



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

Jesus has now concluded His instructions to the elders of the seven assemblies, as well as to the broader audience who would read this book (including us today). John has finished writing about the *things which thou hast seen* (the vision of Jesus standing among the lampstands with seven stars on His right), and the *things which are* (the present conditions within the hearts of the elders of the seven assemblies); according to Jesus' instructions, what is left for him to write about are the *things which shall be hereafter* (Revelation 1:19).

*Hereafter*, in Revelation 1:19, is from the Greek words *meta tauta*, and is literally *after these*.<sup>1</sup> To strengthen the connection between this verse and where we are at, the first and last two Greek words in this sentence are *meta tauta* (*after this* and *hereafter*). In chapter one, John wrote of the vision that he had of Jesus; in chapters two and three, he wrote of things as they were in his day, and now he will begin to write about things that will take place *after these* – looking beyond his present time, which was about AD 96.

Now comes the huge challenge of wading through all of the metaphorical language to discover what it is that the Lord Jesus Christ would have us to know about what is coming *after these*. The interpretations of what follows vary tremendously. Perhaps it would be helpful to take a moment to define some of the terms that are used, so that, when we hear them, we are not without some understanding of what is being referred to. The terms that we'll look at all center on the word *millennial*, and are differing views on when, or if, Christ will return to the earth to reign. Therefore, those who are *pre-* believe that He will come before the millennium, *post-* believe that He will come after the millennial reign, and *a-* believe that there is no physical millennial reign at all, and, therefore, they spiritualize His return.

**Premillennialism** – Although this is often thought to be one body of belief (without qualification), it actually seems to fall into two branches of its own:

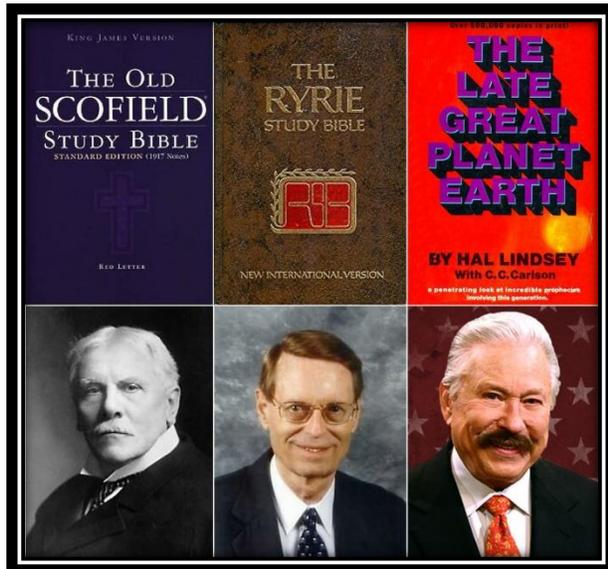
1. Dispensational Premillennialism<sup>2</sup> – Those who hold to this branch are staunch dispensationalists who believe that unless a dispensational view of the Scriptures is taken, it is impossible to arrive at Biblically sound conclusions. Throughout their interpretation of prophecy, they characteristically hold to a very distinct separation between Israel and “the Church”; there is much more to this view, but this is fundamental for our considerations. Consequently, the tribulation spoken of in Revelation 6 and the millennial reign of Christ are viewed as being distinctly related to Israel, and so the “Church” must be removed from the scene before these events take place. During these events, they claim that God is again focused on the nation of Israel, and so they deem it to be necessary to re-institute the sacrificial systems of the Mosaic Law (a return to OT times), although they do concede that these will be commemorative of Christ's sacrifice (as opposed to fore-shadowing what was to come). They believe that the rapture of the “Church” will be in secret – hence the books and movies, like *Left Behind*, that advocate a

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<sup>1</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.fivesolas.com/esc\\_chrt.htm](http://www.fivesolas.com/esc_chrt.htm)

mysterious disappearance of believers, and a second chance, for those who are left behind, to come to the Lord, although it will be under greater hardship. Dallas, Talbot, and Master's Seminars



C.I. Scofield

Charles Ryrie

Hal Lindsey

propound this view, as do/did men like John Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Dave Hunt, Jack van Impe, Hal Lindsey, and Norm Geisler. The Scofield Reference Bible, the Ryrie Study Bible, and Hal Lindsay's book *The Late Great Planet Earth* have all played their part in establishing this view. In many respects, this has become the accepted eschatological view of most Evangelicals, as they follow their favored leader; some have noted that it's softening (being heralded less dogmatically) as we have entered a time of greater ecumenical favor.

## 2. Historic (or Historical) Premillennialism<sup>3</sup>

– The significant difference from the one above, is that there is no dispensational view of Scripture. The Kingdom of God became evident when Jesus began His ministry, it is now being perpetuated by the Spirit of God, and it will be concluded when Christ returns for His own. Before He returns, there will be a time of tribulation and apostasy; His return will usher in the millennial reign that separates the first resurrection (of the righteous) from the second resurrection (of the wicked). Charles Spurgeon (albeit determined posthumously)<sup>4</sup>, George E. Ladd and Walter Martin all held to the fundamentals of this view.

**Postmillennialism**<sup>5</sup> – Proponents of this view agree that there will be a period of 1000 years of universal peace and righteousness in the world; what they cannot agree upon is whether it will be a literal 1000 years, will it be entered into suddenly or gradually, and what the signs of its advent will be. Once again, there are two veins of thought. One group emphasizes a theonomy approach, where the “church” works to restore a theocracy to the earth – God working through His people to establish His kingdom. The other is a dominion approach (largely Pentecostal) that sees a “Latter Rain” event binding the power of Satan, and, thereby, freeing the “church” to reclaim its rightful power and material wealth. Either way, the kingdom of God is brought in through the efforts of His people, which should (under the theonomy view) see a gradual improvement in the world situation. World War I decimated both the optimism and ranks of this view, but it is beginning to gain favor once again. Gary North, Gary DeMarr, and Kenneth Gentry propound the theonomy view (all are Reformed theologians); Paul Cho, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, and Pat Robertson (all charismatics) hold to the Latter Rain view, to varying degrees.

**Amillennialism**<sup>6</sup> – Literally this means *no millennium*; however, in fact, the position is that the present time is the millennial reign of Christ from heaven, and that there will be no literal 1000-

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.fivesolas.com/esc\\_chrt.htm](http://www.fivesolas.com/esc_chrt.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.spurgeon.org/eschat.htm#ans-sum>

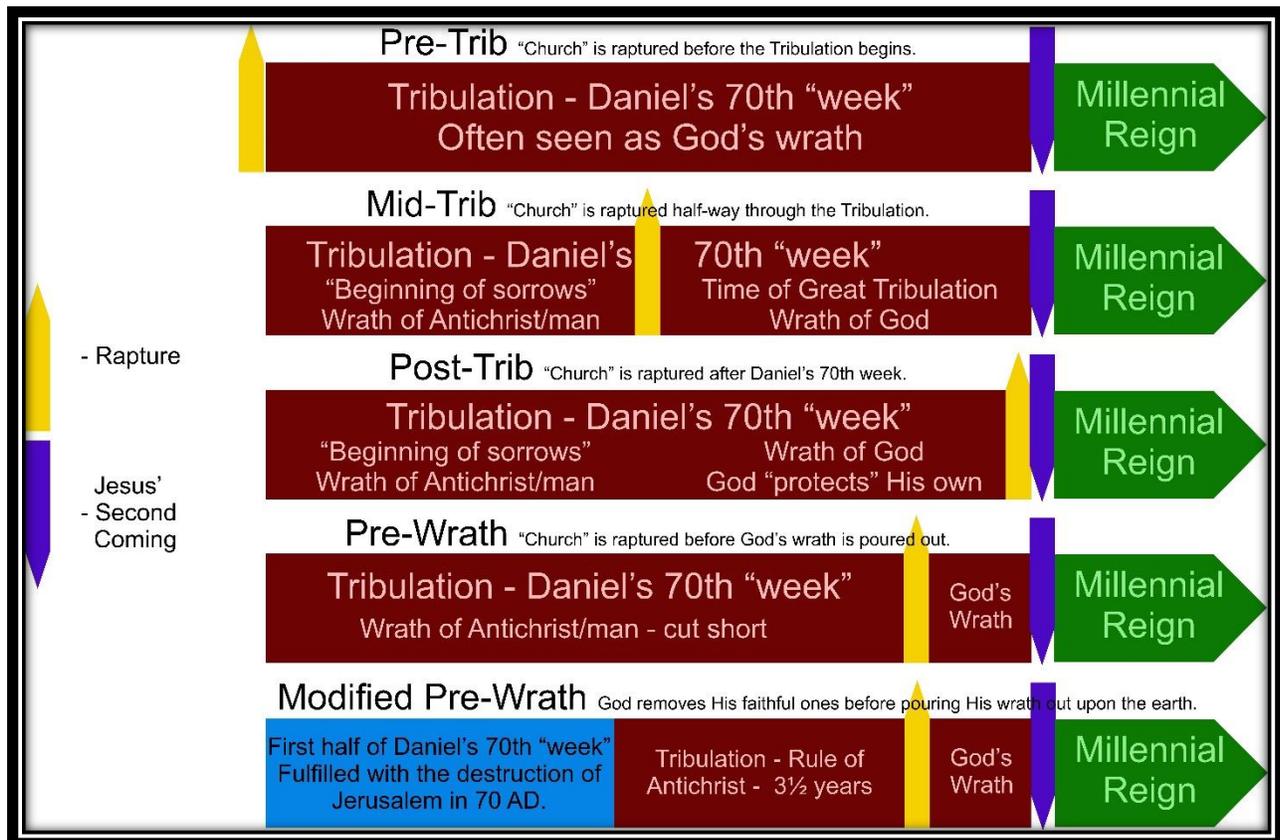
<sup>5</sup> [http://www.fivesolas.com/esc\\_chrt.htm](http://www.fivesolas.com/esc_chrt.htm)

