

A Study in Eschatology

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Rev. Jason Kortering was pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan from 1966-1970. During his pastorate he wrote a series of pamphlets on eschatology: the study of end times. These pamphlets have long since been out of print, but requests for them have increased tremendously in recent months....

Although these pamphlets were written over twenty years ago, they are relevant to us today more than ever. It is our prayer that this material will be a blessing and encouragement to God's people in the last days in which we live.

Chapter 1: Try the Spirits

Stormy winds are blowing over the ecclesiastical waters today. Doctrines which the Christian church has professed for centuries are being cast aside with blatant disregard. It is no longer humiliating for a clergyman to be labeled a heretic; it has become a mark of distinction, a symbol of pioneering in the effort to make the gospel relevant in our day. One accusation after another is hurled against the Christian church, charging her with being out of step with our times. Because the times have changed, it's assumed that the gospel must change with it.

We live in a day when as never before we have to heed the words of the Apostle John, *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come: and even now already is it in the world."* [1 John 4:1-3](#).

The amazing thing is that these winds of change are blowing up storms in every sphere of life.

Oh, I know there are the radical theologians who have become more daring than others. Listen to one example:

"We are now living in a time when the whole inherited body of our theological language is disappearing into the past and a new history is dawning in our midst before which theology is increasingly becoming speechless. The Christian can no longer find security in an absolute sovereign God who exercises a beneficent and providential government over the world. Theology must resolutely confine the Christian name of God to the past and wholly refrain from proclaiming his redemptive presence in our historical present."

This is the voice of an outspoken advocate of the God is Dead movement, Thomas J. J. Altizer in his book, *"The Gospel of Christian Atheism."*

Lest we think that such a departure is far removed from us we had better take another look into the seminaries of traditional orthodox and conservative churches. Very few of them are faithful to the historic Christian faith. The road of apostasy begins with what seems to be an insignificant doctrinal departure, but such a departure leads swiftly and surely to the same place, a denial of God!

Let me illustrate this a moment. Some time ago there appeared in the *Reformed Journal* articles by Prof. Harold Dekker of Calvin Theological Seminary. This institution historically stood upon the Reformed Confessions as e.g. The Canons of Dordt. Professor Dekker wrote,

"There are therefore three senses in which we may legitimately speak of the atonement as being universal in design, i.e. the *sufficiency*, and *availability* of salvation for all men and the divine *desire* that all will receive it. The only point at which Scripture and the Reformed confessions point to a limited design in the atonement is at the point *efficacy*.

Only there can a doctrine of limited atonement be formulated which does not do clear violence to Biblical teaching concerning the universal love of God."

Mind you, God has sufficient love for all men that He has made salvation available for all of them. In this love God desires to save all men, yet He saves only a few. If this is true, why not be honest enough to say, such a God is dead! He cannot save those whom He desires to save.

We ask, Why should these winds of change blow so strongly today? There can be only one answer, the Word of God is no longer considered the only infallible rule for faith and life. The Bible is not treated as the reservoir of God's perfect revelation which, as John Calvin expressed it in his *Institutes*, are the spectacles with which alone we can see properly the purpose of God for all things.

Sometimes students express more openly and bluntly what their professors teach with subtlety. It's interesting to observe student publications and writings from this point of view. Frequently, in their zest to write something bold and different, such students reveal the nature and character of their seminary instruction. It is significant that much of student writing focuses as an attack upon the Bible itself. Let me give two illustrations. The first is from a letter written to Dr. Carl McIntire editor of *Christian Beacon*, by two students of the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Mt. Airy, Pa. In this letter, published in the *Christian Beacon*, they give vent to their hatred for the Word of God. "From objectively studying both Scripture and the history of Christianity, we hold that all fundamentalist and Bibliolatry are one of the grossest forms of pagan superstition. All major non-Christian religions believe in such literal inspiration bunk... The Bible may be viewed as a witness of the apostles and other godly men to the revelation of God in history, but it is not an infallible holy textbook" Derisively, they suggest, "Since you take the mythological story of Noah's ark literally, cute, go find your ark, get into it, and sit in the dung of the hippopotamus which you believe was in there for 40 days and think a little; the Christian church and the American people will never be deceived by such foolishness."

With more suavity and yet heading in the same direction are the words of an article published in the *Stromata* a student magazine of Calvin Seminary. There student M. Hoogland wrote concerning the errors of the Bible. His point was that the Holy Spirit was not concerned with these "errors," but only the content of the message. He wrote, "It must readily be admitted that the Bible nowhere explicitly claims to be infallible. Why then should we be so upset when someone suggests the possibility that certain narratives of Scripture are not historically accurate and are not meant to be." He concludes, "Is the doctrine of infallibility essential to Christianity? By this time the answer to be given should be evident." Obviously his answer is no.

The Psalmist emphasizes, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" [Psalm 11:3](#). This applies equally to the present controversy within the church world. If the Word of God is no longer considered to be the divinely inspired Word of God, there is no touchstone for truth and error. The inevitable result is that error is exonerated as the truth, there is no more a dividing point between the truth and the lie. Isn't that apparent today? This applies to the doctrinal position of most any church. The winds of change have blown many a church off its historical foundation. Confessions are no longer taught and professed. In the words of J. Carson Blake, "A confession is not a monument, but the tool for the present mission of the church. It

is not good Calvinism to let one document stand for three centuries." Even today the Roman Catholic church has an appealing sound for many a Protestant ear when she insultingly cries out through the voice of the recent Vatican Council, "Oh, churches that are so far and yet so close to us. Churches for whom our heart is filled with longing. Churches, the nostalgia of our sleepless nights. Churches of our tears and of our desire to do you honor by our embrace in the sincere love of Christ, oh may you hear, sounding from this keystone of unity, the tomb of Peter, apostle and martyr, and from this Ecumenical Council of brotherhood and peace, the loving cry we send to you."

Then one departs from the truth and holds to doctrines that are in direct contradiction to the Word of God, the result is that his walk of life shall bear a similar evidence of corruption. I need not press this point, it is all too apparent today. Mind you, the so called, *new morality* is not the product of heathenism, but the illegitimate offspring of what calls itself church. Surely God is not mocked, for when man denies that God is the only absolute sovereign God Whose grace alone can and does change the heart of the elect sinner who is redeemed through the blood of Calvary, God gives them over to a reprobate mind. "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts." [Romans 1:22-24](#).

What are we to do about this situation? When the stormy billows of false doctrine and immorality crash about us, what is our calling? Shall we close the hatch and sink deeply beneath the turbulent surface and find security in isolation? Shall we try to run away from it all and nurse our wounded spirits in the bowels of past glories? No, my friend; that may seem appealing, but that is not the calling of the faithful church. Rather, the church of Jesus Christ is to enter into the storm as a battleship that is anchored firmly to the Rock of Ages, our Lord Jesus Christ as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. Only then can we oppose the enemies of the truth, and sound forth in clear and certain words the pure preaching of the Gospel and not be dashed to pieces on the rocks of unbelief. When we do this we can be certain that our eye will be focused upon the beacon light of God that directs us safely to the haven of rest.

The faithful church must try the spirits whether they be of God!

We are confronted on every hand by the false spirit, the spirit of antichrist.

This spirit is a triple-headed monster. In the first place, this evil-spirit is strategically directed by the personal devil. Ever since the devil was cast out of heaven, upon the ascension of Jesus Christ, he is busy persecuting the "woman which brought forth the man child... and to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." [Rev. 12:13-17](#). The devil uses as his emissaries the heathen world of unregenerate men. [Psalm 2:2,3](#) describes this form of attack, "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed saying, let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." It is furthermore evident from Scripture, that not only the devil and heathen kings oppose the church, but also many who pose as "Christians," who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. [II Timothy 3:5](#). We read in [II Thess. 2:3, 4](#), "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that

day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called god, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

This text indicates to us that the spirit of antichrist will be manifest in the midst of the church, assuming a pious and religious form. The nominally Christian church will produce this "son of perdition."

This *spirit* of antichrist is in opposition to the true God and to His Christ. Very cleverly he directs his line of attack not in bluntly saying there is no God and there is no Christ; rather he changes the Scriptural idea of God and Christ into one that flatters fallen man. The truth of the sovereignty of God and the binding power of His divine law upon every creature lowers man into the dust. The spirit of antichrist is determined to change this. He comes with flattering words and presents a god that is loving to all creatures and would like to bring all creatures into his kingdom if only they let him. God is universal Father according to this spirit of antichrist His Fatherhood is presented to us in His son. Jesus Christ Jesus did not come to atone for the sins of His elect, no; this spirit tells us that Christ came to teach and show us by very deed how we are to live together. Basically this spirit of antichrist denies Christ! It is *anti*, against Christ. The belief of antichrist is that Man with a capital M, especially in the Man Jesus, is able to overcome the curse of death by his own cunning ways, by scientific advancement, by social evolution, by international diplomacy. Yes, we are to look for the kingdom of God upon earth, as all men will eventually beat their spears into plowshares and their swords into pruning hooks. We are to concentrate upon feeding the earth's millions, instead of trying to destroy them. We are to remove racial prejudice, and not distinguish between the Negro race or white race; rather we are to speak of the human race. We are not to categorize men by religious affiliation, we are not to speak of Protestant or Roman Catholic, rather of the one universal church of Christ. The ecumenical spirit reasons that the five main religions of the world are basically alike. Whether one is a Buddhist, a Confucianist, a Mohammedan, a Hindu, or a Christian, one thing is common to all, they all have a great leader, they all advocate human decency, therefore they all must live in peace together. The only difference between the world's great religions is that of geographical origin. Essentially they are all alike.

Neither is it strange that the faithful church will not be allowed to live in the sphere of this false spirit of antichrist. Perhaps you observe that if this spirit is so genial, they will certainly permit the true church to live along side the rest of the religions of the world. If this is your conclusion, it is wrong. The reason is simple. All the world's religions including false Christianity, agree in this, that the main ideal of man is to establish the kingdom of peace in this world through the means of universal brotherhood. The true Christian church cannot agree with this. The faithful church must condemn this false view of history. The Gospel of Christ is not universal brotherhood through a general fatherhood of God. It is that man is fallen into sin and an object of divine wrath. The only hope for fallen man is that his sins are covered by the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ. Because this is the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, the true church is forced to condemn the sinful approach of the false church, she must expose this as the lie, and without wavering refuse to cooperate with any program that advocates this false gospel.

Because the true church cannot compromise and speak the same language as the spirit of anti-Christ, anti-Christ will oppose the faithful church.

This is happening today. It is important that we are able to discern this great struggle. Right now the *spirit* of antichrist is using a soft approach in her attempt to destroy the church. It stands to reason that even as Nebuchadnezzar offered to the three friends of Daniel another opportunity to bow down to the beast, so today, the spirit of antichrist would rather overcome the true church with subtlety than outward bloodshed. History shows us dearly the line of attack. First the devil lulls the church to sleep, his pet expression is, "It doesn't make any difference what you believe, just so you believe." Lethargy, doctrinal indifference, gross ignorance of the Word of God, constitute the first signs of the false spirit creeping into the church.

