the unpardonable sin.

Unto the churches - This indicates that all seven Churches were to profit by each of the seven letters. Thus in a symbolic sense, all of God's Church can benefit from heeding each of the messages.

To him that overcometh - This is seen as the call to all the Churches, that only the overcomer will inherit the reward of the righteous. There is no other class mentioned, only those who accept the help offered and overcome, cost what it may, and those who are lost. An interesting point on the original language here is that the form of the verb implies that the person “continues in overcoming” or “keeps on winning.” Thus it is not a one off victory over Satan, but a continual walking by faith constantly overcoming in all things by the power of the indwelling Christ. (Jude 24, Philippians 4:13, 1 John 5:4; 4:4)

Eat of the tree of life - The tree of life was in the midst of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9) and immortality was the result of eating its fruit. (Genesis 3:22) But this was lost through the sin of man. Thus the first promise of the first letter of Christ is of the restoration of the first thing lost through sin; access to the tree of life and its life giving fruit. (Revelation 22:1-2, 14) The overcomer will return to his long-lost Eden home and again have a right to its glories untold.

Time period for Ephesus was 31 A.D. to 100 A.D.

Smyrna - The Period of Suffering and Martyrdom

Revelation 2:8 *“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;”*

Smyrna - *“This is synonymous with myrrh, which was an aromatic substance used sometimes as a healing ointment but especially for embalming the dead, John 19:39. One of the chief ingredients of myrrh was made by crushing and bleeding a plant of the same name. It is very bitter to the taste but has a fragrant odour, and the more the plant is crushed and bruised the greater the fragrance. The name Smyrna, therefore, indicates suffering and persecution which prove a blessing. Smyrna would be crushed by cruel persecutions, but as a result of her sufferings would be anointed for a death and burial that would end in a resurrection and renewal of life. Although the afflictions would be bitter to the victim, they would result in releasing to the world the perfume of heaven.”*

Seven Epistles of Christ, Taylor G Bunch, pgs 130, 131.

First and last - Was dead and is alive - If we notice carefully, you will see that this is a description already used in chapter 1. Christ introduces Himself to each one of the Churches with a description already seen in the introduction to the book of Revelation.

“To the Smyrna Church, about to pass through the fiery ordeal of persecution, He reveals Himself as one who was dead, but is now alive. If they should be called to seal their testimony with their blood, they were to remember that the eyes of One were upon them who had shared the same fate, but had triumphed over death, and was able to bring them up from a martyr's grave.” **Daniel and the Revelation, Uriah Smith, pgs 351, 352.**

He holds the keys to unlock them from that martyrs death. (Revelation 1:18) Death has no more sting and the grave has no more victory to those that are victorious in Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57) This would be of great comfort to those during this time.

Revelation 2:9 *“I know your works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but you are rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”*

Knows works, tribulation, and poverty - As with all the Churches, Christ knows every work performed.

The Church was to be crushed by persecution from the pagan Roman Caesars as the gospel spread throughout the then known world, but it was not to be permanently killed. Millions of Christians sacrificed their lives for the truth, whether by wild beast or set alight as human torches, death came to them in various ways. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)

Here is listed the Roman Emperors that persecuted Christians;

Trajan 98-117 A.D.	Alexander Severus 222-235 A.D.
Hadrian 117-138 A.D.	Maximus 235-238 A.D.
Antoninus Pius 138-161 A.D.	Decius Trajan 249-251 A.D.
Marcus Aurelius 161-180 A.D.	Gallus 251-253 A.D.
Commodus 180-192 A.D.	Valerian 253-260 A.D.
Septimus Severus 193-211 A.D.	Aurelian 270-275 A.D.

We will come to Diocletian in verse 10.

During this time of great persecution against the Christian Church, those that would not forsake their faith were threatened with the loss of citizenship rights and confiscation of property also.

(but thou art rich) - Even though they were in a state of poverty, they were rich in faith, James 2:5, that is spiritually rich. They were having nothing but possessing all things. (2 Corinthians 6:10) See also Proverbs 10:22; 13:7.

Blasphemy...say they are Jews, and are not...synagogue of Satan - In the New Testament context a Christian is regarded as a Jew, in a spiritual sense, and heir according to the promise. (Romans 2:28-29, Galatians 3:7; 26-29) If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed. See also Romans 9:6-7 and 2 Peter 2:9-10. See also [Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks](#).

Here we have people taking the name of Christ upon themselves by calling themselves Christians, or a spiritual Jew, when the reality was they possessed nothing of the requisite character. They claim to be a Christian, but they do not manifest the deeds of Christ, thus giving others the occasion to ridicule by saying that this is a specimen of Christianity. (Romans 2:23-24) God regards it as blasphemy.

Those that are hypocritical God regards as a part of the synagogue/Church of Satan. (1 John 3:7-10) Could the Lord say that of you and I?

Revelation 2:10 *“Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.”*

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer - The people were encouraged to not fear the persecution as long as they did not let go of God, did not lower the standard

to save their lives. We are not to fear those that kill the body but can not kill the soul. (Matthew 10:28) Also that we will be hated for Christ's name, but if we endure unto the end we will be saved. (Matthew 10:22) See also Isaiah 41:10 and Matthew 10:30-31.

Prison, that ye may be tried - The persecution of the Church was one way of making it pure, of testing who was serious and who was not. It will be noticed that during this period there is no rebuke, only encouragement under tribulation. Thus there was yet, no major doctrinal problems amongst the true believers. Persecution is a sure means of purifying the Church and encouraging piety amongst its members.

We are to count it all joy when we fall into diverse temptations, because the trying of our faith works patience, and when patience has done its perfect work we will be perfect and entire wanting nothing. (James 1:2-4) As gold is passed through the fire to take away all the dross, so to is our faith to pass through fiery trials to refine and purge away all the dross out of our lives. (1 Peter 1:7; 4:12-14, Zechariah 13:9)

Tribulation ten days - Being a symbolic prophecy the days here will equal ten years. This tribulation is seen during the reign of Diocletian from the year A.D. 303-313. Under both Diocletian and Galerius his successor the desire was to remove Christianity from the empire and thus preserve the Roman way of life, which they believed was under threat by the monumental growth of the Christian religion. Diocletian's first decree in A.D. 303 was to ban Christianity throughout the empire, plus to burn the Christian's religious books including the Bible. This unleashed an unmitigated and relentless persecution of Christians in the entire empire.

Faithful unto death, and...give thee a crown of life - They were encouraged to maintain their faith even unto death, unto martyrdom. For if they were faithful and endured unto death, though they be tried, they would be given a crown of life. (James 1:12) This is given to them at Christ's appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8, 1 Peter 5:3-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) Let us comfort one another with these words.

Revelation 2:11 *“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death - Even though they would suffer the first death, the second death, which is eternal death, (Revelation 20:14-15) would have no power over them, for Jesus will raise them up from the dead when He comes the second time. (Revelation 20:6) This is promised to the overcomer. See also Matthew 5:10-12.

The time period of Smyrna was 100 A.D. to 313 A.D.