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

year reign on earth, rather it is the entire period between the first and second advents of Christ. This is the position held by Catholics, Lutherans, and many who hold to a Reformed theology. It is promoted by J.I. Packer, who holds a Reformed view of Scripture; R.C. Sproul used to follow this view but has since moved into the postmillennial camp, although still holding to a Reformed theology.

These three broad categories, even though they focus on Christ’s millennial reign on earth, flow out of a more basic determination as to how the Scriptures are to be interpreted, and, consequently, they also impact how the book of Revelation is viewed. There are four general approaches taken when handling the prophetic imagery of this book: **Preterist** – believes that all of the prophecies have been fulfilled, and that they relate to the time of the author of Revelation; **Futurist** – most prophecies are yet future, and we look to see them unfolding around us; **Historicist** – the prophecies are being fulfilled with the unfolding of history, and they describe events from the Apostles unto today (which is a forward-sliding time-frame); **Idealist** – nothing is to be interpreted literally, it is all symbolic, and simply allegorical of the struggle between good and evil.<sup>7</sup>

Couched within the Pre-Millennial view (probably the view with the largest following) is the matter of when, or if, Christ will return to snatch away all those who are faithful to Him. The tribulation is generally thought to be a seven-year period (Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> “week”), which stretches from the revelation of the Antichrist through to the wrath of God being poured out upon the earth. Within this, there are those who believe that Christ will return prior to the time of tribulation (Pre-



<sup>7</sup> <https://bible.org/article/interpretive-models-book-revelation-whole>

Tribulation, they consider the seven years to be the wrath of God), mid-way through the time of tribulation (Mid-Tribulation, with a distinction between the wrath of Antichrist/man [first half] and the wrath of God [second half]), after the tribulation (Post-Tribulation, with a recognition of man's vs. God's wrath, but see God protecting His own while pouring out His wrath), and others who believe that He will return just prior to God pouring out His wrath upon the earth (Pre-Wrath). The most popular Pre-Tribulational view is basically a product of a strongly-held dispensational interpretation of Scripture, which results in an artificial distinction between Israel and "the Church." The other views are less obviously dispensational, with some individuals not holding any dispensational leanings.

Probably the obvious question is: where do I fit into this? I don't really feel all that comfortable with any of these views; I do hold to a literal interpretation of the Bible, but that does not override the fact that there is much metaphoric and symbolic language used in the Scriptures, particularly in Revelation. Even though I would call myself a premillennialist, I am definitely not a dispensationalist; the difficulty with applying distinct labels is that they are often restricted by a particular theological bias, or may include so many variations that it is difficult to really know what is meant. I have been a "pannist" for all of my Evangelical years (being quite sure that it will all pan out in the end), but acknowledge that such a hands-off attitude to the Revelation is not a proper approach to the Word of God. Frankly, I would prefer to leave the categories and labels behind, and permit the Word of God to speak for itself; however, in the chart above I have added a "Modified Pre-Wrath" view, which I believe is more in keeping with the Scriptures. Nevertheless, I have gone through this exercise to familiarize both the reader and myself to what we will face from those about us. It is good to understand, even if only in a general sense, what others might bring to our attention. However, the appropriate response would be to have them explain what they mean; after all, their understanding might prove to be quite different from how it is generally defined. However, I am convinced that it is simply not appropriate to spend copious amounts of time trying to thoroughly understand these theological positions.

As John turns from what is, to what will come, he saw (*looked - oida*) a door that was opened in the heaven (singular). The door into heaven was already open; *opened* is in the perfect tense, which describes a past action that never needs to be repeated.<sup>8</sup> When John looked, the heaven was already open; he did not see heaven being opened. Likewise for Ezekiel, "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1b); again, the perfect tense is used to describe a completed past action. The Hebrew word, which is translated as *heavens*, is always plural, and it is the context that determines exactly to what it is referring. We generally acknowledge the Biblical support for three specific heavens: 1) the atmosphere that surrounds the earth in which the birds fly (Genesis 1:26 – *air* is the same Hebrew word as *heavens*), 2) the universe, the home of the stars and planets (Genesis 1:15-17), and 3) the abode of God being all encompassing (1 Kings 8:27). When Ezekiel and John saw the open heavens, it provided them with insight into God's habitation – as much as that is possible for man to comprehend.

However, something that we might miss in our English, is that John says that he saw (*oida*), but immediately follows that with *look thou (behold - idou)*. *Behold (idou)* is always in the second

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<sup>8</sup> Strong's Online.

person singular, active voice, and imperative mood.<sup>9</sup> John saw, and he immediately commands the reader to also look; it is Jesus' desire that we, like John, take the time to try to understand what is about to be unfolded. John saw, first hand, the open heaven and many things that he struggled to describe; we are enjoined to follow his gaze into the heavenlies, and learn what the Lord has for us.

Immediately John describes the *first voice* that he hears after seeing the open heavens, and it was as of a trumpet. You will recall that when John first heard the Lord speaking to him, he describes the voice as being like unto the sound of a trumpet (1:10). Although *first voice* does not appear to relate back to that initial appearance of the Lord to John, it would seem likely that the first voice that he heard from the opened heavens was the voice of the Lord. Again, despite *voice* and *sound* being translated from the same Greek word, the context leads us to *voice* because of what follows. We have the metaphor of the trumpet sounding forth (*talking* and *said*), but what comes are audible words, not notes of a horn, and these words were directed specifically to John.

The first words that John hears are *come up hither*, or come thou up to this place.<sup>10</sup> This is not a general invitation to come up to the Lord (it is John who hears the voice); it is a very specific invitation that is extended to John alone – *come* is a second person, singular verb. Jesus has just finished dictating the letters to the elders of the seven assemblies, and now He calls John to *come up* to heaven. John is invited to come to the Lord in heaven, with the promise that Jesus will show him (*thee*) what must come to be *after these*.<sup>11</sup> Again, the phrase *after these* uses the things that are (namely, the present condition of the elders within the seven assemblies) as a time stamp, thereby emphasizing that John will be shown what must follow.

C.I. Schofield, and those who hold to a pre-tribulational view of the rapture, are guilty of seeing this as the fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 – “Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”<sup>12</sup> However, it doesn't take much investigation to show the fallacy of this position. As we have already noted, *come* (in Revelation 4:1) is singular, while the thrust of Paul's words to the Thessalonians is unequivocally plural (*we*, *caught up*, and *ever be* are all plural in form). Therefore, these two cannot be referring to the same event. Part of their difficulty is a natural product of their strong dispensational view of Scripture,<sup>13</sup> which leads them to believe that the

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<sup>9</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>10</sup> Scrivener's 1894 NT.