Next, if we are no longer concerned about the Bible, the arch enemy lays his attack upon the Word of God itself. Of course, if he is to destroy the church, he knows all too well that he has to destroy the principle truth that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and all that the Bible teaches is truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Very gradually he begins to sow seeds of doubt concerning the Word of God. The devil smiles when he hears seminary professors and future ministers cutting the Bible to pieces, calling one part myth and another part fable. When he has thoroughly poisoned the church with this, then the conclusion inevitably follows; the lie is sown and no one can keep it out. Soon the very fundamental truths of the Word of God are being denied. Creation is replaced by evolution. The fall of Adam is considered a story about pre-historic man. The miracles are stories that excite the imagination of children. The truth of the virgin-birth points out in "mythological dress" that Christ was born with "heavenly" ambitions. You see, when the lie is made to be the "truth" then the "church" has become false and the spirit of Christ no longer dwells there, [Rev. 2:5](#).

It is important that we try the spirits.

There is only one true spirit, that is the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ poured out upon the church on Pentecost. The Spirit of truth that dwells in the church maintains the gospel of truth. Principally that Gospel centers in Jesus Christ. The faithful church preaches the gospel that salvation is realized only through the covering of the atoning blood of Christ. God eternally willed to glorify Himself in the salvation of His church through Jesus Christ. In this counsel of election, He decreed that the whole church would be redeemed unto glory through Jesus Christ. That salvation has been accomplished. Principally that salvation is realized at the cross. All the elect have been redeemed, for Christ arose from the dead. This resurrection was God's seal of approval upon Christ's perfect work. This Christ, who knows His Sheep with an everlasting love, now sends forth the call of the gospel to efficaciously draw all those for whom He died into the perfect fold of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Whence do we know this spirit? Only one place my friend, that is in the Word of God. The Bible is the Word of God. Because God inspired the Word, it is infallible, without error. All the truth of salvation is written clearly within its pages. May God give us childlike faith to bow in humble reverence before His Word.

We must expect persecution. Christ did not promise His church an easy road. He tells us, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you." [John 14:27](#). That peace is not external; Jesus also said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." [Matt. 10:34](#). Prior to the return of our Lord there shall be great tribulation for the faithful church, [Matt 24:21, 22](#). Yet, we have peace in our hearts, as Christ Himself assures us, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me...I go...I will come again unto you that where I am there ye may be also." [John 14](#).

Many people are confused in our day. Some are outside the church, some are within the church. The tempest is increasing in its fury as the last days are upon us. May God give you His grace that you may not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but that you may set your eye upon the Word of God as a beacon that guides you to the eternal Haven of Rest.

Try the spirits whether they be of God!

Chapter 2: Our Life After Death

Death possesses a terrible sting.

Any of you who have gathered around the death-bed of a loved one have felt it. It is an awesome moment when you are called upon to be present at death.

Strange things often accompany the agony of dying. Perhaps some of you have personally witnessed a dying loved one lifting up a feeble hand heavenward and trying to describe the angels that are present or the heavenly splendor that they see. Not infrequently this vision of splendor evokes a cry of eager anticipation from the dying. Soon the last breath is heard and the forces of death take hold. A once active, breathing, speaking, loving person now lies coldly still in death.

At such a time the question of life after death cries urgently for an answer. Job asked it: "If a man die, shall he live again?" [Job 14:14a](#). Does one simply go to sleep after death? Is death the end of all existence? Does one leave this life to begin the enjoyment of a better life?

These questions become urgent for two reasons.

Interest in the life after death is not born out of mere curiosity, rather we desire to know what happens to our loved ones who depart from this life. If the bond of love has been established in Jesus Christ, we desire to know whether our departed brother or sister continues to enjoy that bond of fellowship with Christ or not. Even this interest is not centered simply in the person. Our concern is not limited to the well-being of a loved one; chiefly the motive of our question is this, do they continue to live to the glory of God or not? We know that the purpose of life here is centered in the praise and glory of God; we likewise wonder whether God is glorified in the death of His saints or not.

Even then, we cannot divorce ourselves personally from this interest in the life hereafter. We know we are going to die. The only exception applies to those who will be upon the earth when Christ returns ([I Thess. 4:16,17](#)). We desire to know for ourselves what we may expect at the time of our death.

The promises of God are clear and sure on this point. As we consider the Scriptural truths on this subject, it is our prayer that each one who reads this may come to the same conclusion as the Apostle Paul in [I Cor. 15:55-57](#), "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE IMMORTALITY OF 'THE SOUL

We are accustomed to speak quite glibly of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. If we consult the dictionary we are confronted with a definition similar to this one, "*Immortality*-- exemption from death or annihilation, unending existence, everlasting, as immortality of the soul."

This definition indicates that our thinking and "*uses loquendi*" of this work has been thoroughly conditioned by Greek philosophy. According to the Greeks, immortality simply applied to the continued existence of the soul after death. The late Prof. Berkhof explains this view and contends that the Bible uses the term in this way.

"Immortality in the sense of continuous or endless existence is also ascribed to all spirits, including the human soul. It is one of the doctrines of natural religion, or philosophy that, when the body is dissolved, the soul does not share in its dissolution, but retains its identity as an individual being. This idea of the immortality of the soul is in perfect harmony with what the Bible teaches about man, but the Bible, religion, and theology, are not primarily interested in this purely quantitative and colorless immortality, the bare continued existence of the soul." *Systematic Theology*, page 672.

Does the Bible speak of immortality as mere continuous existence? First, the Bible speaks of God as being immortal. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." [1 Tim. 1:17](#). Likewise in [1 Tim. 4:14-16](#), "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen." Secondly, Scripture uses the word immortal as a description of the believer only once, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." [1 Cor. 15:53, 54](#).

From this it must become immediately apparent, that the word immortal cannot and must not be applied to the wicked outside of Christ. The word itself, *athanasia*, means outside the scope of death, without death. The Word of God certainly does not describe the wicked as deathless. The very opposite is true. Already in the beginning of time the warning was issued, "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," [Gen. 2:17](#). This actually happened when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," [Rom. 5:12](#). The character of this death is described for us by the Psalmist, "For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee," [Ps. 73:27](#). This is paraphrased for us in the *Psalter*, "To live apart from God is death, 'tis good his face to see." This same idea is presented to us in [1 Peter 3:12](#), "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." This applied to both the body and soul of the wicked that are outside of Jesus Christ. All during their early existence and even reaching beyond, they die and sink deeper into death. Physical death brings them to a greater measure of separation from God. The apostle John speaks of a second death for the unbeliever, "and the devil that deceived them was cast into the

lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever... and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." [Rev. 20:10,14](#). It must be apparent that the term *immortality* cannot be applied to the wicked outside of Christ. Their souls are not immortal, they are dead and pass into a deeper state of death continually, even unto hell.

Only the children of God are immortal. Their souls are immortal and their bodies must put on immortality. They are delivered from the power of death through Jesus Christ who is the "resurrection and the life," [John 11:25](#). Principally this life is infused in the child of God when God regenerates him, [John 3:3](#). This rebirth delivers us from the power of sin and death. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," [1 John 3:9](#). It is this life of Christ that places us in a relationship with God, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers," [1 Peter 3:12](#). In the power of this life we seek God, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," [Isa 55:6, 7](#), This infusion of life in us is called *the first resurrection* and through it we look forward to the final resurrection of body and soul in the life hereafter, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years... and I saw the dead, small and great stand before God... and the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them ... Behold the tabernacle of God is with men." [Rev. 20:6, 12, 13](#); 21:3.

WHY PHYSICAL DEATH FOR THE BELIEVER?

The weight of this question can be appreciated only with a proper understanding of the nature of death. Let it be emphasized from the outset that death is *not natural*. Because we live in the sphere of death we become conditioned and accept death as something ordinary. We expect to die, it is the inevitable end of all men, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," [Heb. 9:27](#). Death is under the direction of our Sovereign God, He alone takes life. In fact it may even be said that when God has accomplished His purpose with man, He slays him and thereby delivers him through physical death to his everlasting abode.

Christ Jesus has delivered His people from the curse of death. As the perfect High Priest He sacrificed His blood upon the cross as the payment for the sins of His elect, "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," [Heb. 2:17](#). Through the blood of atonement, Christ completely redeemed His people from death, He removed the curse forever, [1 Cor. 15:55-57](#).

Why must the believer pass through physical death? From the above we understand that death is not punishment for the child of God. The curse of physical death was also removed by

Christ. We must place physical death in the context of the purpose of God for all things. The whole earth is under the curse of death. This includes all mankind, [Rom. 3:23](#), and the whole of the creation, [Rom. 8:22](#). It is the purpose of God to save His people by delivering them out of the curse of death. Time is the means within which God unfolds His perfect counsel. This indicates to us that the full realization of the everlasting must await the end of time, [I Cor. 15:25-28](#). Hence our whole life is a passing through the valley of the shadow of death, [Ps. 23:4](#). Physical death is the means that Christ uses to separate us from the sphere of the curse when our purpose on earth is finished, and to deliver our soul to a higher realm of glory to await the reunion of the body in the resurrection. Death for the believer is not a curse, rather it is the servant of Christ which delivers us unto life everlasting, [II Cor. 4:16](#).

THE CONSCIOUS STATE OF BLESSEDNESS

There must be not a doubt in our minds that the believer immediately upon death enters into a conscious state of glory.

To make this clear we must expose the fallacy of what is commonly called "soul-sleep." According to this view the soul becomes unconscious after death and is awakened in the resurrection. Proponents of this view seek support from Scripture by making reference to texts that describe death as a sleep. "But we would not have you to be ignorant brethren, concerning them which are fallen asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope," [I Thess. 4:13](#). Or "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness," [Ps. 17:15](#). Similarly Peter quotes from [Ps. 16](#), "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," [Acts 2:27](#). From these texts they reason furthermore that in the instance of those who were resurrected from the dead and brought back to this life, none describe for us or relate anything concerning the blessed life they experienced after death. They would take literally the words of Jesus concerning Lazarus, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep," [John 11:11](#). Besides these evidences, they reason that it is impossible for a soul to function in this life without a body, it must also be true after death. It is irrational to imagine that a soul can be active and conscious without a body.

In answer to these conclusions by the Anabaptists and Russelites and all who follow this reasoning, we maintain that whenever Scripture speaks of death as a sleep, it does so simply from the point of view of the body. Careful study of the texts that speak of death as a sleep will reveal that in every instance reference is made to the physical aspect of death. This is quite in harmony with reality. The force of physical death is likened to sleep; the body lies dormant, oblivious of all surrounding, to be laid to rest and raised in the resurrection. Hence burial of the body is described as a being sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption," [I Cor. 15:42](#). Concerning those who were raised from the dead and returned to this life, we need but remember that these were exceptions and cannot by any reasoning be made the rule. God had a special purpose for the raising of Lazarus, and it may well be that God preserved his soul in a dormant state while awaiting the return to this life. It would be quite contrary to God's justice

if He would so ordain that these should receive a taste of the heavenly glory and then return to the sphere of death only to die again.