Pergamos - The Epoch of State Religion

Revelation 2:12 “*And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which has the sharp sword with two edges;*”

Pergamos - The name Pergamos means height or elevation. This is a fitting name as the city was built upon a thousand foot high hill, thus placing it in a position to be easily defended. The only way it was ever captured was by stratagem. A very good description of the Church during the Pergamos period.

Gibbon, speaking of Constantine, says “*From the first moment of his accession declaring himself the protector of the church...the first emperor who publicly professed and established the Christian religion...rendered Christianity the reigning religion of the Roman empire*” **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon, Vol 2 Chap 16, pg 138.** Constantine rose to full power, about 320 A.D. but previous to this had granted Christianity complete freedom to practice within the empire. Christianity became very popular, with Constantine himself professing to be converted to Christianity in 323 A.D. and also marching his army through a river to baptize them. Christianity undoubtedly became high and lifted up, or simply put, exalted.

Sharp sword with two edges - We know from Revelation 1:16 that this is none other than the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Thus Christ is coming to this Church with the word of God.

Even though Christianity was being exalted, the Church was having doctrinal problems, showing that popularity can breed corruption. Satan had tried to stamp out the Church through persecution, but only found that it purified and enlarged the Church. Thus he changed his strategy.

Revelation 2:13 “*I know your works, and where you dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and you holdest fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*”

I know thy works - Where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is - “*When Cyrus captured the city of Babylon, the ancient seat of Satan's counterfeit system of religion, the supreme pontiff of the Chaldean mysteries and his retinue of priests fled from the city and ultimately made their residence in Pergamos. Here they re-established their Babylonian worship and made the kings of Pergamum the chief pontiffs of their religion. When Attalus III, the last of their priest-kings, died in 133 B.C., he bequeathed both his royal and priestly offices to the Romans. A century later, (Julius and Augustus), Caesar became both emperor of Rome and Pontifex Maximus of the religion of the empire. He was given divine honours, which he handed down to his successors, (later rejected by the Christian emperor Gratian 380 A.D.). These were later assumed by the popes, (firstly by Pope Damasus, thus its transferral to the Church of Rome), the supreme pontiffs of ecclesiastical Rome. Thus Pergamos became the connecting link between the two Babylons, the ancient and the modern. The papal system is patterned after that of Babylon and Rome. This is another reason for the statement of Jesus that Pergamos was the*

place where Satan dwelleth.” *The Seven Epistles of Christ, Taylor G Bunch, pgs 149, 150.* Bracketed words are added information. See also notes on seat, power, and great authority in Revelation 13:2.

Holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith - Even amidst the changes that were taking place in the Church, with its sudden and drastic change from intense persecution to popularity and privilege, some did not compromise, some maintained the truth in its purity and continued to hold aloft the name of Jesus.

Antipas - *“It is supposed that Antipas was not an individual, but a class of men who opposed the power of the bishops, or popes, in that day, being a combination of two words, 'Anti,' opposed, and 'Papas,' father, or pope; and many of them suffered martyrdom at that time in Constantinople and Rome, where the bishops and popes began to exercise the power which soon after brought into subjection the kings of the earth, and trampled on the rights of the Church of Christ. And for myself, I see no reason to reject this explanation of the word 'Antipas' in this text, as the history of those times are [is] perfectly silent respecting such an individual as is here named.”* **William Miller, Evidence From Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, pp. 135, 136.**

Revelation 2:14 *“But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”*

A few things against thee - Once again, after giving praise to the good points in this Church, Christ now sets forth the rebuke.

There them - The apostate Church that was developing in Rome is not the Church that is under question here. For the period here that we are looking at, is when we see a great divide underway in Christendom, as some were compromising under the new freedom and others refused to do so and were forced to separate. However, this statement that they had some “within” the Church that held to the doctrine of Balaam, reveals that not all who rejected the apostasy were correct either.

Hold the doctrine of Balaam - To understand what the doctrine of Balaam is here, we need to go back to the Old Testament to see what he did to the children of Israel.

Taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel - Balaam was once a prophet of God but went astray loving the wages of unrighteousness. (2 Peter 2:15) Balak wished for Balaam to come and curse the children of Israel, who were his opponents at that time. (Numbers 22:6) But every time Balaam went to curse them only a blessing came out, (Numbers 24:10) for what God hath blessed no man can reverse. (Numbers 23:20)

But Balaam knew how to have God's blessing taken away from Israel and thus changed his strategy. In Numbers 25:1-9, 31:15-16 we find the answer. Balaam counselled Balak to send beautiful women into the camp of Israel to seduce them into celebrating an idolatrous feast. It worked, for they first committed fornication, then they went to the

feast, then they ate and drank, then they bowed to their gods. The end of Balaam's counsel was the death of 24,000 people. So we see the process of compromise, little bit by little bit. Thus it was with those within the Church. Little by little they began to compromise with error. Satan had changed his strategy from persecution to exalting Christianity to the state religion. Such errors as Sunday worship, burning of candles and wax tapers, purgatory, and the giving of the title of “Mother of God” and “Queen of Heaven” to Mary came into the Church. Ultimately paganism walked into the Church and was exalted through the Papacy as Christianity. Balaam had led the children of Israel to compromise thus bringing their downfall, so to with the Church during this time. There were those within that were compromising and thus bringing their downfall.

Revelation 2:15 *“So have you also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”*

Nicolaitanes - As far as we can find out from history, those that were called Nicolaitanes were those that made the law of God of none effect through grace. Jude 4 gives us a glimpse of this group that turned the grace of God into lasciviousness or sexual freedom, thus they were believing that the law doesn't matter for God's grace covers us. But the verse calls them ungodly men.

Them that hold - Under the Church of Ephesus the deeds of the Nicolaitanes was not tolerated. But here we see that, in the Church during this time, there were those who held to these false teachings.

NOTE: The doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans within the Church itself reveal that there was a certain number of people that, while desiring to be true to the word also desired to be united or loyal to the Church as a whole body. Thus they sought to promote tolerance of the apostasy that was leading the Church astray. This is where the issue of Balaam becomes very clear to us, in that he encouraged the Israelites to join with the Moabites in the “harmless” feast which eventually led to their ruin, thus in the papal apostasy some promoted tolerance of the new ideas coming into the Church. It is important to learn what should be tolerated and what should not, as the wrong type of tolerance will lead to ruin.

Revelation 2:16 *“Repent; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”*

Repent or I will come unto thee quickly - What is the Church to repent of? It is to repent of tolerating the teachings and practices of the Balamites and the Nicolaitanes. The Church is not to tolerate sin and apostasy in her midst, but how often has she allowed this to happen. Of this we must repent and reform.

Fight against them - Christ will come and fight against those that hold to these teachings and practices, and against those that are compromising.

With the sword of my mouth - All those, of Israel, that had joined themselves to Baal-peor were literally slain with the sword. (Numbers 25:5) So to it is with those of Spiritual

Israel that persist in compromising with the world, which is spiritual adultery. (James 4:4) The spiritual sword, that is the word of God, will be unsheathed against them and they will be severed from among God's people.