<sup>11</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/scofield-reference-notes/revelation/revelation-4.html>

<sup>13</sup> Dispensationalism is not without its variations: C.I. Schofield saw seven dispensations – Innocency, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Kingdom; others add Eternal State to this to make eight; David Cloud holds to nine – Testing, Lawlessness, Babel, Israel's Beginning, Law of Moses, Church, Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, Millennial, and New Heaven and Earth; still others see four – Patriarchal, Mosaic, Ecclesial, and Zionic, or three – Law, Grace, and Kingdom. Cloud's observation is that “no two dispensational teachers have agreed in every point,” and “no one system of dispensational theology can satisfy everything the Bible teaches ....” Therefore, the obvious conclusion must be that dispensationalism is completely subjective, and not a particularly useful means for Bible interpretation; yet every dispensational teacher will argue vehemently for his position. Cloud acknowledges that the number of dispensations is not important: “the important point is that there have been various periods during which God has worked out His purposes, and during these periods God has related to men in different ways and has required different things of him.” In other words, how you divide Scripture is not all that important, as long as you make some arbitrary divisions that work for you, and, most importantly, that

“church” will not go through any of the sufferings and trials that are recorded within the Revelation; therefore, the obvious solution (within their dispensational view) is to remove the “church” from the earth before we get any further into John’s prophecies. Although, this might seem to fit well with their view of Scripture, there is nothing within our text to support this; every indication is that this is nothing other than Jesus’ call to the Apostle John to come up and see what will be coming. The other impact of the dispensational view is that Jesus’ letters to the elders of the assemblies are the only part of the Revelation that is for us today, and it is applied symbolically in order to fit the period from Jesus’ ascension through to the rapture of His faithful ones. In typical fashion, for the dispensational mind, the letters expose the condition of the “church” throughout the ages, which only serves to dilute the message that Jesus has for us (for me); the letters become nothing more than subjectively applied generalities that indicate the general state of the “church” down through the centuries (something that is particularly fitting for dispensationalists who draw a distinct line of separation between the “Church” and Israel). By contrast, we have seen that the letters contain significant messages that are pertinent to our lives (part of the things that *are*), and, if we heed their messages, are a means of preparing ourselves for the Lord’s return. We, as readers of this prophetic book, are invited to see what John will write about (*behold*), but we simply cannot extend that to refer to those who are in Christ being called into heaven (removed from earth) before what follows.



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

John hears the call of Jesus to come up, and *immediately*, without any delay, he is (comes to be) in the Spirit (ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι).<sup>14</sup> Earlier we learned that all of this began when John was (came to be) *in the Spirit* (ἐγενόμην ἐν Πνεύματι), while confined by Rome to the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:10); notice that the Greek phrasing is identical.<sup>15</sup> We saw that John came to be in the Spirit, and, while in the Spirit, he saw the Lord behind him, and received the dictation of messages for the elders of the seven specified assemblies in Asia; there is nothing to indicate that he was physically removed from the Isle, or that, while he was in the Spirit, he was transported away from Patmos during the vision and dictation. However, now he is called to see the dwelling place of the Most High, and things that are yet to be; clearly there is a change in location, which means that John has now entered the spirit world; he was not physically transported to heaven, nor did he die – his spirit was simply taken into heaven.

Here is another evidence that John, being taken up to heaven to receive special revelations, does not represent the Body of Christ being taken to be with the Lord. Look carefully at Paul’s words on this matter: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead [those who have died *in Christ*] shall be raised [resurrected] incorruptible [not subject to decay], and we [those who have not died] shall be changed [transformed]” (1

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you make a “clear distinction between Israel and the Church.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dispensationalism>;  
[http://www.wayoflife.org/database/study\\_bible\\_dispensationally.html](http://www.wayoflife.org/database/study_bible_dispensationally.html)

<sup>14</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Corinthians 15:52).<sup>16</sup> The dead in Christ, and the faithful who are alive when He comes, will receive immortal bodies – but bodies, nonetheless. When Jesus was resurrected, He was in a body of flesh and bones: “Behold [See] my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see [know, understand]; for a spirit hath not [absolute] flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39).<sup>17</sup> He confirmed to His disciples that He was not simply a spirit, even though He could appear in their midst at will. They were still skeptical, so He ate some of the food that they had with them, further affirming that He was not just a spirit being. John wrote that when we see Him (in glory), we will be like Him – we will have resurrected bodies of flesh and bones: “... we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like [similar to] him [indicative mood – a statement of fact]; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2b).<sup>18</sup>

Jesus ascended bodily into heaven (Luke 24:51), and He is presently in heaven still bearing the signs of the sacrifice that He made while on earth: “And I beheld ... a Lamb as it had been slain ...” (Revelation 5:6). Likewise, when Christ comes to receive His own, we will be physically resurrected and changed in that instant (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). We have been assured that, for the faithful, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8); therefore, we understand that our spirits go to be with the Lord when we die, and, very obviously, our body remains behind. The spirits of the faithful who have died will come with the Lord at the time of the rapture, to be joined eternally with newly resurrected, immortal bodies; the faithful, who are alive on the earth when the Lord returns to gather His own, will join them in the air in their instantly-transformed bodies – they will not die and be resurrected; rather, their bodies will take on immortality, which is a significant transformation (1 Corinthians 15:52). This in no way can be likened to John being called into heaven to receive from the Lord a revelation of things to come; John was not physically removed from Patmos.

The Greek word *idou*, translated as *behold*, always appears as a command in the second person singular, and it is there to direct our attention to what will follow.

John arrives in heaven, and the first thing that he sees, to which he draws our attention, is a throne, and Someone sitting on it. A throne is something that we attribute to those who are in authority, and who are ruling as a king or queen. Therefore, when we think of a *throne* in reference to God, we are expressing Who He is in terms that we can understand; after all, God is a spirit (John 4:24), which immediately places Him beyond our complete comprehension. The Psalmist declares: “Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: the



<sup>16</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>17</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

sceptre of thy kingdom is a right [uprightness] sceptre” (Psalm 45:6; Hebrews 1:8);<sup>19</sup> from this we learn that God’s sovereignty is eternal – there was never a time, nor will there ever be a time, when He is not over all things. “God reigneth over the heathen [peoples]: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness” (Psalm 47:8);<sup>20</sup> when a king is said to be sitting on his throne, it was an indication of his sovereignty over his people, and that his judgment is in place. The Psalmist sees the Lord ruling over the affairs of all peoples, and that He does so in holiness, i.e., His judgment will reflect His holiness. “Justice [righteousness] and judgment *are* the habitation [foundation] of thy throne: mercy [kindness] and truth [faithfulness] shall go before thy face” (Psalm 89:14; Psalm 97:2).<sup>21</sup> The authority of God is established in righteousness and justice, out of which flow the expressions of His kindness and faithfulness, and these, in turn, are tempered by His holiness. “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train [skirt of His robe] filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1).<sup>22</sup> After describing the devastation that will come to Judah and Jerusalem, Isaiah sees Jehovah seated in authority, above all things, and the glory that filled His temple was but a portion of His covering (1 Kings 8:10-11). “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven [heavens] *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool ...” (Isaiah 66:1);<sup>23</sup> “Exalt [lift up] ye the LORD our God, and worship [bow down] at [toward] his footstool; *for he is holy*” (Psalm 99:5).<sup>24</sup> The Lord’s sovereignty is over everything that has been created (*heavens*); we view His footstool (*earth*), and bow before His majesty that is so clearly evident here. Truly, His ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9). After Solomon had completed the temple for the Lord, he said, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” (1 Kings 8:27). What does God’s throne look like? It is beyond our comprehension, and greater than we could ever imagine. Upon entering the heavenly realms, the first thing that John saw was the eternal, all-encompassing authority of the eternal Jehovah.



Jasper

Sardine (Sardius)



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

He begins to try to describe the One Who is sitting upon the throne, this One

Who holds all authority for all eternity. *Jasper*, in the ancient times, was a translucent, precious

<sup>19</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> BDB; Strong’s Online.

<sup>22</sup> BDB.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Strong’s Online; BDB.

stone that came in many colors, but predominately green.<sup>25</sup> *Sardine* is a semi-precious stone that can vary in color from a yellowish-red to a deep, almost black red.<sup>26</sup> Remember, God is a spirit (John 4:24), and John is trying to describe a Spirit in terms that he is familiar with as a human. He is seeing colors that bring to his mind these stones that were familiar to him. Around the throne, he sees a halo, or a circle of light (*rainbow*), that has the appearance of an emerald – green. John’s description of God is expressed in colors, perhaps most appropriate for a spirit.