Scripture provides abundant proof that believers expected immediate glorification at death. Even though we cannot fathom this wonder as e.g. how a soul can consciously exist without a body, yet we believe that with God all things are possible.

Paul wrote to the Philippians, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. 1:20, 21. Asaph declares the same confidence in [Ps. 73:23, 24](#), "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory." Christ Himself expressed this confidence when He shouted to the malefactor, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise," [Luke 23:43](#). Both would immediately enter into this conscious state of glory, for paradise is further described for us in [II Cor 12:2-4](#), "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven... How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." This obviously was the very throne of God. John saw a vision in the Isle of Patmos and beheld, "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God," [Rev. 20:4](#), and they are not sleeping, but, "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." This describes this present period in which the gospel is preached and the church gathered. There is no doubt, but that every believer may expect to awake and "still be with thee," [Ps. 139:18](#), at the moment of our physical death.

As glorious as this conscious state may be, it is not the final glory. Even then the whole church is not yet complete, for the cry arises, "How long O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" [Rev. 6:10](#). Awaiting the resurrection of the body and the gathering of the complete church, these saints in heaven look forward to a still better day when, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes... for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." [Rev. 21:4, 5](#).

PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED

There are some, the Roman Catholics, who claim that even the children of God may expect to experience conscious suffering after death. This is claimed in their doctrine of purgatory. The only Scriptural proof they allege is found in [I Cor. 3:13,15](#), "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is... If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Their view is that through Baptism we are freed from original sin, by means of the Eucharist we are freed from mortal sins, and by means of penance and purgatory we are freed from venial sins (sins of the flesh, not directly against the

law of God). According to this view there must yet be a sanctifying process after death. Their proof text nevertheless does not apply, no more than their reference to II Macc. 12:42-45 of the Apocryphal books. The reference to I Corinthians does not even speak of a literal fire upon the person, rather a refinement as a fire and that too at the end of the world. The doctrine of purgatory denies the sufficiency of the one complete sacrifice of Christ that covered all our sins once for all, [Heb. 9:25, 26](#).

The unrepentant wicked who are outside of Christ are the only ones that will experience conscious suffering at the moment of their physical death. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus makes this clear, "The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom," [Luke 16:22, 23](#). Even as Lazarus immediately enjoyed conscious bliss, so in contrast the rich man experienced conscious agony.

The wicked cannot find any comfort in some annihilation after death. God's righteous judgments shall stand unto eternity. When God says the soul that sinneth it shall die, that shall take place in a temporary state of suffering and descend into a deeper state of woe after the judgment when all the wicked shall, "go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," [Mark 9:43](#), 44.

OUR PERSONAL ABODE

You notice that the subject of this chapter is, "*Our* life after death." That makes it personal. It is not first of all an abstract idea of life after death, but personally *my* and *our* life after death.

This is extremely important for all who take the Word of God seriously. There is a state of conscious suffering or joy awaiting every man at the moment of physical death. Within the abode of joy, the people of God lift up their hearts in praise unto the God of Salvation and sing, "Worthy Is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing," [Rev. 5:12](#) Within the abode of suffering, there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, [Matt. 24:21](#).

There is only one way into the state of conscious glory, that is God's way of salvation in Jesus Christ. No man can earn entrance, for all our deeds are evil, we are by nature "covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable unmerciful; Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them," [Rom. 1:31, 32](#). The way of salvation is the way of perfect righteousness accomplished by our Lord Jesus on the cross, [Eph. 2:1-10](#).

Confess your sins, repent of your evil way, and hear the voice of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," [Matt 11:28](#). That rest is at the foot of the cross where He merited heaven for all His own.

As Christ dwells in us we shout triumphantly, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me," [Gal. 2:20](#). In that life we shall never die, [John 11:26](#).

Say this, and you surely may say with conviction, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave thy victory; thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" [1 Cor. 15:55-57](#).

Chapter 3: Evidence of Our Lord's Return

The prospect of the return of our Lord upon the clouds of heaven arouses more than a passing interest in the hearts of the children of God. Joy fills our hearts as we contemplate the promise of Christ Jesus: "Let not your heart be troubled:... In my Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you.... I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." [John 14:1-3](#).

The glorious return of Christ may not be spiritualized as the modernist would have us do. You realize that many deny the historicity and infallibility of Scripture. To such the resurrection and return of Christ are myths that have to be interpreted in a "spiritual" way. They scoff at the bodily resurrection of Christ and likewise contend that the return of Christ is not going to be a process of development in which the whole human race will become more "Christlike." Even as the resurrection of Christ is spiritualized as a revival of interest in brotherly kindness, so they spiritualize the return of Christ as a universal acceptance of this kindness and peace.

This we deny emphatically on the basis of the Word of God. We look forward to the day when Christ shall return personally upon the clouds of heaven. In this return He will immediately raise the dead and translate the bodies of the living to ones fit for an eternal abode. [John 5:28, 29](#) and [Daniel 12:2](#). There will be no rapture in which the church will be taken out of this world and spared the great tribulation. There will be no interlude of seven years after which the kingdom will be established in Jerusalem of which Christ will be King and reign a millennium. These conceptions are the empty dreams of a fertile imagination. When Christ returns at the end of the ages He will come *once* and will bring all creatures into judgment, thus opening the way for the casting out of the wicked into the everlasting misery of hell and the formation of the new heavens and earth for the children of God.

In His return, Christ will receive us unto *Himself* in Father's house of many mansions. This is our joyful hope.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Jesus' disciples came to Him and asked, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" ([Matt. 24:3](#)). In answering this question, Jesus reminded His disciples that He would establish His kingdom in the way of judgment. He was going to leave them in order that He might go to the cross and earn the right to establish His kingdom by atoning for the sins of His elect and satisfying God's righteous judgment. Nevertheless, He was going to come again unto them and realize His promised kingdom. The establishment of this kingdom would involve the gathering of the church of all ages for whom He was about to die and the casting out of the wicked world in judgment. To make this clear to His

disciples, Jesus directed them to an actual historical event that would prefigure the end of the world. This was the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred In A.D. 70 when Rome plundered Jerusalem. This explains the reference Christ makes to "them that are with child and give suck in those days! But pray that your *flight* be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." [Matt 24:16-21](#).

Ultimately however, the signs of the times referred to in this section, point us to the end of the world when Christ will come again to establish His heavenly kingdom that will continue forever.

With this in mind we must be careful to understand what is meant by the "signs of the times."

First, these signs are real events that occur in history. They are not some extra-sensory perceptions that one may receive in a dream or mysterious apparition and thus learn certain secrets that are not common to mankind. There are those that claim that God has given them a special revelation by which they and they alone know the secret of His coming, when and how it will take place. Beware of all such claims! The signs are actual events in history for all to see and observe. Take for example, the sign of wars and rumor of wars, ([Matt. 24: 6](#)) this is a sign for all who have eyes and spiritual knowledge to discern.

Secondly, it follows from this that these signs themselves produce the Christ. Throughout all history, Christ is coming. He came to the disciples in a special way at Pentecost; He comes to the church through the preaching of the gospel; He comes to each of us at death; He shall come personally when all things are accomplished. Christ is busy gathering His church unto Himself. At the same time, the world is becoming increasingly wicked and their measure of iniquity is being filled. They are soon ripe for judgment. Thus, the unfolding of the signs accomplishes God's purpose with all things. This is clearly seen in the sign of the preaching of the gospel to all nations, [Matt 24:14](#) and [Rev. 6:2](#).

Finally, the signs of His coming are definitely designated for us in the Scriptures. We may not go around inventing signs, we must study the Word of God in which God in Christ specifies what things indicate to us the nearness of the end. In answering the question of the disciples, Christ gave them certain guide lines by which they would be able to discern the times and seasons. We have these presented in the Old Testament as for example Daniel, by Christ Himself in the New Testament, and also in the epistles e.g. II Thess. and especially the Book of Revelation. By comparing Scripture with what things must happen before Christ shall return and that when these occur, we may know that our Lord cometh. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." [Luke 21:28](#).

CURRENT EVENTS AND THE SIGNS

By studying the Bible we learn that there are three specific areas within which these signs are unfolded. These are in nature, among the nations, and within the church. We will look at each of these briefly.

As the return of Christ draws nearer there will be an increase in natural disturbances. Christ in [Matt 24:7](#) tells us, "There shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." If we add to this the knowledge we receive from the Book of Revelation we may conclude that what is true of all ages becomes greater toward the end of the world. In Revelation, chapter 4-6, we have a description of the seven seals. There is a book in the hands of the Almighty. This book represents the counsel of God which must be unfolded in history. This book has seven seals which must be broken if its contents are to be revealed. The 7th seal becomes seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet becomes yet seven vials. Some of these seals speak of natural disturbances e.g. the fourth which is pale (6:7,8) its rider has power, "to kill with the sword with hunger and death and with the beasts of the earth." Likewise for the trumpets, (chapters 8, 9) a curse is cast upon the earth, sea, and air. The same is true of the vials, (chapter 16) in which destruction is brought upon the earth. The point is that with the seals, only one fourth of the earth's population is affected, with the trumpets one third is killed, and with the vials there is total destruction. It is obvious to conclude from this that as the end comes closer, we may expect an increase of destruction and death caused by natural calamities. This will end in the final cataclysm and total destruction when Christ returns. Then the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light ([Matt. 24:29](#)), and the heavens shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together and every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places. [Rev. 6:14](#). Anyone engaged in agriculture is well aware of the increased difficulty in raising crops. The extremes of late and early frost combined with drought in some areas and floods in others contribute to food shortages throughout the world. Diseases in plants and an abundance of insects that destroy the fruit of the earth are evident on every hand. A casual observance of the daily news can't help but impress upon us the extent of natural upheavals in our day. Earthquakes, tornadoes, blizzards, landslides pervade the headlines daily. He that hath ears to hear discerns in these signs the call of our Lord, "Behold I come quickly."

The second area lies within the sphere of the nations. According to Scripture, just prior to the return of Christ the nations of the world will be joined together in one world government called the Kingdom of antichrist. The kingdom is presented to us in the Old Testament in the image of Nebuchadnessar, [Daniel 2](#). Paul speaks of the antichrist as the man of sin or son of perdition in [II Thess. 2:3](#). This kingdom is also pictured for us in the Book of Revelation chapter 13. Upon the evidence of these portions of Scripture and elsewhere, we may conclude that the nominally Christian nations of the world will succeed in bringing world peace for a brief duration. These nations, such as the countries of Asia Minor, Europe, and America have been the leaders throughout the history of the world. They have been plagued by wars for generations even as the Sovereign God works out his purpose in having confused the language at Babel, enabling the church to be gathered in the midst of the nations. This wound will be healed ([Rev. 13:3](#)), indicating that war will be no more, instead there will be a period of ungodly prosperity. In the midst of this prosperity the true church will bear the brunt of the enmity of the antichrist against the church. There will be tribulation for the children of God ([Matt. 24:9,10](#)) even the institute church will be destroyed. [Rev. 11:7, 8](#).