Revelation 2:17 *“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receiveth it.”*

To him that overcometh - Again it is only to those that continue in overcoming these things that receive the reward.

Eat of the hidden manna - Literal manna was provided to the children of Israel to feed and maintain their life. (Exodus 16:15, 35) A golden pot with an omer of manna in it was laid up inside the Ark of the Covenant in the sanctuary, (Exodus 16:33, Hebrews 9:4) thus being hidden from the eye. Jesus Christ is the true manna or bread of life that came down from heaven. (John 6:48-63) If we are overcomers we will be a partaker of Jesus Christ, the hidden manner, and to be a partaker of Christ means to be a partaker of eternal life. (1 John 5:11-12) The fact that it will be given to the overcomer is a sign that this manna represents the sustaining of God in the new heavens and new earth. It is God's promise to provide for us that which eye has never seen for us to enjoy throughout eternity.

Give him a white stone...a new name written - White stones were given to gladiators who were victorious in athletic contests in Greece and Rome. The name of the victor was inscribed in the white stone, and it entitled him to special privileges. Thus it is with the overcomer. Name denotes character and white is a symbol of purity and victory. The new name describes the victory he has had over sin and the purity of character that he has attained to. It also entitles him to the special privilege of entering into the gates of Heaven, and being heirs with Christ and kings and priests before his throne. (Romans 8:16-17, Revelation 3:21, 22:5)

The Pergamos period was from 313 to 538 A.D.

Thyatira - The Church That Tolerates Jezebel

Revelation 2:18 *“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who has his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;”*

Thyatira - Sweet savour of labour or sacrifice of contrition.

The citizens of Thyatira were mostly poor and humble labourers, being made contrite by sacrifices and their lives were made fragrant by the blessing of labour. They produced instruments of brass, bronze, and other metals, also the production of and dyeing of cloth in red but especially in purple, as we find that Lydia was a seller of purple from Thyatira. (Acts 16:12-14)

This period deals with the supremacy of the Papal Church from 538-1798 A.D., and it is significant to note that the chief colours worn by the popes and cardinals, of this Church, is none other than scarlet and purple.

Those that were obedient to the truth through this time were called upon to constantly sacrifice and were generally poor in the eyes of the world. Thyatira is a fitting description of the Church during this time.

Son of God - This is the only depiction of Christ in Revelation where he is called the Son of God. This is noteworthy as during this period the great apostate had usurped the position and title of the Son of God for himself, and had seated himself in the temple of God as though he were God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4). It was a reminder of the church to cease from false worship of Babylonian gods that were being introduced in the Christendom. Rome is the embodiment of Babylon. You can look at the description of Rome in Revelation 13 and 18, it carries the civilization of all the other beasts before her including their paganism which obliterated the true sonship of Christ. This obscuring of Christ is something that was started by Satan himself in heaven, and he Satan gave his seat and authority to Rome. In papacy is continued the war of the sonship of Christ that began in heaven:

Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and Lucifer, that glorious angel, got up a warfare over the matter, until he had to be thrust down to the earth. He knows what I am saying today. He knows whenever there is a company assembled together as you are here. He knows when we are making efforts in every way possible to reach out to win the minds of the people. He has his agencies appointed so that after this meeting will be over, circumstances will arise and the enemy will try to gain the victory. {Ellen Gould Harmon Ms86-1910}

Angels were expelled from heaven because they would not work in harmony with God. They fell from their high estate because they wanted to be exalted. They had come to exalt themselves, and they forgot that their beauty of person and of character came from the Lord Jesus. This fact the angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and they came to consider that they were not to consult Christ. One angel began the controversy and carried it on until there was rebellion in the heavenly courts among the angels. They were lifted up because of their beauty. {Ellen Gould Harmon Lt42-1910}

Eyes like unto a flame of fire - This is a reference to the vision of Christ in Revelation 1:13-15. Thus confirming that this is indeed the one who was in the midst of the seven candlesticks, was still there watching over his Church during this long and dangerous period.

Revelation 2:19 “I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first.”

Works, charity, service, faith, patience - Even though this was to be one of the hardest periods for the Church, Christ, the ever watchful guardian of his people, found

much to commend and encourage. Even amidst the trouble and hardship of this era, God's people found strength and were able to stand true.

Last to be more than the first - This is the only Church that improves as it goes along. It seems that as the papacy grew in power and strength, audacity and pride so the strength of the people of God improved and as the end of this period dawned the world was ready for great new light.

Revelation 2:20 *“Notwithstanding I have a few things against you, because you sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”*

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee - Bad circumstances do not justify the presence of sin, or the tolerance of those who are evil in our midst. Even though these people were passing through a terrible time in regards to the state of the Church, they were not excused for allowing apostasy to go unchecked.

Woman - Represents a Church in prophecy. (Jeremiah 6:2, Isaiah 51:16, 2 Corinthians 11:2) Obviously a pure woman is a pure Church and an impure woman an impure Church.

Jezebel - To find out or understand what is being said here, we need to understand who and what Jezebel was. Listed below are the comments of who Jezebel was.

- *She was a whore and witch. (2 Kings 9:22)*
- *A prophetess of Baal, the realm of an impure religion. (Revelation 2:20)*
- *Teaches fornication. (Revelation 2:20)*
- *Married to Ahab king of Israel, or Church and state united. As a result he was led into Baal worship. (1 Kings 16:31)*
- *Jezebel (Church) dominated Ahab (state), she controlled the state through Ahab. (1 Kings 21:25)*
- *One result of the apostasy was a drought for three and a half years. (1 Kings 16:32-17:1; 18:18, James 5:17)*
- *Persecuted God's faithful. (1 Kings 18:3-4; 19:1-2)*
- *She has children. (Revelation 2:23)*
- *Ultimate end was total annihilation. (2 Kings 9:36-37)*

If we take these marks and apply them to the time frame we are dealing with, 538-1798, you will see they correctly fit the Roman Catholic Church, that is spiritual Babylon. (see verse 13) We find the Papal woman, or spiritual Babylon, in chapter 17 as well. Let us now apply them.

- *The Papacy is a whore, for she has not laid her trust, reliance and support upon Christ the husband but upon the state, (spiritual adultery). (Ephesians 5:23-25, Revelation 17:1-2) She is also the habitation of devils. (Revelation 18:2)*
- *Papacy calls itself the sole teacher of truth. Claims infallibility.*
- *She teaches others her fornication. (Revelation 17:2, 18:3)*

- *She is a Church and state united. (Revelation 17:2)*
- *She controls the state. (Revelation 17:3) The beast/state is supporting the woman that is riding it. The one who is being supported and is riding is the one in control.*
- *One of the results of the papal rule was three and a half prophetic years, or 1260 years, of spiritual drought of the word of God.*
- *None will deny that she is a persecuting power. (Revelation 17:6, Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:7)*
- *The Papacy designates herself as the mother of Christendom, thus the other Churches that are drunk with her fornication are her daughters. (Revelation 17:5)*
- *Her ultimate end will be total annihilation. (Revelation 18:6-9, 19, 21)*

Sufferest - It seems that even amidst those who were not giving in to the apostasy, there were some who allowed tolerance to go to far and they allowed papal teachers to speak to them.