It is noteworthy that John viewed the Lord of the Universe as being various hues of green and red. When Satan’s thoughts were elevated, his aspiration was to be “like the most High” (Isaiah 14:14b). After Adam sinned, the Lord gave Satan his sentence of destruction for deceiving the woman, whom Adam chose to follow into sin. Satan heard the sentence of destruction from the Lord, nevertheless, from that day he has determined to take every opportunity to make himself as much like the Most High as he could, and his aspirations have not changed. His reason for enticing Eve to disobey the Lord was to become the lord over mankind, thereby usurping God’s rightful place as man’s Authority. Babel was where he incited man to aspire to be someone whom he was not – namely, a god in his own eyes (in keeping with Satan’s promise to Eve – Genesis 3:5). When the Lord confused the languages at Babel (Babylon), the people scattered and took their anti-God philosophy (religion) with them. Alexander Hislop contends that the religious system in Babylon included a sun god (Nimrod, who was killed), his wife (Semiramis), and their son (Tammuz, who was born at the winter solstice after Nimrod’s death), who was also purported to have died and been raised as the reincarnation of the sun-god Nimrod.<sup>27</sup> In his subtlety, Satan developed a religious system that contained many parallels to what God would do to bring salvation to mankind. I mention this matter very briefly to underscore the fact that Satan is the king of blasphemy against God, and is the great counterfeiter.

As we see John’s description of the Lord upon His throne, we can see how Satan has woven a falsehood into the very fabric of our culture. John describes the Lord Almighty as appearing to be various hues of red and green; Satan has seen fit to take these same two colors and permeate the pagan festivities of the winter solstice with them – a festival that the Roman Catholics have labelled *Christmas*, and which has become a cultural staple and accepted tradition, even among professing Christians. When we see the colors of red and green together, are we reminded of God? No, the first thought to enter our minds has to do with the pagan festival orchestrated by Satan, and “sanitized” by the Catholic Church. “And what concord [agreement] hath Christ with Belial [a name for the devil]? ... Wherefore [because of this] come out from among them, and be ye separate [*aphorizo* – to mark off by boundaries], saith the Lord, and touch [cling to] not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:15, 17).<sup>28</sup> Just because something is a tradition, that does not make it right. A sin that has been carried out for millennia is still sin – God does not change; however, error will change its hues like a chameleon, so as to appear to be innocuous and even virtuous. The socially acceptable traditions of Christmas may seem to be very spiritual and wonderful (even within Christianity), but their source has not changed – it is none other than the devil himself.

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<sup>25</sup> Strong’s Online; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jasper>

<sup>26</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnelian>

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, pg. 115 (pdf edition).

<sup>28</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

We have already noted that God is greater than the created universe, and we speak of His omnipresence – He is everywhere at once. “If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell [*spread out the habitation after death as my couch*; this is paradise, NOT hades], behold, thou *art there*” (Psalm 139:8).<sup>29</sup> The Psalmist poetically identified Jehovah’s omnipresence; whether he went into the heavens or into the place of the dead, God was there. Bear in mind that until Jesus ascended into heaven, and led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8), the OT saints dwelt in paradise after death (Luke 16:22; 23:43); now, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Perhaps John’s view of God in the heavens would indicate that, although God is present throughout His creation, there is a greater concentration of His presence in His heavenly abiding place. Here there is no evil, only goodness, holiness, righteousness, and glory. In the world today, we have the presence of the Spirit of God within the faithful saint (John 16:7-11), but there is abundant evidence everywhere of Satan’s war against righteousness. Once again, our finite understanding is evident.



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

Around the *throne* of God were 24 other *seats* (*thrones* – the words are the same in Greek, the only variance is from singular to plural).<sup>30</sup> *Round about* comes from a Greek word that means around, on all sides of.<sup>31</sup> If you’re like me, when you read this you immediately picture a throne area with 24 smaller thrones in a circle around it. However, there’s nothing to say that they weren’t arranged more spherically than circular. Our frame of reference is with the presence of gravity, which tends to hold all things down at whatever level the lowest plane might be. That is an earthly perspective that we tend to erroneously apply to a heavenly location.

On these 24 thrones, John sees 24 elders sitting, who have been clothed in white garments. *Clothed* is in the perfect tense and passive voice: God has clothed them in the white raiment, and it has been done once, never to be repeated.<sup>32</sup> Isaiah declared, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for **he hath clothed me** [perfect tense] with the garments of salvation, **he hath covered me** [perfect tense] with the robe of righteousness ...” (Isaiah 61:10).<sup>33</sup> These elders have been so clothed by God. Salvation is something that is applied by God, man cannot conjure up, or work for, any part of his salvation. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [is doing] the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works [performed miracles]? And then will I profess [say plainly] unto them, I never [not at any time] knew [acknowledge] you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [lawlessness]” (Matthew 7:21-

<sup>29</sup> BDB.

<sup>30</sup> Stephannus 1550 NT.

<sup>31</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>32</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

23).<sup>34</sup> Our part in salvation is to be persuaded (to believe) that Jesus purchased our freedom from sin, and then to repent of our sin; it is God Who sees our persuasion and repentance, Who then clothes us in salvation. We might well live in piety and perform many religious activities, but that will not bring us salvation. The elder of Laodicea was obviously pious (for he was an elder of an assembly), and felt that he lacked nothing, yet Jesus saw him as being wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked (3:17). He was a leader in the assembly in Laodicea, yet he had not been clothed by God with the garment of salvation. “Examine [be continually testing] yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves [be constantly examining to see if you are Biblically genuine]. Know ye not your own selves [are ye not thoroughly acquainted with], how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [unless] ye be reprobates [unapproved, failing to stand the test]?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).<sup>35</sup> We are to continually check to ensure that our lives demonstrate compliance with the truths of Scripture – are we showing forth the righteousness and holiness of God (Romans 8:4); are we living in obedience to the commands of the Lord (John 14:15)? What are His commands? Consider Exodus 20:3-17 to be a foundation of His desire for us; the first four commands deal with our relationship with the Lord, and the last six with our neighbors. Do not forget that these Ten Commandments have been written upon our hearts when we placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 10:15-17). We must not become enamored with our good deeds, but, rather, weigh what we are doing, and our motivations, against God’s Word (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:10).

Who are the elders? We are not told specifically who they are. The word *elders* is translated from the Greek *presbuteros* (*pres-boo'-ter-os*), and means someone who is elderly, or someone who holds a particular responsibility within a local assembly (Acts 14:23).<sup>36</sup> The term is used synonymously with bishop (Titus 1:7) and overseer (1 Peter 5:2) in the NT.

After the rich man was unwilling to forsake his wealth, power and prestige, Peter asks the Lord how it will be with them, since they have forsaken all and followed Him. Jesus replies: “Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [literally, birth again; when all things are renewed] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging [governing] the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).<sup>37</sup> Is this a promise that the twelve Apostles will sit on thrones governing Israel during the millennial reign of Christ? It sounds that way. Isaiah shows that there is a difference between the 1000-year reign of the Lord Jesus Christ and the time of the new heavens and earth: “For, behold, I create [transformation] new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17); there will be a restoration of many things during the millennium, but that will not include the eradication of sin and its consequences. Isaiah speaks of the infant dying at a hundred years, the adult who dies at a hundred will be considered to be cursed (v.20), and the wolf and the lamb will feed together (v.25) – clearly death (the due compensation for sin) will still be present. Isaiah goes on to speak of the new heavens and earth as remaining before Jehovah, that those who are there will bring a continual stream of worship before Him, and those who have sinned against the Lord will be in Gehenna and looked upon with abhorrence (Isaiah 66:22-24;

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<sup>34</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon; Stephannus 1550 NT.

<sup>35</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Mark 9:47-48). Isaiah describes two very different times, and it is during this former time (the millennial reign) that Jesus tells His disciples that they will govern the twelve tribes of Israel – a time when things will be much better than they are now, but not like they will be when the Lord brings the new heavens and earth into being.