Is there not an abundance of evidence that points to world unity today? Surely the wars and rumors of wars are the birth pangs to bring forth the world government of antichrist. Today the

world is more united than ever before. The space program has contributed immensely to this end. How small the earth really is. One would be inclined to take the perspective of Miss Barbara Ward in her book, "Spaceship Earth," the whole earth is but a giant spaceship hurling through space and the human race is its crew. A divided crew is bound for trouble, we need to cooperate and live in peace together. How futile to imagine war when it is possible to encircle the earth with the "big bomb" which can be triggered momentarily and directed to any part of the earth. With the vast system of communications we have learned the need for one world language, one metrical system and the like. We must recognize that nationalism is a thing of the past. The nations that have great wealth must give to those that have not; racial distinctions must be eradicated; we must all learn to see each other not as white, or black, or yellow, but as the human race. Besides this, capitalism, communism, and socialism are but systems of economics. Capitalism is one extreme and Communism is another. Socialism seems to be a common denominator which may well fill the worlds needs in this great antichristian government. America today is not governed by a free enterprise system, it is controlled by government. Government spending determines prosperity or recession. Even in communistic countries more incentives are being given for individual initiative, the farmers that produce much are given more in return. It is obvious today that American capitalism is going more in the direction of a controlled economy (communism) and communism is going in the direction of more free enterprise (capitalism). The United Nations is a powerful force working in this direction of world government. All this indicates that the establishment of the world kingdom is very near.

One wonders how governments ever gain such power. After all a world government can be accomplished only through the removal of strict nationalism. The clue to understanding this is given us in [Rev. 13](#) where the second beast comes forth out of the earth, which had power to give life unto the Image of the first beast (the world government) [Rev. 13:15](#). This second beast includes such things as science, education, and religion. The unique point of the antichristian rule is this, the people will gladly give authority to the world government. This will not be forced upon people, they will readily accept it.

This will be accomplished by two means.

The first is that government gives to people what they want. Certainly one has to be blind not to see that government here in America is controlling more and more of our life. It reaches into the sphere of economics by controlling business large and small through antitrust laws, taxation, and the like. Government controls education, the schools, universities, and more and more the public media of communication: radio, press, television, etc. Government subsidizes science foundations, teacher grants, and such like. Government has programs to care for the poor, provide medical care under social security, and many benefits to dependent children.

The average citizen doesn't consider that the money for these programs comes from his pocket; he credits the beneficent "Uncle Sam." With open arms he gladly gives more and more power to government. What a secure feeling to think that all our financial worries are really the government's, all our unforeseen emergencies are to be handled by someone bigger. Today we see with our own eyes how the people gladly give control to the government. With

almost unlimited resources the government is busy expanding its scope of power. Taking the perspective of the world, government may soon tell us just how we may spend our money, how many children we may have so that the world won't be over populated. Under the benevolent direction of government, scientists pursue the course of human eugenics to design the "super-race." These things must happen in order to usher in the antichristian world government.

With this the "church" plays an important roll. This is the second factor that brings the antichristian world government to the fore. No state could ever succeed in history without the blessings of the church. The final world government of antichrist cannot succeed without the blessing of the nominally Christian church. This is after all the real thrust of modern ecumenism. A world government cannot be realized without a world church to add its blessing. The World Council is such a media. This false church organization isn't interested in the preaching of the gospel of the Word of God. Rather its *forte* is social improvement. Rpeatedly it has to flirt with government, leading its membership to walk openly in agreement with the principles of antichrist. How many decisions of the World Council deal with maintaining the truth of the Word of God in an apostate generation? The list includes instead, the war in Vietnam, civil rights, distribution of wealth, and all the social issues of our day. Surely this false religion gives the biggest thrust to the world government to bring it to realization.

The ecumenical movement isn't going to be satisfied with uniting Protestantism; it must include Roman Catholicism not only, but all the religions of the world. Christianity isn't the only good religion, there are good points in Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Islamism as well. We have to recognize this and then we will be able to live at peace as a successful crew upon spaceship earth. The human race must and will succeed. This is the gospel of the false church today. It proves to us that the end is very near.

The final sign of our Lord's return lies in the sphere of the true church. Even as we mentioned before, it will suffer persecutions. Because the faithful church refuses to recognize the antichristian beast and will not receive its mark ([Rev. 13:16-18](#)), she suffers persecution; she cannot buy nor sell, for there is no place in such a godless society for her. She will not be allowed to preach from the pulpit; the radio will be out of bounds; and every meeting place will be controlled. The faithful will have difficulty providing Christian education for their children; they will not be able to keep up with the demanded ideals of government. Yea, she will flee to the hills and find refuge in seclusion. [Matt. 24:9-28](#).

OUR ATTITUDE

That day is not far away. Any who reads with discernment the current events will attest that these things are developing speedily. It is almost breathtaking.

Shall we fear? The faithful would be so inclined. It is not a pleasant prospect to consider that our unbelieving neighbor will have luxurious living, a short work week, fringe benefits, protection of all kinds of insurance, the best medical care and all the rest. But the FAITHFUL will be struggling to stay alive, suffering for Christ's sake.

Yet, what a glorious future. As things become increasingly difficult, the nearness of the end is all the more imminent. We wait not for a kingdom here on earth, that would be disappointing. We seek the kingdom of Heaven where we will be at home with Christ and all the saints to take our places in the glorified creation and praise God perfectly forever.

Let's cry out joyfully, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Chapter 4: The Four Horsemen

In all of Scripture one cannot find a more complete and incisive interpretation of history than we find here in the passage we wish to consider in this chapter.

"And I saw when the lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering and to conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red; and power was given to him that sat there to take peace from the earth and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, come and see. And I beheld and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword and with hunger and with death and with the beast of the earth." [Revelation 6:18](#).

We must remember that the vantage point is heaven. The Apostle John was on the Isle of Patmos and while confined there for the sake of the gospel ([Rev. 1:9](#)) received a vision. In this vision he saw the throne of God ([Rev. 4:2ff.](#)) and round about this throne there were gathered representatives of the entire redeemed world. The church was officially represented by the 24 elders (12 patriarchs of the O.T. and 12 Apostles of the N.T.) [Rev. 4:4](#). There was the innumerable throng of the saints. [Rev. 7:9](#). The brute creation was represented by four beasts taken from the different spheres of the animal world ([Rev. 4:6ff.](#)) and the angels were there as the heavenly choir ([Rev. 7:11](#)) and as servants of God. [Rev. 8:2ff.](#)

In one word, John saw heaven in all its glory as it is now constituted.

The focal point of the vision was Christ. God was the one sitting on the throne ([Rev. 4:11](#)) and in His right hand was a book, a scroll, that was rolled up and sealed with seven seals. These seals were on the edge of the scroll, spaced in such a way that when one was broken the scroll could be unrolled until the reader came to the next seal. This scroll represented the counsel of God as it pertained to the history of the world and the things that had to come to pass in order that Christ might realize the kingdom of heaven. In a sense it contained the blueprint for the heavenly kingdom that John saw in the vision. The question was asked, "Who is worthy to open the book?" [Rev. 5:2](#). By this is meant, who has the authority and the power to reveal its contents not only, but to realize the events that are contained therein. When John wept at heaven's silence, he was overcome with the prospect that the kingdom of heaven, as he saw it

in the vision, would never be *realized*. At this point the attention of John and all the inhabitants of heaven is directed to the "Lamb as it had been slain, having the seven horns and the seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the world." This indicates that Christ is already in heaven as the Exalted One, having completed the work of redemption. By this work He merited all power in heaven and earth. [Matt. 28:18](#). Christ earned the right and received the power from God to reveal the secret counsel of God and bring it to pass so that throughout all history all things are being directed with view to the personal return of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven as John saw it. They all sang, "Worthy is the Lamb." [Rev. 5:9](#).

The four horsemen are the revealed contents of the first four seals after they are broken one at a time. John watched as Christ took the book, broke the seals, and revealed the contents. When the first seal was broken, John heard a voice call, "Come!" This call was not directed to John (the inclusion of "and see" is not a correct translation; it should be simply *come*) rather to the horse and the rider. After the breaking of each seal the same command is given and each time another horse and rider come forth. The total is four horsemen.

According to the proper method of interpretation, the four horsemen represented certain historical events. Taken in their totality they represent history as it is being unfolded today. We must not be entirely futuristic and apply them to the events of the "Great Tribulation" when the church will not be present in the world. Rather, they refer to all history from the beginning of the world to the end, especially from the moment of the ascension of Christ to His personal return. Throughout all our days these four horsemen are riding. We emphasize all four are riding. It is not correct to interpret these four horses as if they ride in chronological succession, at one point in history the white horse rides, then later the red begins to ride, etc. All four are present in the world at all times, only at certain points in history one may be predominant and seem to draw the "spot light" of attention.

To interpret these horsemen we must use Scripture with Scripture.

A horse was principally an animal of war. Consider [Job 9:19-25](#), "He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength. . . . He mocketh fear.... neither turneth he back from the sword." Israel was forbidden the use of horses in battle lest they attribute the strength of victory to men and animals rather than to God. The Psalmist declares this in [Ps. 20:7](#) and [Ps. 33:17](#). The horses as they ride throughout history represent certain powers that prevail as they are under the rational and moral direction of Christ (the rider is not identified here, for it is not significant; merely the fact that they do not run wild). Each time Christ breaks another seal, another horse rides. Obviously these four powers are under the direct control of Christ Who alone is worthy to break the seals and send for the horsemen.

What are these powers that prevail throughout history?

We get our first clue from the colors of each horse and then from the additional description given in the text.

The first horse is described as white. In Scripture white is a symbol of purity, "though your sin be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow," [Isa. 1:18](#). The saints, victoriously gathered in heaven, wear white robes, [Rev. 7:9](#) and [Rev. 19:11](#). Besides it is added in the text itself that the rider receives a crown, the symbol of victory and he is sent forth, "Conquering and to conquer," repeated for emphasis. The white horse therefore represents the victorious power of the preaching of the gospel which alone is able to purify the hearts of men and bring the entire church into heavenly perfection. Over against the blackness of this world, which remains black, Christ gathers His own out of the world through the sanctifying power of His Spirit and Word. It is the victory of the truth over the lie, of the holy will of God over the moral depravity of men. This truth and holiness is applied to the hearts of the elected through the power of the preaching of the gospel. Notice emphatically, that the power is under the direction of Christ! He sends His Word to all those for whom He died on the cross and therefore surely realizes the eternal good pleasure of His Father in heaven. Consider [Acts 2:47](#), "The Lord added daily such as should be saved." [Acts 16:6](#), "...forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." Also [Acts 13:48](#), "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." This horse has been riding throughout all history and continues to ride with power and glory till the last elect shall be gathered within the church.