Revelation 2:21 “*And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*”

Gave her space to repent of her fornication - Jezebel was given ample opportunity to repent 3 ½ before Elijah on Mt. Carmel gave all the chance to choose sides. The papacy was given 1260 years.

Interesting to note the space Jezebel was given to repent and how it is applied here to the papacy during the dark ages

Luke 4:25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up **three years and six months**, when great famine was throughout all the land;

James 5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of **three years and six months**.

Prophetically

Daniel 7:25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until **a time and times and the dividing of time**.

Revelation 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue **forty [and] two months**. 6 And he opened his mouth **in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven**. 7 And it was given unto him to make **war with the saints**, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

God's great mercy, even with the apostate Church, was to call her to repentance. How was this done? “...through messages of rebuke and warning delivered by men in and out

of the church who sensed the need of revival and reformation. Among these reformers were cardinals, priests, monks, and other church officials. Popes were charged by church leaders with being the predicted antichrist in the temple of God...” **The Seven Epistles of Christ by Taylor G Bunch, pg 168.**

She was given a chance to leave off her marriage to the state and walk with them no more, and to be married to Christ.

She repented not - Jezebel never repented, and so it was with the apostate Church. Thus the opportunities passed and she was left to her own devices.

Revelation 2:22 “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.”

Cast her into a bed - When looking throughout scripture, this small phrase appears to refer to affliction, illness and death.

Job 33:19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain.

2 Kings 1:4, 16-17 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed...therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken.

Isaiah 28:20 For the bed is shorter than that [a man] can stretch himself [on it]: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.

Matthew 9:2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying (original Greek, cast or thrown down) on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

This is a depiction of the trouble that will come to the Apostate Church as a result of her defiance of God. Eventually the time will come when God will not be even open for repentance, when he will not hear their prayers.

Them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation - This includes the state and other religious organizations that also have jumped into bed with her, and committed fornication with her, corrupting the faith given to the Church of God.

Except they repent of their deeds - Unless they repent this great tribulation will come upon them because of their evil deeds. This also shows the longsuffering and mercy of God, in that, He is asking them to repent and give up the adulteress relations.

Revelation 2:23 *“And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”*

I will kill her children with death - Jezebel and her children were to utterly perish. (2 Kings 9:7-9; 10:37; 10:1-28) So to it is with spiritual Jezebel's children. Papal Rome calls herself “mother,” and continually speaks of Catholics as her “children.” The Protestant Churches are sometimes spoken of as wayward children who will someday return home, and when they do a hearty welcome awaits them from the “mother Church of Christendom.” Thus all the religious systems or Churches that separated from the Papacy but still cling to her doctrines and practices and who commit spiritual fornication with the kings and nations by uniting with them when opportunity presents itself, are her children.

All the churches shall know - So the doom of all the offenders would be known, or manifested, to all the Churches. But when will they know? At the time when the second death is inflicted upon this great whore and her children. This will be at the end of time when people from all ages will be able to see the judgment meted out on those who refused to repent of their abominations and chose the way of death.

I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts - God would have us know by the judgment on the whore Jezebel that He has an all seeing eye like flames of fire, that searches the reins and hearts of men. Nothing is disclosed to Him, we cannot hide anything from Him. He sees what we think we hide and he knows what we think we have covered. (1 Samuel 16:7, Psalms 7:9, Hebrews 4:13)

Give unto every one...according to your works - Christ will reward every one according to the works that have been, both the righteous and the wicked. (Psalms 62:12) This reward He brings with. (Matthew 16:27, Revelation 22:12)

Revelation 2:24-25 *“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. 25 But that which you have already hold fast till I come.”*

As many as have not this doctrine - This is a reference to those that have not been overcome by the pressure of the apostasy, the teachings of Jezebel.

Not known the depths of Satan - The Catholics boast of having adopted and Christianised paganism in order to defeat Satan with his own religion. Thus paganism with its “mysteries” and “the deep things of Satan” became the religion of the church during the Thyatiran period. ***The Seven Epistles of Christ by Taylor G Bunch, pg 172.***

So those that were not taking part in the apostasy of the Papacy were not being a partaker of the depths of Satan. Thus the Bible shows us that Catholicism contains the depths and teachings of Satan.

I will put upon you none other burden - The heavy burden of the papal apostasy was a great weight to deal with, no one was a friend, nowhere was safe, and each day could be the last. During this time their faithfulness in upholding the truth they already had, under these conditions was required by heaven. With more light comes more responsibility. (Luke 12:47-48)

25. But that which ye have already - No other burden, or duty, was to be required of God's people during this evil period than to hold fast to what they already possessed.

Hold fast till I come - Again this idea of holding to what they have both in experience and knowledge of the truth, (1 Thessalonians 5:21) looking forward to the time when Jesus would return to take them home. Glorious promise of redemption. (Hebrews 3:6; 10:23)

Revelation 2:26 “*And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.*”

Keepeth my works - Note the contrast between the works of Jezebel mentioned previously and the works of Christ, that is the works of obedience contrasted with the works of disobedience.

For the works of God are to believe on Christ Whom He hath sent. (John 6:29) And he that believeth on Christ, the works that Christ does shall he do also. Our whole duty is to fear God and keep His Commandments. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) These are the works that He can approve of.

Unto the end - Matthew 24:13 “*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*” This experience is unto the end of our mortal life, not just a momentary one.

To him will I give power over the nations - To them that have kept Christ's word unto the end, these will have the power over nations. The tables will turn, and the saints who have been persecuted and trodden under foot, will inherit this earth and reign with Christ throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. (Revelation 22:4-5; 3:21)

Revelation 2:27 “*And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*”

Shall rule them with a rod of iron - This is a reference to the shepherd's crook. On its other end was a length of iron which was used as a weapon of defence or attack against any preying upon the flock. It was an instrument of destruction. It denotes that the overcomers will share in the final administration of justice against those who so cruelly oppressed them, because of their loyalty to Christ. This is confirmed by the remainder of the verse: “as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.

Even as I received of My Father - The promise to the overcomer was also given to Christ. (Psalms 2:7-9)

Revelation 2:28 “*And I will give him the morning star.*”

Morning star - Ultimately Jesus Christ is the bright and morning star. (Revelation 22:16; cf. 2 Peter 1:19) Also the morning star is the sign and promise of greater light. As the morning star reveals that the fullness of sunlight is about to break upon the dark night sky, telling us that the darkness of night is almost over, so the beginning of the great reformation was as a bright star that developed into a fully fledged sun. This morning star was the English Reformer John Wycliffe. Although many stars had always shone during the darkest period of history the shining of the morning star was the beginning of the great Reformation from which there was to be no return.