Therefore, since Jesus’ promise to His disciples will apply to the millennial reign of Christ upon this earth, this is not what John is viewing in the presence of the Lord. So why, then, does John see twenty-four elders sitting on twenty-four thrones? The last time that we find reference to the twenty-four elders is when it is announced in heaven that Babylon, responsible for spiritual corruption, has been judged – they fall down in worship before the Lord, Who is on His throne (Revelation 19:2-4). We read of the throne of God (the presence of His authority) in the new heaven and earth (Revelation 22:1), but we read nothing further of the twenty-four elders.

We know that the twenty-four elders are human beings (like us) who have been purchased out of sin, for they have been clothed in white raiment (Ephesians 4:24). This is confirmed further when they proclaim to the Lamb, “thou ... hast redeemed [bought] us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9).<sup>38</sup>

We are also told that these elders are wearing “on their heads crowns of gold.” Peter spoke specifically to elders: “The elders [same Greek word] which are among you I exhort ... feed the flock of God which is among you .... And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown [*stephanos*] of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:1-4).<sup>39</sup> To the faithful elder, bishop or overseer, there is a promise of an unfading crown of glory. The Greek word *stephanos* speaks of a woven wreath given as an award for achievement (as in a winner of a contest), or as a reward for a task well done. Peter identifies that the elders, who faithfully discharge their responsibilities within an assembly, will receive such a reward in glory. Each of these elders is wearing a crown (*stephanos*) of gold, a reward that they would have received for their faithfulness to the Lord. These 24 elders could be representative of the leaders who have faithfully labored among those who make up the flock of God; we are not told, so anything would be mere speculation, not revelation!



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

The word *voices* gives expression to a sound being heard (*phone – fo-nay*), not specifically a human voice. Therefore, John describes flashes of light, and rolling thunder and other sounds, which he does not, or cannot, identify, proceeding out of the eternal, all-pervasive authority and rule of God. When the Lord came to find Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we read that “they heard the voice [*qowl – kole*] of the LORD God walking in the garden ...” (Genesis 3:8a). Similar to the Greek *phone*, the Hebrew word *qowl* primarily means a sound or voice, and comes from a

<sup>38</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

root word meaning to call aloud; from this we understand *qowl* to mean an audible sound.<sup>40</sup> Within the context of Genesis 3:8, we recognize that this word does not refer to God's voice (for He speaks in the next verse), but rather to a sound that God made as He proceeded through the Garden looking for Adam and Eve; it was audible, for they heard Him coming, and tried to hide themselves. When the Lord pronounced his judgment on the man, Adam, He said, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice [*qowl*] of thy wife ..." (Genesis 3:17a); this would refer to a conversational voice that Eve used with Adam. This same Hebrew word is used when Jehovah descended upon Mt. Sinai to speak with Moses and the children of Israel: "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders [*qowl* (sounds) – the context, which includes lightning, would probably indicate that this was truly thunder] and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice [*qowl* – sound] of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16).<sup>41</sup> From this we can understand that this word (*qowl*) places no qualifications on either the volume or the source of the sound – it is simply something that is audible, whether it is the human voice, thunder, or the deafening blast of a trumpet. Likewise, the Greek word *phone* is used for the sound of the wind (a gentle movement of air – John 3:8), the voice from heaven affirming Jesus to be the Son of God (Matthew 3:17), and the sound of the trumpet blast when Christ returns (Matthew 24:31). The *voices* that John heard could have been anything.

Not only are there *lightnings* to behold coming from the throne of God, but, as John takes in all that there is to see, he notes that there are also seven lamps that are burning before the throne, which, we are told, are the seven Spirits of God. As John began this book, we saw that he brought expressions of grace and peace from God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and "from the seven Spirits which are before his throne" (Revelation 1:4). As we looked at that passage, we recognized that this is metaphorical language and was, therefore, not to be taken literally to mean that there are seven individual Spirits of God. Numerous passages affirm that the Holy Spirit is ONE – here are a few: John 1:33, Romans 8:26, 1 John 3:24b (all references made to the Holy Spirit are singular). We have the identical situation here; we see the full presence of the Spirit of God at the throne of God. We would not expect anything else, for we are told that "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father (singular), the Word (singular), and the Holy Ghost (singular): and these three are one" (1 John 5:7). The location of this testimony to the Tri-unity of God is the same place where John now finds himself in the spirit – heaven (the Greek word translated as *heaven* is the same in both cases)! Therefore, it should not be surprising to find each Member of the Godhead here. Tradition says that the first epistle of John was written before the book of Revelation;<sup>42</sup> what John expressed in his epistle, through the guidance of the Spirit of God, he is now looking at in heaven.

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<sup>40</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

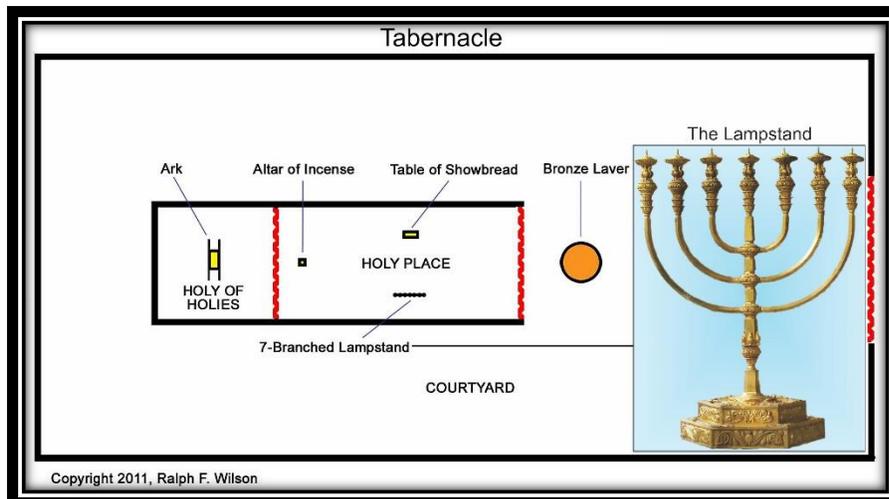
<sup>42</sup> [http://www.freebeginning.com/new\\_testament\\_dates/](http://www.freebeginning.com/new_testament_dates/)

The writer of Hebrews refers to the Jewish temple as a “shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5), and Moses was cautioned to make everything according to the pattern that was given to him on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 26:30). God’s purpose was to provide Israel with a physical likeness to the heavenly reality. Before the Holy of Holies, where the presence of the Lord rested, was the sanctuary, which contained the lampstand and the table of shewbread. The lampstand, according to the pattern that Jehovah gave to Moses, was constructed to hold seven lamps, which were to be burning continually before the Lord (Leviticus 24:2). John now describes for us that after which the lamps of the tabernacle were patterned – the seven-fold fullness of the Spirit of God burning before the throne! The illumination of the sanctuary came by means of the continually burning lamps; spiritual enlightenment for the child of God, whose body is called the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19), comes through the abiding presence of the Spirit of God (John 16:13).



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

As John continues to take in what he observes, as he enters heaven, he sees, stretching out between where he is and the throne, a glassy sea that is transparent. He likens it to *crystal*, which in its purest form is perfectly clear.<sup>43</sup> A sea is a vast body of water, of which we generally cannot see its end because of the curvature of the earth. John describes this as a vast, transparent, crystal-



like sea, which is as smooth as glass.

Once more we get confirmation that the throne is not what we would envisage; here is a concentrated presence of the Lord in all power and purity. As we saw earlier, when the glory of Jehovah filled the temple, it is described as being but the skirt of His

robe (Isaiah 6:1) – just the outer edge of His majesty and glory. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He included the phrase “Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven” (Matthew 6:10); as John beholds the throne of God, he is seeing the place where the will of God is done perfectly and completely, all of the time! There will come a day, when Jesus will establish His earthly, millennial kingdom, that the will of God will also be accomplished on earth, although, for the most part, it will only be an external compliance. When Satan is released after his 1000-year confinement (Revelation 20:2), he will rally those who are ready to throw off the restrictions of life under the

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.galleries.com/Rock\\_crystal](http://www.galleries.com/Rock_crystal)

reign of Jesus, and they will be like unto the sand of the sea for number when they come against the Lord (Revelation 20:7-8) – this is clear evidence that outward compliance does not identify a change of heart.