The second horse is red in color. According to Scripture red is a symbol of lust and passion. The contrast is made between red and white (purity) in [Isa. 1:18](#). There, our sins are described as scarlet and crimson. The redness of Esau indicated robust power. [Gen. 25:25](#). The dragon, Satan, is pictured as red, burning with lust and evil. This evil lust for power and wealth produces war and bloodshed. [Prov. 23:29](#) speaks of "redness of eyes" as a result of wounds. All this indicates that the red horse is the power of lust that produces bloodshed. This is confirmed in the text, "power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword." This takes place throughout all history. From Abel's blood that cried to the God of heaven to the last battle of Armageddon, human history is written in blood. Today we feel the effects of the red horse as he rides in Vietnam.

The third horse is black. Also in this connection the Bible speaks on the meaning of this color. "Our skin is black like an oven because of the terrible famine" [Lam. 5:10](#), or "Judah mourneth and the gates thereof languish, they are black unto the ground," [Jeremiah 14:2](#). Blackness speaks of famine, of so great scarcity that one is in anguish. This black horse represents the power of economic and social strife associated with poverty and riches. The rider has a pair of balances by which he measures out one's daily portion (a measure of wheat and three measures of barley) for one's daily wage (a penny). Here we see scarcity, a meager existence by which one has not enough to live, but too much to die. This is in contrast to "touch not the wine and oil." This represents riches and luxury present in the world. What an accurate description of history this really is. There has been constant striving between the haves and the have nots. Labor unions with strikes and boycotts, public riots have their deep roots in the distribution of wealth. Surely this third horse is also riding today, individually, nationally, and internationally.

The fourth and last horse is pale in color. Literally this is greenish yellow. Scripture makes two references to this color. Both in [Isa. 29:22](#) and [Jer. 30:6](#) it describes people that are faint and about to die. The power of death upon the body produces this effect, a pale corpse is a terrifying sight to behold. This horse represents death in all its horror and the many ways that brings one to the grave. In our text the name of the rider is "Death" and "Hell" follows after him. Graphically this portrays the grim reaper claiming mankind at any given point in history bringing them to the state of the dead and the grave (*hades*, hell). A substantial number of the earth's population is constantly being killed (one fourth indicates that one portion of the four corners of the earth, not literally, rather a goodly number). To wit: diseases, murders, violence of many forms, traffic accidents (50,000 a year in the U.S. alone), plane crashes, earthquakes, floods, etc. This horse also rides on and on through history.

We must now ask, what is the relationship between these four horsemen? Is there any significance in the fact that the white horse is first and the other three follow? Do they have a causal relationship amongst each other at all? These questions must be related to Christ Who is the One Who breaks the seals and sends the riders forth. Each time Christ opens the seal and one of the beasts (representatives of all creatures) calls, "Come!"

In brief we must see that the white horse is first because it represents the essential purpose of God in history. The preaching of the gospel and the cause of the church in the world is essentially the *only* purpose that God has with all events in time. The world continues to exist because God will gather from the fallen human race of men His own elect, redeemed in Christ. This is *the* one work of God in history.

The remaining three horses are important only in their relationship to the first, the cause of the church of Jesus Christ. I emphasized at the outset that if we can understand properly these four horsemen, we will have the key that unlocks the proper interpretation of history. Here it is then! There is significance to wars, to economic and social unrest, to pestilence and riots that lead to death only in their relationship to the *church*. Their significance is that they serve the gathering in two ways, first by preventing the premature establishment of the anti-christian world kingdom, and secondly, by strengthening the faith of the people of God so that they continue in the midst of affliction looking for the day when Christ shall establish His kingdom of peace, not on earth, but in the glory of the new heavens and the new earth.

Let's consider how this is true.

Take wars first of all. The red horse (war) follows the white horse. We ask, how do wars serve the purpose of the church? Throughout history fallen man has scoffed at God's sentence of death. Using his depraved reasoning and perverse will, he envisions a kingdom of pleasure in the midst of this world. Mockingly he scoffs at Christ and His kingdom. He reacts to the pure preaching of the gospel with bitter hatred and becomes all the more determined to erect his kingdom in defiance of God and Christ. (in this sense the first horse causes the rest of the horses to follow.) So he strives in passionate envy and greed to build this kingdom. He wants to take hold of his neighbor's land and possessions and soon his passion for power brings him into war with his neighbor. This makes a divided world and such a world cannot stand in great power and victory. Today man strives for international peace, yet it is as elusive as the mechanical

rabbit. By this division the powers of the world fight amongst each other instead of concentrating their power against the church. While this takes place, the church is able to dwell in the world and be busy with the preaching of the gospel. While war hardens mankind into deeper hatred and determination against God and excites him to build the kingdom of antichrist, the effect of war on the church is that of humility. When our sons go off to battle, and we send them there in obedience to Christ who places rulers over us; we as Christians are made to see that we have no abiding city here below. The red horse serves the white as Christ controls all events with His eye upon His church.

Similarly also the black and pale horses follow the white and red horses. Economic stress, the unbalance of the distribution of wealth which produces riots, unrest, boycotts, strikes and all the rest follow upon war and serve the purpose of the church. We can see this round about us daily. Because of Vietnam our country can't devote all efforts to the war against poverty. Hence we have riots in our streets. Man may build wonderful machines like the auto, yet death and hell follow as more people are killed with them than with all the wars combined. Christ sends forth the black and pale horses. By their presence Christ casts His hand of judgment on His enemies. Our surgeons practice their skills, yet they stand baffled before an increase in diseases. Murders, suicides, "accidents" abound more and more. This too serves the church. While these things plague the world, their dream of the great society must also be put off. They are frustrated in their design to build the perfect man in the perfect society in the perfect world. While this transpires, the church is still able to be gathered and worship together. We can still enjoy a measure of freedom to let the light of the gospel shine forth. The terrifying effects of the presence of these two horses on the people of God also works for spiritual strength. Through poverty, through the loss of employment, through sickness, and even death we are brought closer to God by His all sufficient grace.

When the four horses will have finished their course, there will be a brief period of international peace, economic prosperity, great advances in medicine and science, so that all will wonder at man and his achievements. During this time the great tribulation will take place for the people of God that are yet on earth. Then the full anger of the wicked will be directed against the faithful witnesses and they shall be slain in the streets.

That day is near at hand. Yet, we fear not, for we know from history's lesson that God's all sufficient grace will surely give to His church the complete victory. All things serve the well being of the church; this includes the coming of antichrist.

When Christ shall come, He will shake the heavens and the earth in His divine wrath. The wicked will see briefly the terrible fury of His anger before being cast into the burning depths of the unquenchable fire of hell.

When Christ shall appear upon the clouds of heaven, we may be found poor, naked, hiding in the caves of the earth, yet we will see Him in power and great glory and hear His blessed voice say, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Christ is all powerful. He controls all events as He sends forth the horses and his rider working all things for the day of His coming. With this insight into the Word of God we have reason not to be faint hearted, but to watch and pray.

Chapter 5: The Sealing of the 144,000

The question which is frequently raised in our day is, how shall the church ever survive in the midst of the corruption and devilish assaults which seem to grow in frequency and intensity. So urgent the question becomes, that we are inclined to frame it within the context of survival and almost overlook the fact that the church must do much more than survive; she must be busy in her *calling!* We ask, how is it possible that in our day of moral decay, great apostasy in the nominal Christian church, persecution of the faithful Christian, social upheaval, wars, natural disturbances, and an increase of God's judgments upon men, that the church of Jesus Christ continues to preach the true Word of God, enjoy the Sacraments as Christ instituted them, and be protected by the discipline which Christ instructed His church to exercise? Why are not the people of God deceived by false doctrine and led away to pursue a life of sensuous pleasure?

The answer we find in the portion of Scripture we would like to consider in this chapter. The people of God are sealed by God Himself and that makes all the difference.

We read of this in [Rev. 7:1-8](#), "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Then we have listed the following twelve tribes each having sealed 12,000: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Aser Nephthalim, Manasses, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zabulon Joseph, and Benjamin.

This chapter seven of Revelation forms an interlude between chapters six and eight. In the preceding chapters, John's attention has been drawn to the vision of the seals. Christ was revealed to John as the One Who was able and willing to take the sealed scroll from the Sovereign God Who sat upon the throne, and to open it and reveal and realize its contents. This brought forth the four Horsemen who in their totality constitute the first four seals. The fifth seal revealed that under the altar were the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God. With a loud voice they cried saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell in the earth?" They are victoriously delivered from the troubles that mark this present time, they are clothed in white robes of victory. The sixth seal unfolded a terrible array of destruction in nature. Listen, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together... For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" [Rev. 6:12-17](#). The six seals taken in their totality reveal that as long as earth continues

the purpose of God shall be victorious. The white horse shall ride on and with it shall come wars, bloodshed, troubles in society, and persecution of the saints. In the midst of this world, God continues to speak to the wicked that the great day of His wrath is come when He will call all mankind to account. These same signs assure the church that the end draweth nigh when they shall be delivered. This testimony will be most terrible just prior to the return of Christ when all the forces of nature shall be shaken with judgment.

In the vision recorded In [Rev. 7](#), it is about the time for the opening of the seventh seal. This seventh seal in turn comprises seven trumpets. These are mentioned in [Rev. 8:7](#) through 9:21 (the seventh trumpet becoming in turn seven vials). These seven trumpets are a further revelation of God's terrible judgments upon the world.

In order to understand the sealing of the 144,000 we have to be acquainted somewhat with these trumpets. The first trumpet ([Rev. 8:7](#)) presents a terrible hail storm with flaming fire which destroys a third part of the vegetation. The second ([Rev. 8:8](#)) presents destruction of life in and on the sea brought about by a flaming mountain. The third trumpet brings destruction in the rivers and inland waters ([Rev. 8:10 11](#)). The fourth trumpet is sounded and a third part of the sun, moon, and stars are made dark which in turn affects man's life ([Rev. 8:12](#)). The angel shouts in heaven. "Woe woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound" [Rev. 8:13](#). The fifth trumpet brings forth terrible demons and evil spirits that corrupt the minds of men (locusts out of the bottomless pit, [Rev. 9:141](#)). The sixth trumpet brings upon mankind great pestilences, terrible wars, famines, etc. which really constitute an increase of the destruction wrought by the horsemen. One third part is destroyed by the trumpets which shows an increase over the one fourth of the seals. With the blowing of the trumpets things are brought closer to the end and the hand of God is working in a greater measure of judgment upon the unrepentant wicked as they hover on the brink of hell.