Ellen Gould– Great Controversy Chapter 5 - John Wycliffe the morning star

Before the Reformation there were at times but very few copies of the Bible in existence, but God had not suffered His word to be wholly destroyed. Its truths were not to be forever hidden. He could as easily unchain the words of life as He could open prison doors and unbolt iron gates to set His servants free. In the different countries of Europe men were moved by the Spirit of God to search for the truth as for hid treasures. Providentially guided to the Holy Scriptures, they studied the sacred pages with intense interest. They were willing to accept the light at any cost to themselves. Though they did not see all things clearly, they were enabled to perceive many long-buried truths. As Heaven-sent messengers they went forth, rending asunder the chains of error and superstition, and calling upon those who had been so long enslaved, to arise and assert their liberty. {GC 79.1}

Except among the Waldenses, the word of God had for ages been locked up in languages known only to the learned; but the time had come for the Scriptures to be translated and given to the people of different lands in their native tongue. The world had passed its midnight. The hours of darkness were wearing away, and in many lands appeared tokens of the coming dawn. {GC 79.2}

In the fourteenth century arose in England the "morning star of the Reformation." John Wycliffe was the herald of reform, not for England alone, but for all Christendom. The great protest against Rome which it was permitted him to utter was never to be silenced. That protest opened the struggle which was to result in the emancipation of individuals, of churches, and of nations. {GC 80.1}

Wycliffe received a liberal education, and with him the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. He was noted at college for his fervent piety as well as for his remarkable talents and sound scholarship. In his thirst for knowledge he sought to become acquainted with every branch of learning. He was educated in the scholastic philosophy, in the canons of the church, and in the civil law, especially that of his own country. In his after labors the value of this early training was apparent. A thorough acquaintance with the speculative philosophy of his time enabled him to expose its errors; and by his study of national and ecclesiastical law he was prepared to engage in

the great struggle for civil and religious liberty. While he could wield the weapons drawn from the word of God, he had acquired the intellectual discipline of the schools, and he understood the tactics of the schoolmen. The power of his genius and the extent and thoroughness of his knowledge commanded the respect of both friends and foes. His adherents saw with satisfaction that their champion stood foremost among the leading minds of the nation; and his enemies were prevented from casting contempt upon the cause of reform by exposing the ignorance or weakness of its supporter. {GC 80.2}

While Wycliffe was still at college, he entered upon the study of the Scriptures. In those early times, when the Bible existed only in the ancient languages, scholars were enabled to find their way to the fountain of truth, which was closed to the uneducated classes. Thus already the way had been prepared for Wycliffe's future work as a Reformer. Men of learning had studied the word of God and had found the great truth of His free grace there revealed. In their teachings they had spread a knowledge of this truth, and had led others to turn to the living oracles. {GC 80.3}

When Wycliffe's attention was directed to the Scriptures, he entered upon their investigation with the same thoroughness which had enabled him to master the learning of the schools. Heretofore he had felt a great want, which neither his scholastic studies nor the teaching of the church could satisfy. In the word of God he found that which he had before sought in vain. Here he saw the plan of salvation revealed and Christ set forth as the only advocate for man. He gave himself to the service of Christ and determined to proclaim the truths he had discovered. {GC 81.1}

Like after Reformers, Wycliffe did not, at the opening of his work, foresee whither it would lead him. He did not set himself deliberately in opposition to Rome. But devotion to truth could not but bring him in conflict with falsehood. The more clearly he discerned the errors of the papacy, the more earnestly he presented the teaching of the Bible. He saw that Rome had forsaken the word of God for human tradition; he fearlessly accused the priesthood of having banished the Scriptures, and demanded that the Bible be restored to the people and that its authority be again established in the church. He was an able and earnest teacher and an eloquent preacher, and his daily life was a demonstration of the truths he preached. His knowledge of the Scriptures, the force of his reasoning, the purity of his life, and his unbending courage and integrity won for him general esteem and confidence. Many of the people had become dissatisfied with their former faith as they saw the iniquity that prevailed in the Roman Church, and they hailed with unconcealed joy the truths brought to view by Wycliffe; but the papal leaders were filled with rage when they perceived that this Reformer was gaining an influence greater than their own. {GC 81.2}

Wycliffe was a keen detector of error, and he struck fearlessly against many of the abuses sanctioned by the authority of Rome. While acting as chaplain for the king, he took a bold stand against the payment of tribute claimed by the pope from the English monarch and showed that the papal assumption of authority over secular rulers was contrary to both reason and revelation. The demands of the pope had excited great indignation, and Wycliffe's teachings exerted an influence upon the leading minds of the nation. The king and the nobles united in denying the pontiff's claim to temporal

authority and in refusing the payment of the tribute. Thus an effectual blow was struck against the papal supremacy in England. {GC 82.1}

Another evil against which the Reformer waged long and resolute battle was the institution of the orders of mendicant friars. These friars swarmed in England, casting a blight upon the greatness and prosperity of the nation. Industry, education, morals, all felt the withering influence. The monk's life of idleness and beggary was not only a heavy drain upon the resources of the people, but it brought useful labor into contempt. The youth were demoralized and corrupted. By the influence of the friars many were induced to enter a cloister and devote themselves to a monastic life, and this not only without the consent of their parents, but even without their knowledge and contrary to their commands. One of the early Fathers of the Roman Church, urging the claims of monasticism above the obligations of filial love and duty, had declared: "Though thy father should lie before thy door weeping and lamenting, and thy mother should show the body that bore thee and the breasts that nursed thee, see that thou trample them underfoot, and go onward straightway to Christ." By this "monstrous inhumanity," as Luther afterward styled it, "savoring more of the wolf and the tyrant than of the Christian and the man," were the hearts of children steeled against their parents.-- Barnas Sears, *The Life of Luther*, pages 70, 69. Thus did the papal leaders, like the Pharisees of old, make the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition. Thus homes were made desolate and parents were deprived of the society of their sons and daughters. {GC 82.2}

Even the students in the universities were deceived by the false representations of the monks and induced to join their orders. Many afterward repented this step, seeing that they had blighted their own lives and had brought sorrow upon their parents; but once fast in the snare it was impossible for them to obtain their freedom. Many parents, fearing the influence of the monks, refused to send their sons to the universities. There was a marked falling off in the number of students in attendance at the great centers of learning. The schools languished, and ignorance prevailed. {GC 83.1}

The pope had bestowed on these monks the power to hear confessions and to grant pardon. This became a source of great evil. Bent on enhancing their gains, the friars were so ready to grant absolution that criminals of all descriptions resorted to them, and, as a result, the worst vices rapidly increased. The sick and the poor were left to suffer, while the gifts that should have relieved their wants went to the monks, who with threats demanded the alms of the people, denouncing the impiety of those who should withhold gifts from their orders. Notwithstanding their profession of poverty, the wealth of the friars was constantly increasing, and their magnificent edifices and luxurious tables made more apparent the growing poverty of the nation. And while spending their time in luxury and pleasure, they sent out in their stead ignorant men, who could only recount marvelous tales, legends, and jests to amuse the people and make them still more completely the dupes of the monks. Yet the friars continued to maintain their hold on the superstitious multitudes and led them to believe that all religious duty was comprised in acknowledging the supremacy of the pope, adoring the saints, and making gifts to the monks, and that this was sufficient to secure them a place in heaven. {GC 83.2}