We see the same thing today within the ecumenical movement that rules within most of Evangelicalism: there is an outward expression of “Christian” living and loving, but it does not come from a heart that is right with the Lord. When Jesus spoke of this, He said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works [perform miracles]? [This is exemplary outward compliance!] And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23; cp. Luke 6:46-49).<sup>44</sup> Our undivided attention must be on the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2), not on the things that **we** might be doing – even those things that we may be convinced will bring honor to Him. Do not be deceived into thinking this way. God’s desire is that we would live out His righteousness and holiness through the enablement of His Spirit, Who abides within all who remain faithful to Him (Romans 8:4,9). We have received a holy calling from God (2 Timothy 1:9), we are challenged to live according to that calling (Ephesians 4:1), and we are to wear the garment (*new man*) of righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24) in order to live out the purposes of God – those purposes that He has predetermined for everyone who is abiding in Him (Ephesians 2:10). God has a plan for your life and mine, and His plan is that we would show forth His holiness and righteousness (Romans 8:1-4) – that is the *will* of the Father!

The multitudes asked Jesus about this very thing: “Then said they unto him, What shall [may] we do, that we might work [do] the works [plural] of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work [singular] of God, that ye [may] believe on [be persuaded of] him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28-29).<sup>45</sup> God’s singular purpose is that they (and we) might be persuaded that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is Who He says He is (we receive a love for the truth – 2 Thessalonians 2:10); to this end, He is providing every evidence and opportunity to stimulate our persuasion! Through our believing will come holiness and righteousness of life, which will bring honor and glory to the Father; here is a significant failure of Evangelicals who participate in ecumenism – they claim to be persuaded (to believe), yet they live like the world. We might well be amazed at the sacrifices made by missionaries who have labored in some remote region of the world for all of their lives, but the bigger question is this: did they do the work of God by having a singular focus on the Lord Jesus Christ? Truly, they may well have done many wonderful things, and even in the Lord’s name, but were His righteousness and holiness expressed through their lives?<sup>46</sup> In all of their doing, were they doing the will of the Father, or were they simply a cog in the wheel of a mission society – another servant expanding the program of a particular mission? It is for this very reason that Paul wrote: “Examine yourselves [test to ensure that your heart and actions agree], whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves [examine your heart to ensure that you are

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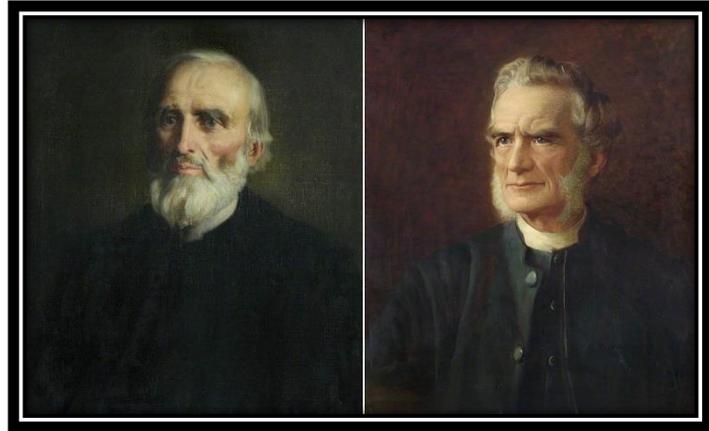
<sup>44</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>45</sup> Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>46</sup> Two examples: 1) Donald McGavran, a third generation missionary, believed in group salvation, and laid the groundwork for the Church Growth Movement; 2) Teresa of Calcutta, a confused Roman Catholic who believed that conversion could be simply a greater commitment to Hinduism, or whatever you believed.

Biblically genuine]. Know ye not your own selves [do you not thoroughly know], how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [unless] ye be reprobates [fail to stand the test, unfit]?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).<sup>47</sup> We must not permit ourselves to be enamored with a man, a mission, or a denomination; our singular focus must be on the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). The Word of God, as it has been preserved for us, is the expression of the Lord Jesus Christ to us (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13); as we invest our time and energy in studying the Bible (something that we are commanded to do – 2 Timothy 2:15), we will increase in our understanding of Who it is Who has paid the price for our sins (2 Peter 3:18 – another command!), which, in turn, will increase the reflection of His righteousness through us (Romans 8:4).

This is why it is so important to study and to fill our minds with the correct Bible text. The English language has seen a translation frenzy take place since the establishment of a new standard of Greek text by the Biblical critics of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The higher critics considered the



F.J.A. Hort

B.F. Westcott

Biblical text to be written by men at a particular time in history and for a specific purpose (as opposed to the text being the inerrant Word of God), and lower critics were those who were focused on the gathering and assembly of the texts that were available to them;<sup>48</sup> in other words, the higher critics developed a philosophy of how the Biblical text should be viewed, and the lower critics worked with the fragments of manuscripts and their compilation. Therefore, when Westcott and Hort began their work on a new Greek NT text in 1853, they did so as lower critics, i.e., they were focused on the texts of Scripture that they had available to them, particularly the more recently discovered and more ancient manuscripts. However, their role as lower critics (fitting the texts together and deciding on which one to follow and where) was overshadowed by the influence of the philosophies of the higher critics, which determined that the texts of Scripture were to be handled like unto any other piece of ancient literature (in other words, it was man's writings, not God's Word). With this critical philosophy as a foundation, Westcott and Hort began to covertly assemble a Greek text that expressed their conviction that the manuscripts most recently discovered were the most accurate, because they were physically the oldest. The difficulty with this is that the oldest surviving manuscripts are those that were not used because of the many errors that they contained; their claim that the oldest were the best is contrary to the reality that they were, in fact, the worst.

When, in 1870, a committee was struck to carry out a revision of the Authorized Version, both men were included in the company of NT translators.<sup>49</sup> The primary purpose for the revision was to update the English vocabulary of the KJV text, and to have it reflect the latest in Biblical

<sup>47</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>48</sup> [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Higher\\_criticism](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Higher_criticism)

<sup>49</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westcott-Hort>; <http://www.bible-researcher.com/ervhistory.html>

scholarship;<sup>50</sup> no thought was given to the wholesale departure from its foundational Greek text (the Textus Receptus, or Received Text). However, Westcott and Hort secretly brought their experience and “expertise” to bear on the revisionary work, and influenced the NT committee to go beyond their mandate and to make significant changes based solely upon their Greek text assembly, which was, in turn, a product of higher critical philosophy and their more ancient manuscript fragments.<sup>51</sup> Westcott and Hort had quietly worked on their revised Greek NT text for 17 years before it found expression in the NT revision; interestingly, both the newly compiled Westcott-Hort Greek NT and the Revised Version NT (based largely upon that corrupt Greek text) were first published in May of 1881.<sup>52</sup> Beginning with the Revised Version, ALL subsequent revisions and translations made into the English language have either been based upon the Westcott-Hort Greek text, or, at the very least, been strongly influenced by it. The only English Bible that has not borne any influence from the work of men like Westcott and Hort is the King James Bible. Is it perfect? Of course not – it is a translation, and as such it bears the marks of the fallible translators; however, it is based upon a Greek text (the Received Text) that is far superior to the Westcott-Hort text for one simple reason: it was not corrupted by the tinkering of heretics who despised it and scoffed at many of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Hort, for example, referred to the Greek text upon which the KJV is based as “the villainous Textus Receptus.”<sup>53</sup> Being a greater sceptic than Westcott, Hort denied the existence of Eden, saw Adam’s sin as no different from any of his descendants (sin is not inherited, it is an action), and saw the worship of Mary as little different from the worship of the Lord.<sup>54</sup> To add insult to injury, both Westcott and Hort were active practitioners of the occult even while they were working on their updated Greek text; this is something that has been openly affirmed by their sons.<sup>55</sup>

I will not go so far as to say that the KJV is an inspired translation, as some do, but if we are at all concerned about reading and studying a translation that has missed the touch of men like Westcott and Hort, then we must settle upon the KJV as the best English Bible. The excuse that we often hear is that the KJV is so difficult to understand; the obvious solution is to be sure that you have been born-again from on high, and then permit the Spirit of God to open your understanding. Every modern translation has felt the touch of Westcott and Hort to varying degrees; therefore, let us immerse ourselves in the purest text of English Scripture so that the holiness and righteousness of the Law of God might be expressed through us to His glory and honor (John 16:13; Romans 8:1-4).