In the midst of the vision of seals and trumpets, God reveals to John quite a different scene. We can just imagine how terrible this vision must have been. It is frightening to read, but try to imagine one that actually saw all this dramatized in a revelatory dream before his very eyes! John heard the kings of the earth, the great men, and the rich men, and chief captains, and the mighty men and every bondman, and every free man scream from their hiding places, "Mountains and rocks, fall on us! Hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

The four angels which John saw in the beginning of chapter seven were the harbingers of those who would blow the seven trumpets. The wind that was about to sweep over the earth that was restrained by the four angels (indicating that the whole earth is involved, north, south, east, and west), must not be separated from the following seven trumpets; rather the wind will occasion the trumpets to blow. As soon as the four angels will release the wind, the seven angels with trumpets in their hands will blow and the results will follow.

John must have been excited to hear the angel who ascended from the east (the sun rising), shout, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." At this point in the vision, attention is drawn to the church of Jesus

Christ that is on earth. What will happen to them? The opening of the six seals have brought forth terrible judgments of God upon the earth and these will increase as the end comes. The trumpets are about to be blown revealing a still greater judgment and horrible specter of depravity and death. God knows that the interest of John (who is a servant of God who has to write these things down in order that he may tell it unto the churches) is centered in the welfare of the church. These words are for us.

The church is sealed by God. This guarantees their safety in the midst of the world that is being plagued and shaken by the righteous God.

We must ask, what does this mean that certain ones are *sealed*, and that too on their forehead? Scripture repeatedly speaks of the children of God as being sealed. Some examples: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise," [Eph. 1:13](#). "Now he which stablished us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: Who hath also *sealed* us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," [II Cor. 1:21,22](#). "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed* unto the day of redemption," [Eph. 4:30](#). From these texts we conclude the following: *First*; that the living God seals them. The angel is His messenger to fulfill His will. He is the source of salvation and apart from Him there is only death and destruction. *Secondly*; this seal is a proof of ownership. When God through the Holy Spirit seals a person, He designates that that person belongs to Him. This means that the seal that is placed upon the child of God has its source in the sovereignly free counsel of divine election. Eternally, God sealed unto Himself His people, through the decree of election. Still more, these elect are sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Their mark is really the blood of the atonement. This was typically manifest in the Old Testament when Israel stroked the blood-mark upon the doorpost, ([Ex. 12:21-23](#)) God sealed His own with blood. This is also signified in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in the New Testament church. The mark of the sealing is essentially the verification of being purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. *Thirdly*, the seal distinguishes a person, it separates the one sealed from those who are not sealed. For this reason the mark is placed upon the forehead. This represents the fact that the sealing of the child of God by the Holy Spirit is not only internal, it also becomes manifest in the world. Surely, according to the passages quoted, the Holy Spirit is the One Who seals the people of God within their hearts by the preaching of the gospel. He gives a new heart of flesh which replaces an old heart of stone. He gives us revelation so that we know God. He fills us with divine love so that we respond to God. By the working of the Holy Spirit we are sealed in an unbreakable and unchangeable eternal covenant of friendship with God. This sealing becomes manifest in our life. In the vision, the seal is on the forehead thereby representing the visibility of the seal. You can tell who is sealed! You can see who are the children of God by their walk of faith in the midst of an evil generation.

Finally, It is a seal of safety. This follows from what we have just said. Notice, the fact that the 144,000 are *sealed* does not mean that they will not suffer the plagues, the judgments common to all mankind. The church in the last days will not escape the judgments of God like Israel did in Egypt. Scripture is replete with warning concerning the Great Tribulation which the church will suffer: [Matt. 24:19-24](#), [II Thess. 2:2](#), [II Peter 3:18](#), [Rev. 3:11, 12](#). The sealing by the Holy Spirit indicates that the salvation of the church is God's work which He performs by the Holy Spirit and

no power or evil force shall ever destroy that work of God. He is faithful and whatever He begins He finishes for the glory of His name.

Besides this, the church must understand that when God will send great judgments and terrible plagues as we have them described in the sixth seal and the ensuing seven trumpets, even though the outward manifestation of these shall fall upon all men everywhere (they shall cover the whole earth for the four angels will release the four winds of heaven), yet these terrible things will not be given to the people of God as *judgments*. As surely as God sends sunshine and rain to all men everywhere, yet from a twofold motive (as favor for His people and as tokens of wrath upon the wicked... that their measure of iniquity may be filled), so also God sends his plagues upon all men for this same twofold purpose (as judgments and wrath upon the wicked... tokens of the fiery cinders that shall enflame them in death and hell, but as tokens of favor for His people... assuring them that even in the tribulation He works all things for their spiritual well-being, cf. [James 1:2-5](#), and draws them into the redeeming arms of love in Jesus Christ).

We must now ask, just *who* is sealed?

John did not actually see the throng of people who had this seal on their forehead; he "heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel," [Rev. 7:4](#).

According to the Dispensationalists who divide the Bible into various epochs or periods, the Israel of the Old Testament is obviously intended. They refer this event to the saving of the nation of Israel.

Many serious objections must be raised against this view. *First* the literal twelve tribes are not intended because the list excludes two tribes, *viz.* Ephraim and Dan. Besides Joseph is mentioned as a tribe, which he never had except through his two sons Ephraim and Manasse. Judah is mentioned first rather than Reuben who was the oldest and therefore is mentioned first in other lists, e.g. [Numbers 1](#). No one is willing to make the 12,000 a literal figure as if each tribe had exactly the same number of people saved, a fact which would be contradicted by history. The emphasis here is rather upon the spiritual house of Israel. The Israel of the Old Testament is here representative of the people of God of all ages as they are redeemed in Jesus Christ. Judah is mentioned first because it was out of Judah that Christ was to be born, cf. [Gen. 49:10](#), "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." *Secondly*, throughout the New Testament, "Israel" is referred to as the church of all ages. Consider [Matt. 2:6](#) where Christ is presented as a "Governor, that shall rule my people Israel," a reference to the entire church of all ages.

Similarly [Rom. 11:26](#), "So all Israel shall be saved" is a reference to the entire church, the children of Israel according to election and the church of our day, Jew and Gentile. These same children are identified as the children of Abraham ([Rom. 9:6](#)), an obvious reference not to the natural seed of Abraham, but the spiritual seed. Here they are properly called, "servants of our God," [Rev. 7:3](#). *Thirdly*, if those sealed referred entirely to the Jews of the nation of Israel, there would be little significance in proclaiming this to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor ([Rev. 1:1-8](#)).

These churches included Jews and Gentiles who had been drawn together by the power of the gospel. To them comes this vision, the tidings of good news. Consequently, to each of us who are called by the gospel unto a living faith in Jesus Christ comes the good news: we are sealed by the living God and all the tribulations that must come to pass in order to bring our Lord Jesus Christ upon the clouds of heaven, shall not separate us from the love of our God, [Rom. 8:33](#).39. *Finally*, this same truth is borne out in the significance of the numbers themselves.

Numbers have revelatory significance in Scripture. The total of 144,000 is the product of $3 \times 3 \times 12 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$. Three is the number of God triune. Four is the number of man as he reaches out into the vast span of the earth (four directions, four corners). Three times four speak of the power of the three over the four, or God's power over man, hence 12. Consider God's power over the life of Israel as represented by the 12: Twelve sons of Jacob formed the twelve tribes, twelve stones in the Jordan after the miraculous crossing, Elijah took twelve stones for the altar on which the fire of God descended, there were twelve gates to the temple, etc.

The number ten in Scripture conveys the idea of completion, the full and perfect extension. Thus the ten plagues on Egypt formed the complete expression of God's wrath upon them; the ten virgins in the parable of Christ represented complete humanity of which five were wise and five were foolish. The extension of $10 \times 10 \times 10$ indicates the sum total of all the twelves from generation to generation as they are brought into the church throughout the history of the world. If we put this together, we can understand that in the Old Testament the 3×4 was represented in the 12 tribes of Israel. In the New Testament the 3×4 was represented in the 12 disciples of Christ. By multiplying them together we have the product of the two as God unites them in Jesus Christ, both Jew and Gentile are saved by the blood of Christ ([Eph. 2:11-22](#)). This product multiplied by 10 then indicates to us that God will gather His church from all the generations of the earth, as long as the earth continues, He will gather unto Himself *all* His people, the complete number of every generation until all things shall be realized in the return of Jesus Christ.

This then is the gospel of great comfort to the people of God, whether Jew or Gentile: we are sealed by God Himself on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit. We have the certification that though God subjects the wicked to terrible judgments, His mercy is always upon us as He draws us nearer and nearer unto Himself. In His hands we shall rest safe and content.

Those that are sealed shall surely be saved. Already in the later part of this chapter we are directed to lift up our eyes beyond the church that militantly struggles in this world and see her as she is redeemed in the blood of the Lamb, "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb," [Rev. 7:9, 10](#). These are further described in [Rev. 14:1ff.](#), "And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him *a hundred and forty and four thousand* having his Father's name written in their foreheads... and they sung as it were a new song before the throne."

The kingdom of heaven is reserved for all those who are sealed. Are you one? Now you understand how to answer that question don't you? You recognize that all the 144,000 confess that they are not living for a great kingdom of peace on this earth, their eye of faith is directed to the new heavens and new earth. They do not live for themselves and seek the praise of men, they recognize that they are dead in sin and unworthy of the least of God's blessings. Their great joy is being sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ and thus made worthy through Him. Finally, those who are sealed have but one purpose in this life and in that which is to come. They desire to praise God, everlastingly to shout forth the greatness of our God who hath saved us in the blood of the Lamb. If this is your confession, do not doubt, but that you are sealed unto that great day.

Chapter 6: The Locust Out of the Abyss

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit: and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree: but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it: and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle: and on their heads were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron: and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is *Abaddon*, but on the Greek tongue hath his name *Apollyon*. One woe is past and behold there come two woes more hereafter." [Revelation 9:1-12](#).

Little wonder that the eagle (this is the proper translation, not "angel") flies through the midst of heaven crying, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" [Revelation 8:13](#). This trilogy of woes introduces us to the narrative recorded above, that of the fifth trumpet. An eagle in Scripture is a harbinger of dreadful things. Consider, "Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat," [Habakkuk 1:8](#). See also [Deut. 8:49](#) and [Matt. 24:28](#). The cry from the eagles indicates that there is a terrible woe in the offing.

Even a casual reading of the fifth trumpet indicates to us that the content is terrible. This is doubly true if we place the fifth trumpet in its proper setting. We must bear in mind that the six seals have already been broken. Their content has been revealed and is recorded for us in the sixth chapter of Revelation. These included the four horsemen who ride throughout history bringing suffering and destruction in their wake. The fifth seal revealed the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and they cry from under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" The sixth seal unfolded a terrible destruction of the heavenly bodies, "And the heaven departed as a

scroll when it is rolled together." [Revelation 6:14](#). The seventh seal in turn became the seven trumpets. The first four of these trumpets had to do with fiery destruction upon the vegetation of the earth, the seas and open waters, the inland waterways, and the moon and stars, [Revelation 8:1-12](#). In each instance the trumpets that were sounded brought about one third destruction upon that directly affected. Against this background the fifth trumpet is about to be sounded by the angel, and the ensuing results make one tremble exceedingly.