Men of learning and piety had labored in vain to bring about a reform in these monastic orders; but Wycliffe, with clearer insight, struck at the root of the evil, declaring that the system itself was false and that it should be abolished. Discussion and inquiry were awakening. As the monks traversed the country, vending the pope's pardons, many were led to doubt the possibility of purchasing forgiveness with money, and they questioned whether they should not seek pardon from God rather than from the pontiff of Rome. (See Appendix note for page 59.) Not a few were alarmed at the rapacity of the friars, whose greed seemed never to be satisfied. "The monks and priests of Rome," said they, "are eating us away like a cancer. God must deliver us, or the people will perish."--D'Aubigne, b. 17, ch. 7. To cover their avarice, these begging monks claimed that they were following the Saviour's example, declaring that Jesus and His disciples had been supported by the charities of the people. This claim resulted in injury to their cause, for it led many to the Bible to learn the truth for themselves--a result which of all others was least desired by Rome. The minds of men were directed to the Source of truth, which it was her object to conceal. {GC 84.1}

Wycliffe began to write and publish tracts against the friars, not, however, seeking so much to enter into dispute with them as to call the minds of the people to the teachings of the Bible and its Author. He declared that the power of pardon or of excommunication is possessed by the pope in no greater degree than by common priests, and that no man can be truly excommunicated unless he has first brought upon himself the condemnation of God. In no more effectual way could he have undertaken the overthrow of that mammoth fabric of spiritual and temporal dominion which the pope had erected and in which the souls and bodies of millions were held captive. {GC 84.2}

Again Wycliffe was called to defend the rights of the English crown against the encroachments of Rome; and being appointed a royal ambassador, he spent two years in the Netherlands, in conference with the commissioners of the pope. Here he was brought into communication with ecclesiastics from France, Italy, and Spain, and he had an opportunity to look behind the scenes and gain a knowledge of many things which would have remained hidden from him in England. He learned much that was to give point to his after labors. In these representatives from the papal court he read the true character and aims of the hierarchy. He returned to England to repeat his former teachings more openly and with greater zeal, declaring that covetousness, pride, and deception were the gods of Rome. {GC 84.3}

In one of his tracts he said, speaking of the pope and his collectors: "They draw out of our land poor men's livelihood, and many thousand marks, by the year, of the king's money, for sacraments and spiritual things, that is cursed heresy of simony, and maketh all Christendom assent and maintain this heresy. And certes though our realm had a huge hill of gold, and never other man took thereof but only this proud worldly priest's collector, by process of time this hill must be spended; for he taketh ever money out of our land, and sendeth nought again but God's curse for his simony." --John Lewis, History of the Life and Sufferings of J. Wiclif, page 37. {GC 85.1}

Soon after his return to England, Wycliffe received from the king the appointment to the rectory of Lutterworth. This was an assurance that the monarch at least had not been

displeased by his plain speaking. Wycliffe's influence was felt in shaping the action of the court, as well as in molding the belief of the nation. {GC 85.2}

The papal thunders were soon hurled against him. Three bulls were dispatched to England,--to the university, to the king, and to the prelates,--all commanding immediate and decisive measures to silence the teacher of heresy. (Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, period 6, sec. 2, pt. 1, par. 8. See also Appendix.) Before the arrival of the bulls, however, the bishops, in their zeal, had summoned Wycliffe before them for trial. But two of the most powerful princes in the kingdom accompanied him to the tribunal; and the people, surrounding the building and rushing in, so intimidated the judges that the proceedings were for the time suspended, and he was allowed to go his way in peace. A little later, Edward III, whom in his old age the prelates were seeking to influence against the Reformer, died, and Wycliffe's former protector became regent of the kingdom. {GC 85.3}

But the arrival of the papal bulls laid upon all England a peremptory command for the arrest and imprisonment of the heretic. These measures pointed directly to the stake. It appeared certain that Wycliffe must soon fall a prey to the vengeance of Rome. But He who declared to one of old, "Fear not: . . . I am thy shield" (Genesis 15:1), again stretched out His hand to protect His servant. Death came, not to the Reformer, but to the pontiff who had decreed his destruction. Gregory XI died, and the ecclesiastics who had assembled for Wycliffe's trial, dispersed. {GC 86.1}

God's providence still further overruled events to give opportunity for the growth of the Reformation. The death of Gregory was followed by the election of two rival popes. Two conflicting powers, each professedly infallible, now claimed obedience. (See Appendix notes for pages 50 and 85.) Each called upon the faithful to assist him in making war upon the other, enforcing his demands by terrible anathemas against his adversaries, and promises of rewards in heaven to his supporters. This occurrence greatly weakened the power of the papacy. The rival factions had all they could do to attack each other, and Wycliffe for a time had rest. Anathemas and recriminations were flying from pope to pope, and torrents of blood were poured out to support their conflicting claims. Crimes and scandals flooded the church. Meanwhile the Reformer, in the quiet retirement of his parish of Lutterworth, was laboring diligently to point men from the contending popes to Jesus, the Prince of Peace. {GC 86.2}

The schism, with all the strife and corruption which it caused, prepared the way for the Reformation by enabling the people to see what the papacy really was. In a tract which he published, *On the Schism of the Popes*, Wycliffe called upon the people to consider whether these two priests were not speaking the truth in condemning each other as the anti-christ. "God," said he, "would no longer suffer the fiend to reign in only one such priest, but . . . made division among two, so that men, in Christ's name, may the more easily overcome them both."--R. Vaughan, *Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe*, vol. 2, p. 6. {GC 86.3}

Wycliffe, like his Master, preached the gospel to the poor. Not content with spreading the light in their humble homes in his own parish of Lutterworth, he determined that it

should be carried to every part of England. To accomplish this he organized a body of preachers, simple, devout men, who loved the truth and desired nothing so much as to extend it. These men went everywhere, teaching in the market places, in the streets of the great cities, and in the country lanes. They sought out the aged, the sick, and the poor, and opened to them the glad tidings of the grace of God. {GC 87.1}

As a professor of theology at Oxford, Wycliffe preached the word of God in the halls of the university. So faithfully did he present the truth to the students under his instruction, that he received the title of "the gospel doctor." But the greatest work of his life was to be the translation of the Scriptures into the English language. In a work, *On the Truth and Meaning of Scripture*, he expressed his intention to translate the Bible, so that every man in England might read, in the language in which he was born, the wonderful works of God. {GC 87.2}

But suddenly his labors were stopped. Though not yet sixty years of age, unceasing toil, study, and the assaults of his enemies had told upon his strength and made him prematurely old. He was attacked by a dangerous illness. The tidings brought great joy to the friars. Now they thought he would bitterly repent the evil he had done the church, and they hurried to his chamber to listen to his confession. Representatives from the four religious orders, with four civil officers, gathered about the supposed dying man. "You have death on your lips," they said; "be touched by your faults, and retract in our presence all that you have said to our injury." The Reformer listened in silence; then he bade his attendant raise him in his bed, and, gazing steadily upon them as they stood waiting for his recantation, he said, in the firm, strong voice which had so often caused them to tremble: "I shall not die, but live; and again declare the evil deeds of the friars."--D'Aubigne, b. 17, ch. 7. Astonished and abashed, the monks hurried from the room. {GC 87.3}