John goes on to speak of four living creatures (*beasts*) who are in the middle (*midst*) and on all sides of (*round about*) the throne. Here is another confirmation that the throne of God is not a chair (as we might think); God is a spirit, and, although He is said to abide within us (1 John 3:24a), we see a greater measure of His abiding presence in this heavenly throne. These living creatures are clustered in and around the presence of God.

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<sup>50</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised\\_Version](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_Version)

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.bible-researcher.com/ervpreface.html>

<sup>52</sup> [http://bibleready.org/Westcott\\_and\\_Hort.html](http://bibleready.org/Westcott_and_Hort.html)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> <http://bibleforums.org/showthread.php/231500-The-Occult-Connections-of-Westcott-and-Hort>

John goes on to describe these four living creatures as being filled with eyes, front and back. Some liken these creatures to those seen by Ezekiel in his vision (Ezekiel 1:5-10); although there are some similarities, there are also significant differences. There seems to be a closer resemblance to the seraphim that Isaiah saw when he had his vision of the Lord upon His throne (Isaiah 6:2-3), as we will see. However, even in this we are left with a question because these living creatures, whom John observes around the throne of God, join with the twenty-four elders in a new song to the Lamb of God: "... for thou wast slain, and has redeemed [bought] us to God by thy blood ..." (Revelation 5:9).<sup>56</sup> This would seem to indicate that they are a special part of those who have been purchased by the Lamb of God through His sacrifice on Calvary, which, in turn, would make them somehow representative of the human race, like unto, yet distinct from, the twenty-four elders. Clearly, they are also unlike the heavenly beings (the seraphim) that Isaiah observed.



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

*Beast*, once again, is better understood to be *living creature*; a creature in which there is life (*life* being the root of the Greek word).<sup>57</sup> John describes three of these four living creatures as being like a lion, a calf, and a flying eagle, but the one is said to have the *face of a man*. The Greek word translated as *like*, means similarity. There are some who say that because one of the living creatures has a face like a man, that, therefore, all the other creatures only have the face of their respective likenesses.<sup>58</sup> There is a felt need to promote this departure from the plain text because the living creatures that were seen by Ezekiel each had four faces: a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (Ezekiel 1:10). However, within John's description, the indication is that the form of three of the creatures appeared to him to be like unto a lion, a calf, and a flying eagle; the specific clarification is that the other creature, although having a face similar to that of a human, did not have the form of a human being.

The lion, often called the king of the beasts, is generally a symbol of strength and royalty.<sup>59</sup> The calf was an animal that was used frequently in Jewish sacrifices (Leviticus 9:2), and was an object of worship within the ancient Egyptian culture.<sup>60</sup> When the Israelites deliberately departed into idolatry, they made golden calves as their objects of worship (Exodus 32:4; 2 Kings 17:16). Within everyday life, the calf would be a symbol of blessing, a sign of the good that would come; they were a clean animal for the Jews, and, therefore, could provide meat or milk, be used as a sacrifice to God, or used as a beast of burden or labor. The face of a man would depict wisdom and intelligence, being created in the image of God. The flying eagle would bring to mind the thought of a grand perspective; they soar to great heights, and, with their keen eyesight, are able to discern many things.

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<sup>56</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> This is the position taken by Albert Barnes in his commentary on this verse.

<sup>59</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion#Cultural\\_depictions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion#Cultural_depictions)

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/bull.htm>

Once again, the significance of these four living creatures, who are filled with eyes, evades me. Like the elders, the last mention of the creatures comes in Revelation 19:2-4, just before Christ returns to establish His millennial kingdom.



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

Similar to the creatures that were seen by Isaiah, these living creatures have six wings (Isaiah 6:2). John does not tell us how the wings are used (unlike Isaiah), but he does note that the wings are full of eyes on the inside. Also, like the seraphim in Isaiah, these creatures do not take a break from continually proclaiming the holiness of God: “Holy, holy, holy!”

Our English translation would seem to indicate that all four living creatures are speaking in unison. The seraphim of Isaiah proclaim the holiness of God “one ... unto another (or, the other)” (Isaiah 6:3); only one seraph at a time was declaring God’s holiness. Within our text, the word *saying* is singular, which means that only one living creature is speaking at any given time. Their many eyes and varied perspectives (lion, calf, man and eagle) would ensure that the Lord would receive continual, varied praise from these creatures – yet we are told that the theme of their praise is the same: God’s holiness.

Of all of God’s attributes, this is the only one that receives this kind of emphasis; we read of both the seraphim of Isaiah and the living creatures of Revelation declaring the holiness of God. The observation has been made that “the holiness of God is that attribute which governs the exercise of all His other attributes.”<sup>61</sup> Today, among Evangelicals, the one attribute of God that receives the greatest emphasis is His love, and, indeed, we do read that “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16b). However, in their enthusiasm to proclaim the love of God, Evangelicals fail to place His love within the context of His other attributes (particularly overlooking His holiness), and, consequently, God is frequently reduced to a god of their own creation: tolerant and accepting of their compromises (disobedience) and worldliness. Within their minds, God loved them so much that Jesus died to save them, and, once they have accepted that truth (and, granted, it is a truth), then they are fit for heaven – full stop! At this point, there are two errors into which Evangelicals frequently fall: 1) they hold an exaggerated view of their own value in God’s sight (even before “accepting” the Lord), and 2) they refuse to give any consideration to the Biblical teaching that those who believe in the Lord can turn away from Him and become apostate. It is of importance for us to understand their errors, at least in general terms, so that we will not permit them to find a haven within our own thinking. Jesus recognized that there is value in being forewarned (Matthew 24:25), and, therefore, if we can view their errors in the light of Scripture, then we will be better able to protect ourselves from being taken in by their smooth words and fine speeches (Romans 16:18).

God created man in His own image so that there would be one creature within His marvelous creation with whom He could fellowship (Genesis 1:26; 3:8-9). When Adam sinned, that

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<sup>61</sup> Ernest Pickering, Biblical Separation, p. 165.

fellowship with his Creator was immediately broken; God promised that sin would bring death (Genesis 2:17), and it did. Since God is holy, pure, and cannot be defiled, He cannot tolerate sin in His presence (Psalm 5:4-5). However, God was not without a plan; since He knew before Adam was created that he would sin, His plan was that the Word would be incarnated as a man to bear the sins of the world (Revelation 13:8), so that, through the sacrifice that He would make, restoration of fellowship would be possible. The question is: how would God accomplish this? His unalterable justice required that man, the sinner, must die – spiritually, this happened immediately (the man and woman hid from the presence of God when He came to fellowship with them, thereby exemplifying their understanding that the relationship had been broken), and physically, although death set in immediately, it was not completed until later (Adam lived for 930 years – Genesis 5:5). Immediately, upon pronouncing His judgments upon the serpent, the woman and the man, God extended His unfailing mercy by shedding the blood of an animal in order to provide coverings for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21), thereby foreshadowing the promised Sacrifice Who would come and deal a death-blow to Satan (Genesis 3:15), and through Whom fellowship could be restored. Through the coverings that He provided, God expressed His mercy (withholding the punishment that is deserved) to sinful mankind so that, through a living faith in the promises that God had made, His marvelous grace (providing blessings that are undeserved) could then restore man’s fellowship with Him.

God’s justice required that the reward for sin (namely, death) must be meted out; sin could neither be overlooked nor ignored, and so the shedding of blood and death (foreshadowing the Sacrifice Who would come) were required (Hebrews 9:22). The *shedding* (pouring forth<sup>62</sup>) of blood was not simply a donation of some of the blood of the sacrifice; it required the death of the sacrifice, and all of its blood. When such a sacrifice was made, and when it was mixed with faith in God’s promises in the heart of the one making the offering, then a covering for sin was accomplished. It was that mixture of shed blood (death) and faith in God that served to cover sin, because it was in keeping with the coming payment that would be made by the Word Who would come in flesh. If sinful man paid the penalty for his own sin, it meant eternal separation from God, and not restored fellowship (Romans 6:23a). God’s holiness would never permit Him to fellowship with anyone who was not also holy (1 John 1:7); His love for the creatures who were created in His own image fueled His desire for fellowship with them. Therefore, unless the purchased sinner was also made holy, even as the Lord God is holy, there would still be no fellowship (a requirement of His holiness). Therefore, it was determined, before creation began, that the eternal Word (John 1:1) would take on the flesh of His created being (man) in order to procure release from sin for them; “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son ...” (John 3:16a). We might well declare, “What a great love God has for us!” Indeed, He does! However, it was because His great love was tempered by His holiness of character and His need for perfect justice to be done, that Jesus came to pay the price for sin (death), so that, through an enduring faith in Him, we might be freed (His justice for sin is met) and be sanctified (made holy, like He is holy) – made fit for fellowship with the Lord (Revelation 21:3). Our salvation is not due to our great worth, but due to God’s mercy and grace that has been expressed through His Son.