Bearing in mind that John was beholding a vision, we observe with him that a star has already fallen. (He doesn't see it fall.) This star, obviously representing Satan, received a key from God who is sitting upon the throne and with it he opens the bottomless pit. This results in releasing of terrible smoke and hordes of locusts which are described in the most weird fashion. They are led by one, *Abaddon* or *Apollyon*, who serves as their captain.

Quite naturally we are intrigued by this strange display called the fifth trumpet. We must remind ourselves that our interest however, must not be merely intellectual curiosity, rather we desire to know what things must yet transpire that we may be found watching for our Lord's return and thus have our lamps lit.

As soon as the "star" or Satan opened the door of the "bottomless pit", terrible black smoke belched forth. Out of this smoke arose locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power, [Revelation 9:3](#). These locusts were not ordinary locusts; they had the general appearance of locusts, particularly as this applies to their number, they came as a great horde. Ordinarily grasshoppers would consume the green herb and not be a direct threat to human life. With these however; it is quite different; they are commanded not to eat the grass nor the green thing; rather they have power as the scorpions and that is the terrible stinger in its tail. Noteworthy here is the fact that they must not kill men with this power; a scorpion's sting was not usually fatal but painful, and so they must hurt men in such a way that they will wish they were dead, but cannot die. As we view this scene, we notice at once that the impression is given that we have a great number of dangerous creatures that are released from the pit. This impression is blazed upon the consciousness of anyone who has encountered the plague of locusts. Scripture mentions this repeatedly as e.g. [Joel 1:7-12](#), [Joel 2:10-11](#), [Jeremiah 46:23](#), [Nahum 3:7](#), [Amos 7:1-2](#) and [Exodus 10:4-15](#). "He hath laid my vine waste and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white." [Joel 1:7](#).

We must attempt to answer the most important question: who are these creatures, who are represented by the locusts? In order to come to a convincing conclusion we must consider the following elements: from whence do they come, what is their power, how do they stand related to one another, how does their description indicate to us their real character?

According to the original Greek this "bottomless pit" is actually a "shaft of the abyss." This description does not refer to hell as it will be after the judgment, for this is described in [Revelation 20:14-15](#), as a "lake of fire." Rather it applies to the place of demons prior to the final judgment of Jesus Christ when He will sit upon the great white throne. This is confirmed by [Luke 8:31](#), "And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into *the deep*." According to John in [Revelation 20:1,3](#), Satan is bound within this "bottomless pit" for

1000 years. This also confirms what we find recorded in our text under consideration, Satan is fallen from heaven. This is described for us in [Luke 10:18](#), "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." When Satan was fallen from heaven, he was cast into the bottomless pit. This does not imply that he is now entirely limited to and confined to this pit. It only means that he cannot unite the nations of the world into one empire until the end of the 1000 years is come. He does have access to his own evil spirits and he goes to and fro about the earth as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. When Satan was cast out of heaven upon the ascension of Christ into heaven, [Revelation 12:9](#), he proceeded to this abyss and forthwith released from this pit all his hellish cohorts. This is revealed in our text by the smoke and thick darkness that proceeds upon the opening of this pit. All that comes forth from this place is terrible corruption that hides and obscures the light of the sun, the light of God. Here we have a revelation of the spiritual corruption that ferments within this pit. The smoke represents moral decay, naked lies, corruption in every form imaginable. The locusts are the advocates of such filth. We have here every demonic influence upon society and human life.

We should interject at this point the assuring note recorded in this text, "and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit," vs. 1. We must observe that these locusts are different from the natural grasshopper in that they are organized. In fact we can observe a general rank or position. There is one that is king over them, vs 11, and his name is *Abaddon* (Hebrew) and *Apollyon* (Greek) both have the meaning "destroyer." This leader is under the direct command of the one who opened the pit, the fallen star, who is Satan. These hordes of locusts are the cohorts of Satan and they come forth in order to stir up trouble on the earth. Scripture elsewhere refers to these ranks of evil spirits, cf. [Ephesians 2:2](#), "prince of the power of the air" or [Ephesians 1:21](#), "principality, power, might, and dominion" in reference to the angel world. The assuring note however, is that Satan has no power over his cohorts except he receives the key to the bottomless pit. Here also we have confirmed for us that God is the absolute Sovereign, even over the wicked fallen angels. Satan cannot release his hellish locusts except by the direct control and power of God through Jesus Christ. The evil spirits have no power except as it is given them by Christ.

Under this control of God, Satan gives command to *Apollyon*, and through him to all the evil spirits of the abyss, to come forth and attack evil men. We must observe carefully that his interest is not in attacking the church, rather "those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" vs. 4. This does not mean that evil spirits have no interest in the church, see [Revelation 12:15-17](#); rather the point of view of this text is the relationship of Satan to his cohorts as they attack the wicked. This must go on for five months or for the normal period of time in which locusts would make their annual attack upon the crops, i.e., their allotted time.

It is interesting to see that Satan's attack upon the world of wicked men is for the expressed purpose of making them his willing servants and thus be able to do with them what he pleases. We are somewhat inclined to forget that the devil must continually deal with the reprobate wicked to make them his stooges. He does this through these hordes of evil spirits that must go forth and torment five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it: and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them vs. 5,6. We must notice at once that this attack is not

physical, producing pain in the body as such; rather it is spiritual and brings havoc and distress as the result of the terrible advance of sin and death.

To accomplish this, Satan sends forth *Apollyon* and his hordes in a deceiving manner. They assume the appearance of something to enjoy, but from the back it has a stinger in its tail that causes men to suffer misery and even wish to die. We should observe carefully that these locusts appear in a very strange form. In general they are locusts that appear like horses prepared for battle. We observe from Scripture that the horse was a great animal known to men for its power and agility in battle, see [Job 39:19ff.](#), and yet it was designated by God as a vain thing, [Psalm 33:17](#). Here then these evil spirits deceive by giving the impression of power. They claim that if we only follow the philosophy of the world with its approach to government and science we will pursue the way of power and victory. Is this not apparent in our day as the populous is disillusioned by diplomacy and by Scientism. Add to this a further description, "on their heads were as it were 'crowns of gold'" vs 7. This indicates that what these evil spirits seek to accomplish is to convince men that by going the way of Satan, man will realize a rule in this world of great splendor, of universal peace, similar to the golden empire of Nebuchadnezzar, see [Daniel 3:1-7](#). We can see how far this evil spirit has ensnared the minds of the world today. Is not the Great Society the epitome of this crown of gold? Still more, "their faces were as the faces of men" vs 7. This indicates that all the world boasts in human achievements. The philosophy of man without Christ is called Humanism, the greatness of man deified. One must be blind not to see how this permeates the thinking of depraved man today. If there are any problems, *man* must solve them; if there will be peace *man* must work for it; if there is going to be a great tomorrow, man will have to lay the foundation today. Man is capable, man is willing, man must do it now! The evil spirits from the abyss corrupt the mind of man so he places self in place of God.

The approach of these subtle spirits is not only through government and philosophy, but also pleasure. These locusts have "hair of women, teeth as lions, breastplates of iron, and the sounds of their wings as chariots of many horses running to battle." In order to win the affections of men, they come with the appeal to human lust. The hair of women speaks of the evil spirits catering to man's depraved nature and offering the pleasures of sin. Today this assumes the form of "free love" and the "new morality" in which sin is justified and condoned under the pretense of human enrichment. Along with this lust comes also the appearance of strength. The lions teeth represents the power of this lust as it seeks to devour our neighbor's possessions, a getting rich. All this is presented as a reliable force, the breastplate of iron; it appears secure and impregnable. It seems to be the best way; government offers security in their social programs; men find pleasure in eating and drinking, willingly give of themselves to the rule of others so they can enjoy these things more. Everyone gets on the bandwagon. It is the accepted way of life, the noise is that of a great army running to battle. The cliché of our day is "everyone is doing it," and this slogan is out of the pit. The devil wants us to believe this lie. The swarms of locusts overwhelm human life and influence it on every level.

Yet *appearance* is deceitful. From the front it seems to be great to go along with the devil and his cohorts. Yet from the back the consequence of following him in his ways are terrible. On his tail is a stinger which hurts men and makes them want to die, but they cannot.

How evident this is already in our day. What is our government doing today in Vietnam? Yes, it looks as if American power is like a horse, strong in battle, yet we see our sons slain in battle; citizens of another country uprooted from their homes and left to drift aimlessly in the midst of battle. As a result, men's hearts grow faint and can't seem to find a solution. Where is the gold that glitters on the crown of America? Our riches have brought forth devil uprisings: crime, suicide, drugs, all which tell us that man is building his castle on sinking sand. Free love sounds so enticing, but it leaves in its wake divorces, broken homes, empty lives and bottles filled with tears. Man invents the big bomb and boasts of scientific achievements, yet you hear them cry out in fear of doom; what will happen to us if China unleashes upon our heads atomic bombs? Amidst all the boasting of human achievements and greedy satisfying of human lusts, there is such unrest that men find no hope for the future, you hear one after another cry out that life this way is vain. This is getting worse by the day. The locusts out of the abyss are stinging the masses of our day. The way of the flesh and godless men appears so wonderful, but in reality it is so deadly. The reason is obvious, God's curse is upon the house of the wicked.

Let's learn from this that man without God is a fool. God forbid that we ever envy the world or follow after its ways. The goals, the dress, the songs, the pleasures, the philosophy, the science, the government is under the influence of the locusts from the abyss. It is vanity and can bring one nothing but despair. The devil knows this all too well. His interest is not to redeem man, rather he seeks to gain revenge against God by deceiving mankind and thus bringing them through *Apollyon*, the Destroyer, to such oblivion. Thus he receives the key from God to fulfill God's purpose with the wicked: the development of sin and the destruction of the wicked in the way of their sins that He may be known eternally as the God of justice.

Thank God, the elect are sealed, being redeemed by Jesus Christ, and placed under His care. Even the locusts out of the abyss shall not destroy the church. The wicked shall be brought to nought, they shall be shown by God that rejection of God is kicking against the pricks and brings self destruction. The church finds her joy in rejecting the lie of the devil and walking in the way of faith following our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Chapter 7: The Eating of the Little Book

The events connected with the vision recorded for us in [Rev. 10](#) touch upon a vital issue that divides the church today. The issue simply stated is this: what reaction must we expect to the faithful preaching of the gospel? We must relate this to our personal experience first of all and ask, is the message of the gospel pleasing to our flesh? Besides this, is it pleasing to the general public? Do men everywhere come flocking to church because they hear a word that appeals to their carnal nature? Must we work for this and is this the purpose of the preaching of the gospel?

You certainly understand that this is a vital issue in the church today. The answer we give will determine for us whether we are the faithful church or the false church. It is a fact that the leaders in the great churches of our land are more concerned today about the "image" of the church than they are about obeying the Word of Christ. With them issues of top priority are the war in Vietnam, the poor peoples' march, civil rights, and all the popular issues that appeal to the masses. To be sure, they do not search the Scriptures to hear what God has to say; rather they clamor for that which is pleasing to man. Their concern does not center in the reconciling blood of Jesus Christ which alone can free man from poverty of sin and death; rather it centers in a general brotherhood of man and human rights. You may be sure that this position is the popular one and the church that speaks the loudest in favor of such a position is the popular church and draws the limelight.