Wycliffe's words were fulfilled. He lived to place in the hands of his countrymen the most powerful of all weapons against Rome--to give them the Bible, the Heaven-appointed agent to liberate, enlighten, and evangelize the people. There were many and great obstacles to surmount in the accomplishment of this work. Wycliffe was weighed down with infirmities; he knew that only a few years for labor remained for him; he saw the opposition which he must meet; but, encouraged by the promises of God's word, he went forward nothing daunted. In the full vigor of his intellectual powers, rich in experience, he had been preserved and prepared by God's special providence for this, the greatest of his labors. While all Christendom was filled with tumult, the Reformer in his rectory at Lutterworth, unheeding the storm that raged without, applied himself to his chosen task. {GC 88.1}

At last the work was completed--the first English translation of the Bible ever made. The word of God was opened to England. The Reformer feared not now the prison or the stake. He had placed in the hands of the English people a light which should never be extinguished. In giving the Bible to his countrymen, he had done more to break the fetters of ignorance and vice, more to liberate and elevate his country, than was ever achieved by the most brilliant victories on fields of battle. {GC 88.2}

The art of printing being still unknown, it was only by slow and wearisome labor that copies of the Bible could be multiplied. So great was the interest to obtain the book, that many willingly engaged in the work of transcribing it, but it was with difficulty that the copyists could supply the demand. Some of the more wealthy purchasers desired the whole Bible. Others bought only a portion. In many cases, several families united to purchase a copy. Thus Wycliffe's Bible soon found its way to the homes of the people. {GC 88.3}

The appeal to men's reason aroused them from their passive submission to papal dogmas. Wycliffe now taught the distinctive doctrines of Protestantism--salvation through faith in Christ, and the sole infallibility of the Scriptures. The preachers whom he had sent out circulated the Bible, together with the Reformer's writings, and with such success that the new faith was accepted by nearly one half of the people of England. {GC 89.1}

The appearance of the Scriptures brought dismay to the authorities of the church. They had now to meet an agency more powerful than Wycliffe--an agency against which their weapons would avail little. There was at this time no law in England prohibiting the Bible, for it had never before been published in the language of the people. Such laws were afterward enacted and rigorously enforced. Meanwhile, notwithstanding the efforts of the priests, there was for a season opportunity for the circulation of the word of God. {GC 89.2}

Again the papal leaders plotted to silence the Reformer's voice. Before three tribunals he was successively summoned for trial, but without avail. First a synod of bishops declared his writings heretical, and, winning the young king, Richard II, to their side, they obtained a royal decree consigning to prison all who should hold the condemned doctrines. {GC 89.3}

Wycliffe appealed from the synod to Parliament; he fearlessly arraigned the hierarchy before the national council and demanded a reform of the enormous abuses sanctioned by the church. With convincing power he portrayed the usurpation and corruptions of the papal see. His enemies were brought to confusion. The friends and supporters of Wycliffe had been forced to yield, and it had been confidently expected that the Reformer himself, in his old age, alone and friendless, would bow to the combined authority of the crown and the miter. But instead of this the papists saw themselves defeated. Parliament, roused by the stirring appeals of Wycliffe, repealed the persecuting edict, and the Reformer was again at liberty. {GC 89.4}

A third time he was brought to trial, and now before the highest ecclesiastical tribunal in the kingdom. Here no favor would be shown to heresy. Here at last Rome would triumph, and the Reformer's work would be stopped. So thought the papists. If they could but accomplish their purpose, Wycliffe would be forced to abjure his doctrines, or would leave the court only for the flames. {GC 90.1}

But Wycliffe did not retract; he would not dissemble. He fearlessly maintained his teachings and repelled the accusations of his persecutors. Losing sight of himself, of his

position, of the occasion, he summoned his hearers before the divine tribunal, and weighed their sophistries and deceptions in the balances of eternal truth. The power of the Holy Spirit was felt in the council room. A spell from God was upon the hearers. They seemed to have no power to leave the place. As arrows from the Lord's quiver, the Reformer's words pierced their hearts. The charge of heresy, which they had brought against him, he with convincing power threw back upon themselves. Why, he demanded, did they dare to spread their errors? For the sake of gain, to make merchandise of the grace of God? {GC 90.2}

"With whom, think you," he finally said, "are ye contending? with an old man on the brink of the grave? No! with Truth--Truth which is stronger than you, and will overcome you."--Wylie, b. 2, ch. 13. So saying, he withdrew from the assembly, and not one of his adversaries attempted to prevent him. {GC 90.3}

Wycliffe's work was almost done; the banner of truth which he had so long borne was soon to fall from his hand; but once more he was to bear witness for the gospel. The truth was to be proclaimed from the very stronghold of the kingdom of error. Wycliffe was summoned for trial before the papal tribunal at Rome, which had so often shed the blood of the saints. He was not blind to the danger that threatened him, yet he would have obeyed the summons had not a shock of palsy made it impossible for him to perform the journey. But though his voice was not to be heard at Rome, he could speak by letter, and this he determined to do. From his rectory the Reformer wrote to the pope a letter, which, while respectful in tone and Christian in spirit, was a keen rebuke to the pomp and pride of the papal see. {GC 90.4}

"Verily I do rejoice," he said, "to open and declare unto every man the faith which I do hold, and especially unto the bishop of Rome: which, forasmuch as I do suppose to be sound and true, he will most willingly confirm my said faith, or if it be erroneous, amend the same. {GC 91.1}

"First, I suppose that the gospel of Christ is the whole body of God's law. . . . I do give and hold the bishop of Rome, forasmuch as he is the vicar of Christ here on earth, to be most bound, of all other men, unto that law of the gospel. For the greatness among Christ's disciples did not consist in worldly dignity or honors, but in the near and exact following of Christ in His life and manners.... Christ, for the time of His pilgrimage here, was a most poor man, abjecting and casting off all worldly rule and honor. . . . {GC 91.2}

"No faithful man ought to follow either the pope himself or any of the holy men, but in such points as he hath followed the Lord Jesus Christ; for Peter and the sons of Zebedee, by desiring worldly honor, contrary to the following of Christ's steps, did offend, and therefore in those errors they are not to be followed. . . . {GC 91.3}

"The pope ought to leave unto the secular power all temporal dominion and rule, and thereunto effectually to move and exhort his whole clergy; for so did Christ, and especially by His apostles. Wherefore, if I have erred in any of these points, I will most humbly submit myself unto correction, even by death, if necessity so require; and if I

could labor according to my will or desire in mine own person, I would surely present myself before the bishop of Rome; but the Lord hath otherwise visited me to the contrary, and hath taught me rather to obey God than men." {GC 91.4}