Yet, the Word of God expressly warns us that this is not what we should expect, nor should we strive for it. There is something fundamentally wrong when the message of the "gospel" is conditioned by its popular acceptance. In the passage of Scripture that we desire to consider, we are told that John, the prophet of God, must eat the little book which is sweet to his taste, but makes his belly bitter. From this we must learn that the Word of God is pleasing to us by faith, it brings to the true believer reason for hope; peace in the midst of war; joy when earthly sorrow abounds; riches in the sphere of poverty; and life out of death. For the flesh this produces only heartache, pain, suffering, and persecution. This fact however, does not arouse us to change the gospel and to make it different, for this book is the Word of God; and to change God's Word makes one subject to the terrible warning, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city and from the things written In this book," [Rev. 22:18-19](#).

We quote the passage under consideration,

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and

when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that are therein, that there should be time no longer; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants and prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven spoke unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went upon the earth. And I went unto the angel and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings," [Rev. 10:1-11](#).

This chapter forms an interlude in the progressive unfolding of the vision given to John on the Isle of Patmos. Glancing back for a moment, we recall that John saw a window in heaven and climbing up was thus enabled to gaze into the splendor of heaven. He saw a throne, and He that sat upon the throne was surrounded with 24 elders, four beasts, thousands of angels and the multitude of saints. In the right-hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne was a sealed book which only the Lamb that was slain was qualified to open. It was sealed with seven seals which the exalted Christ forthwith opened. The first four seals were the four horsemen; the fifth seal revealed the souls under the altar who were martyred for the sake of the gospel, the sixth seal contained a horrible display of judgment upon the earth. The seventh seal in turn became seven trumpets, the first four of which were judgments of God upon nature bringing an increase of destruction, one third instead of one fourth as with the seals. The fifth trumpet brought the hordes of locusts from the abyss, signifying the release of evil spirits that go forth throughout the earth deceiving men and bringing them to spiritual destruction. The sixth trumpet involved the four angels which released the armies of horses which symbolize the powers of war that destroy men. This brings us to the vision of the tenth chapter.

According to the events thus reviewed, we notice that time has come when the seventh trumpet must be blown, and looking ahead, we notice that this trumpet again turns into seven vials. The vials contain the final expression of God's judgment upon the earth for its devastation is not one fourth as with the seals, nor one third as with the trumpets, but 100% or total destruction. The pouring out of the vials symbolize the ushering in of the end of the world.

Before the awesome details of this destructive force will be made known to John and the church, a vision is given to prepare us for it. John must be comforted and assured that as a prophet he will have to make known terrible things, yet for the church and the people of God even these terrible events will cause Christ to come upon the clouds of heaven and bring the final consummation of glory.

These truths are brought out in the two phases of this vision. The first part deals with the Mighty Angel who stands with one foot on the earth and the other on the sea. He is the one who holds in his hand the little book which is open. This Mighty Angel calls for the seven thunders and lifted up his hand heavenward, swearing an oath that the mystery of God shall be finished. The second part deals with the orders that John take the little book from the Mighty Angel's hand and eat it with the results that it is sweet to his taste, but bitter in his belly.

If we examine the details a little more closely, we notice at once that the Mighty Angel is surely someone extraordinary. The question that is raised is simply this, does this angel represent Christ or must we interpret it as a reference to one of the many heavenly hosts, who serve God as messengers? Nowhere else in the book of Revelation is Christ referred to as an "angel." It is also striking that John does not worship this angel as he worshipped Christ in [Rev. 1:17](#). Nevertheless, the rest of the evidence is in favor of interpreting this Mighty Angel as a representation of Christ. Since the vantage point is back on earth, we see Him standing with one foot on the earth the other on the seas. Clouds are His clothing, a picture of Christ coming in judgment on the clouds of heaven, [Acts 1:11](#); a rainbow was upon his head, the sign of God's unchangeable covenant of grace, [Gen. 9:12-13](#); His face was as it were the sun of righteousness who shall burn like stubble all the workers of iniquity, but who shall rise with healing in His wings for His own, [Mal. 4:1-2](#).

His stance is significant: one foot on the earth and one on the sea. What does this represent? In light of [Ps. 110:1](#), "The Lord said unto my lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," it is evident that this reveals to us Christ as the conquering Lord over all His enemies. All things are made subject to His direction. He is ruler over sky, earth, and sea. Consult [Joshua 10:24](#) as a symbol of this in the Old Testament; see also [1 Cor. 15:25](#), "put all enemies under his feet"; and the same idea in [Eph. 1:22](#).

His action confirms this interpretation. First of all, He cries out with a loud voice, as a lion roars, and this brings forth the seven thunders which utter their voices. Here too, the voice of thunders speaks of judgment, see [Ps. 18:13](#), "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire." The fact that there are seven voices of thunder indicate that the purpose of this judgment is to bring to realization the kingdom of heaven. The number seven in the book of Revelation represents the covenant of grace, three for the triune God and four representing the four corners of the earth; taken together, God and His people are joined in Christ Jesus. Even judgment serves to bring the return of Christ in glory. The content of these voices was understood by John, but he was forbidden to write it down. We must understand this to refer to the secret counsels of God, the complete detail of which must be known to God alone. This includes all the details as to who exactly anti-christ will be, when he will reign, what time will Christ personally appear, all these things are known to God alone and must remain such. Here John heard the seven thunders symbolizing their reality and so assures the church that God knows, and this must remain His secret. The only thing John must tell is what is contained in the little book; this follows later.

The second act by Christ is recorded in verses 5 and 6: He lifted His hand heavenward and swore an oath. What He swears is that there shall be time no more, or more correctly, there

shall be no more delay. The judgments shall be poured out and Christ shall forthwith return. The fact that Christ should swear an oath is not strange, since He as the exalted Lord, remains according to His human nature the servant of God, bound to execute His will. Did He not pray while on earth? Why should it be any different that He swear an oath while in heaven?

From all of this we conclude that Christ is now exalted in heaven working all things so that through judgment He will return and take us to our heavenly home. He is perfect and absolute control over all things, in nature, in the midst of the nations, in the hearts of men. He promises upon the authority of God that nothing shall delay His coming again. His coming is not in spite of evil and troubles (the content of the seven thunders), rather *through* these judgments upon the peoples and nations He is coming again. The terrible plagues described in the following chapters are not outside of Christ's control; they are to take place as Christ executes the perfect will of God. Even troubles themselves bring men to destruction, but serve to save the church and thus work all things for Christ's return.

Now we must still see what all this has to do with the little book in the hand of the Mighty Angel, Christ.

The little book must be identified with and yet be distinguished from the book recorded in [Rev. 5:1](#). If we review a moment what was involved in the former reference, we will recall that the book in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne was sealed; it was written on all sides, yet it was closed; and the question was asked: who is worthy (qualified, meaning: who has the right and power) to open it? The silence in heaven revealed that no man was worthy; only the Lamb that had been slain was qualified. The exalted Christ then took the book and began to break the seals and reveal the content not only, but also realize them. This book obviously represented the secret counsel of God that contained all the details of what had to transpire in order that Christ might realize His kingdom.

In this interlude, we notice that the book is called "little," and it is open. This tells us that it has been reduced in size because much of its contents has been fulfilled since it is now open! Yet, it is not the same book, for John must eat it; and certainly John must not eat the remaining part of the book that was in the right hand of God which Christ was worthy to open. The seventh trumpet of the seventh seal which contains the seven vials must also be revealed and realized by Christ, no less than the others. Rather, we must understand that this book has a special purpose: its content are the seven vials that are to be poured out, which John just received and of which he must prophecy. John must be warned ahead of time, that Christ, the Lord of Judgment, Whose feet are upon the earth as His footstool, commissions him to preach also the remaining message which will be terrible, more so than that which preceded. He must not be afraid to preach the truth, for in sounding it forth, he will be a messenger of the covenant preaching judgment upon the wicked and mercy upon the people of God.

Hence John is called upon to eat the little book. Obviously, this is a vision and John does not do so literally, for a book is not to be eaten but read. The idea is that John must pay close attention to what is about to be revealed to him and not be afraid to "tell it unto the churches." By the eating of this book we learn what a true prophet of God must really do with the Word of God. John had to take it, chew it, swallow it, and thus to digest it and assimilate it into his system.

What was figuratively true for John must be literally true for all prophets. Ministers of today must be students of the Word of God. They must receive the Bible as the Word of God and search its contents; it must become part of their life; they must become gripped by the message. Note with me how this condemns modern day Biblical criticism which bends over backward to find errors and contradictions in the Bible and then literally forsakes the true meaning of the Scriptures as being irrelevant to the needs of the modern church. To save face they say that the Bible is all right, but must be made applicable to the church of today. Genesis is full of "stories" and the miracles are "kid's tales." All who do this are not prophets, for a true prophet must literally eat the Word of God; they must reverence it, believe it and thus it must live in their hearts and souls.

This Word of God is sweet to the mouth, but bitter to the belly. This does not simply mean that parts of the Bible's message are sweet and parts bitter; rather, when one truly worships in the preaching of the Word, it is sweet. We all realize this to some degree. When we sit under the preaching of the Word we feel forgiven, consoled, encouraged, and we rest content under the shadow of the Almighty. Yet, when that Word affects our lives, it brings bitterness. How? Christ's kingdom is coming in the way of development of sin, in the way of the persecution of the church, in the way of anti-christ and his wickedness. This produces great opposition and suffering. According to chapter 11 of Revelation, the witnesses are found dead in the street. This is bitterness to the belly; it causes the church to be a reproach for Christ's sake.

No wonder John had to be assured that Christ would bring about this state of affairs. As certainly as Christ gave him the message to preach, Christ also would use that message as it fitted His purpose, *viz.* the condemnation of the wicked in the development of sin and the salvation of the church by the Word of God. When the church must preach hell fire and condemn the world, yea even the false church world, she must rest assured that her message will be rejected, the gospel will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Even then, it is the Word of God in Jesus Christ and she must expect this and not be dismayed and surely not forsake it.

We need this encouragement, even as John did, or if we look to the Old Testament, Ezekiel also did; see [Ezekiel 2:8, 3:3](#). It is not easy for the faithful prophets to preach a message of judgment upon the wicked. It is not easy to tell the people of God their portion will be that of suffering for the sake of Christ. Yet, this is the gospel.

The true prophet who will be filled with the Word of God and rightly divide it according to the will of God by eating and devouring the Book day by day; will find it sweet to the taste, but bitter to the belly.

This fact however, must not cause the church to forsake the Word. It must be preached so that the church may be gathered and the world found guilty before God. Such is the calling of true prophets.