In closing he said: "Let us pray unto our God, that He will so stir up our Pope Urban VI, as he began, that he with his clergy may follow the Lord Jesus Christ in life and manners; and that they may teach the people effectually, and that they, likewise, may faithfully follow them in the same."--John Foxe, Acts and Monuments, vol. 3, pp. 49, 50. {GC 92.1}

Thus Wycliffe presented to the pope and his cardinals the meekness and humility of Christ, exhibiting not only to themselves but to all Christendom the contrast between them and the Master whose representatives they professed to be. {GC 92.2}

Wycliffe fully expected that his life would be the price of his fidelity. The king, the pope, and the bishops were united to accomplish his ruin, and it seemed certain that a few months at most would bring him to the stake. But his courage was unshaken. "Why do you talk of seeking the crown of martyrdom afar?" he said. "Preach the gospel of Christ to haughty prelates, and martyrdom will not fail you. What! I should live and be silent? . . . Never! Let the blow fall, I await its coming."--D'Aubigne, b. 17, ch. 8. {GC 92.3}

But God's providence still shielded His servant. The man who for a whole lifetime had stood boldly in defense of the truth, in daily peril of his life, was not to fall a victim of the hatred of its foes. Wycliffe had never sought to shield himself, but the Lord had been his protector; and now, when his enemies felt sure of their prey, God's hand removed him beyond their reach. In his church at Lutterworth, as he was about to dispense the communion, he fell, stricken with palsy, and in a short time yielded up his life. {GC 92.4}

God had appointed to Wycliffe his work. He had put the word of truth in his mouth, and He set a guard about him that this word might come to the people. His life was protected, and his labors were prolonged, until a foundation was laid for the great work of the Reformation. {GC 92.5}

Wycliffe came from the obscurity of the Dark Ages. There were none who went before him from whose work he could shape his system of reform. Raised up like John the Baptist to accomplish a special mission, he was the herald of a new era. Yet in the system of truth which he presented there was a unity and completeness which Reformers who followed him did not exceed, and which some did not reach, even a hundred years later. So broad and deep was laid the foundation, so firm and true was the framework, that it needed not to be reconstructed by those who came after him. {GC 93.1}

The great movement that Wycliffe inaugurated, which was to liberate the conscience and the intellect, and set free the nations so long bound to the triumphal car of Rome, had its spring in the Bible. Here was the source of that stream of blessing, which, like the water of life, has flowed down the ages since the fourteenth century. Wycliffe accepted

the Holy Scriptures with implicit faith as the inspired revelation of God's will, a sufficient rule of faith and practice. He had been educated to regard the Church of Rome as the divine, infallible authority, and to accept with unquestioning reverence the established teachings and customs of a thousand years; but he turned away from all these to listen to God's holy word. This was the authority which he urged the people to acknowledge. Instead of the church speaking through the pope, he declared the only true authority to be the voice of God speaking through His word. And he taught not only that the Bible is a perfect revelation of God's will, but that the Holy Spirit is its only interpreter, and that every man is, by the study of its teachings, to learn his duty for himself. Thus he turned the minds of men from the pope and the Church of Rome to the word of God. {GC 93.2}

Wycliffe was one of the greatest of the Reformers. In breadth of intellect, in clearness of thought, in firmness to maintain the truth, and in boldness to defend it, he was equaled by few who came after him. Purity of life, unwearying diligence in study and in labor, incorruptible integrity, and Christlike love and faithfulness in his ministry, characterized the first of the Reformers. And this notwithstanding the intellectual darkness and moral corruption of the age from which he emerged. {GC 94.1}

The character of Wycliffe is a testimony to the educating, transforming power of the Holy Scriptures. It was the Bible that made him what he was. The effort to grasp the great truths of revelation imparts freshness and vigor to all the faculties. It expands the mind, sharpens the perceptions, and ripens the judgment. The study of the Bible will ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration as no other study can. It gives stability of purpose, patience, courage, and fortitude; it refines the character and sanctifies the soul. An earnest, reverent study of the Scriptures, bringing the mind of the student in direct contact with the infinite mind, would give to the world men of stronger and more active intellect, as well as of nobler principle, than has ever resulted from the ablest training that human philosophy affords. "The entrance of Thy words," says the psalmist, "giveth light; it giveth understanding." Psalm 119:130. {GC 94.2}

The doctrines which had been taught by Wycliffe continued for a time to spread; his followers, known as Wycliffites and Lollards, not only traversed England, but scattered to other lands, carrying the knowledge of the gospel. Now that their leader was removed, the preachers labored with even greater zeal than before, and multitudes flocked to listen to their teachings. Some of the nobility, and even the wife of the king, were among the converts. In many places there was a marked reform in the manners of the people, and the idolatrous symbols of Romanism were removed from the churches. But soon the pitiless storm of persecution burst upon those who had dared to accept the Bible as their guide. The English monarchs, eager to strengthen their power by securing the support of Rome, did not hesitate to sacrifice the Reformers. For the first time in the history of England the stake was decreed against the disciples of the gospel. Martyrdom succeeded martyrdom. The advocates of truth, proscribed and tortured, could only pour their cries into the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth. Hunted as foes of the church and traitors to the realm, they continued to preach in secret places, finding shelter as best they could in the humble homes of the poor, and often hiding away even in dens and caves. {GC 94.3}

Notwithstanding the rage of persecution, a calm, devout, earnest, patient protest against the prevailing corruption of religious faith continued for centuries to be uttered. The Christians of that early time had only a partial knowledge of the truth, but they had learned to love and obey God's word, and they patiently suffered for its sake. Like the disciples in apostolic days, many sacrificed their worldly possessions for the cause of Christ. Those who were permitted to dwell in their homes gladly sheltered their banished brethren, and when they too were driven forth they cheerfully accepted the lot of the outcast. Thousands, it is true, terrified by the fury of their persecutors, purchased their freedom at the sacrifice of their faith, and went out of their prisons, clothed in penitents' robes, to publish their recantation. But the number was not small--and among them were men of noble birth as well as the humble and lowly--who bore fearless testimony to the truth in dungeon cells, in "Lollard towers," and in the midst of torture and flame, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to know "the fellowship of His sufferings." {GC 95.1}

The papists had failed to work their will with Wycliffe during his life, and their hatred could not be satisfied while his body rested quietly in the grave. By the decree of the Council of Constance, more than forty years after his death his bones were exhumed and publicly burned, and the ashes were thrown into a neighboring brook. "This brook," says an old writer, "hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."-- T. Fuller, Church History of Britain, b. 4, sec. 2, par. 54. Little did his enemies realize the significance of their malicious act. {GC 95.2}

It was through the writings of Wycliffe that John Huss, of Bohemia, was led to renounce many of the errors of Romanism and to enter upon the work of reform. Thus in these two countries, so widely separated, the seed of truth was sown. From Bohemia the work extended to other lands. The minds of men were directed to the long-forgotten word of God. A divine hand was preparing the way for the Great Reformation. {GC 96.1}

Wycliffe stood up against the Papal apostasy and laid the foundation for greater light to be brought in.

Revelation 2:29 *"He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."*

The Thyatiran era is from 538 to 1798 A.D.