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<sup>62</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.



Harold J. Ockenga

What we see around us today are Evangelicals loudly proclaiming their love for God even while they are living in ecumenism; “My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:10b). This is a mental dichotomy with eternal implications; out of their mouths they proclaim God’s love (blessing), and with the same mouth they deny the Lord (cursing)! How could this be? A moment of reflection will explain how they have come to believe that they can bask in God’s love even while they violate His Word. In 1948 when Harold Ockenga announced a new way of being Evangelical, he changed the course of the movement, and set it on the broad pathway to integration with the heresies of the day. To this point in time, the ecumenical movement had primarily gained traction within the liberal Protestant denominations<sup>63</sup>, but this announcement brought significant change. Ockenga’s proclamation was received with open arms by a majority of those within what was considered to be conservative Evangelicalism. His announcement was two-edged: 1) he openly, and unashamedly, renounced the Biblical mandate to separate from error, and 2) he reached out to the spiritual Liberals, and was prepared to re-evaluate accepted theology (particularly as it related to the first ten chapters of Genesis) to make more room for other opinions. Mainstream Evangelicals heaved a huge, collective sigh of relief, because now they no longer had to contend for their faith against those whom they had always considered to be their spiritual enemies. The battle was over! No, the victory had not been won; rather, Evangelicals laid down their Biblical weaponry, and embraced the spiritually-dead heretics as “one of us.” God had not changed. His Word had not changed. The only change that had taken place was in the perspective of the Evangelical mind; former heretics were now considered to be brothers and sisters, and the Evangelical fold was enlarged to include the wilderness where there were lost sheep, except now they were deemed to be part of the fold and no longer lost. Isn’t it wonderful to be a part of the family of god? We could all relax now in the calm waters of tolerance and acceptance, and enjoy sweet fellowship; this is so much more pleasant than constantly being alert to spiritual danger. In one seemingly innocent step away from the narrow doctrinal stance of the day, Evangelicals were drawn into a new gospel, which required very little of them; all that was needed was a non-judgmental acceptance of their new friends. Their judgment was now reserved for those outside of their enlarged fold who desired to live Biblically. However, like Samson of old, Evangelicals did not notice the departure of the Spirit of God from their midst (Judges 16:20); they lived in their newly found freedom, faithfully practicing their form of religion, but they did so at the cost of their own souls. That first generation of Evangelicals, who were persuaded to accept this new, ecumenical vision, were swept into

<sup>63</sup> Liberal Protestant denominations included the Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, and Methodist, but even their early gatherings, such as the World Missionary Conference (WMC), were not limited to these named. It is interesting to note that early ecumenical activity came as a result of the prolific missionary activities of the late 1800s; there was a felt need to cooperate in these endeavors, hence the coming together to strategize on how this could be done. For example, seven of the eight Commissions struck for the 1910 WMC related specifically to missionary activity, while the eighth dealt with “Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity.” [www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/img/assets/6398/MRL12\\_WMC\\_FA.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/img/assets/6398/MRL12_WMC_FA.pdf)

apostasy; the next generations have been taught the lies of this new, false gospel, and there will be few who will ever discover the narrow, saving truth of God (Matthew 7:14).

The critical question is this: how are we to respond to the ecumenical voices that are continually beckoning us to drink at their fountain? When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is more than simply accepting Jesus as our Savior. Jesus told us that we must count the cost of following Him, lest we begin well but are not willing to pay the price of carrying the cross that He has asked us to bear (Luke 14:26-29); do not miss this very important point – there is a cost and a required commitment to being a Christian (Mark 13:13; 2 Peter 2:20-21)! Then, too, we must be aware that there are not variations to being a follower of Christ: you are either with Him, or you are against Him (Matthew 12:30); eternity will be either heaven (with the Lord) or the lake of fire (with the devil), and what we do in this life will determine our eternal fate. It takes an eternal perspective to be willing to bear the cross in this life in order to abide with the Lord forever in the next; Jesus said that it is the one who faithfully endures to the very end who will be saved (Matthew 24:13; Ezekiel 33:12-13). Do not miss that our salvation will not be confirmed until we have retained our commitment to the Lord to the end (Hebrews 3:14); eternal salvation is not confirmed upon simply praying a prayer – it comes after faithful endurance. However, Jesus promised that we would not be left to our own devices to try to walk the pathway of life alone: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth ... [Who] will guide you into all truth” (John 14:15-17; 16:13). The Spirit of God comes to abide within us when we place our faith in the Lord; He is there to guide our steps as we commit to walking faithfully with Him.

Our relationship with the Lord is likened to the marriage bond. The husband and wife are joined and become one flesh within the bond of marriage (Ephesians 5:31-32); when we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we become spiritually *married* to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17). We recognize that, when a husband or wife strays from their marriage commitment and finds fulfillment in someone other than their spouse, they have committed adultery – they have violated the marriage pledge that they had with one another. When we have been born-again by the Spirit of God, and subsequently take pleasure in teachings that are contrary to His Word, then we are committing spiritual fornication. As we have considered the words of Jesus to the elders of the assemblies in Asia, we saw that along with the exposure of their error came the requirement for immediate repentance – something that we need to take to heart. Unless there is repentance from the adultery/fornication, there can be NO restoration of the relationship, and the marriage is over; there is separation.

You might say, “But we were considering the Evangelicals today and their ecumenical bias – what does spiritual fornication have to do with that?” Ecumenism, by its very nature, requires that those who participate in it must not hold their fellow-participants to any particular standard of doctrinal integrity. Leading the pack of ecumenical thinking today is the pope of the Roman Catholic Church; both he and his Church promote Mary, the mother of Jesus, as someone to whom we are to pray, someone who was without sin, and someone who works with the Lord Jesus Christ



Pope Francis “incensing” an idol of Mary and Jesus

are for Satan because there are only two options! The ecumenist is committing spiritual fornication from which they refuse to repent!

Now, very carefully consider Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “And what concord [agreement] hath Christ with Belial? [a name for Satan; the answer to this question is: NONE] ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not [do not cling to] the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:15, 17).<sup>65</sup> The reason that we are to separate from all that is *unclean* is because the Lord and the devil are mutually exclusive – they have absolutely nothing in common – no association! In the same way that Jesus said that if you are not for Him then you are against Him, it can also be said that if you are not for the Lord, then you are for the devil (there is no middle ground). Consequently, the Lord affirms that He will receive, or accept, you IF you separate from everything that is unclean (including erroneous teaching, which comes from the devil) and do not try to hold onto it. We have demonstrated that there are doctrines within the Catholic Church that are of the devil; therefore, we must have no part with them (no spiritual relationship with those of the Roman Catholic Church) in order to be a recipient of God’s conditional promise that He will accept us. Therefore, since the ecumenist willingly joins with the Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, et.al., anything that is even remotely ecumenical in nature MUST be avoided, for it has been tainted (made unclean) by spiritual fornication. Even though the Evangelical might claim to believe that Jesus is the ONLY way to life, when he joins with ecumenism, or refuses to separate from those who join with ecumenism, he has, by his actions, demonstrated a denial of the Lord; in short, the Evangelical ecumenist has denied the Lord Jesus Christ, and is guilty of spiritual fornication! However, anyone who continues to associate with them shows, by their actions, approval of their ecumenical stance, and, by refusing to obey the Lord’s charge to separate from such error, is also unclean. Like the Judaizers of old, the ecumenist has taken the pure message of the Gospel, and blended it with heresies from the devil, thereby creating a hybrid gospel that is no longer the truth, and one that can no longer save! Paul had no patience for such compromise: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach

to bring about the salvation of souls.<sup>64</sup> In the Word of God we read that Jesus, the eternal Logos, stated: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); clearly, God has stated that there is salvation by no one but the Lord Jesus Christ – certainly not through Mary. Therefore, the Roman Catholic Church is a haven of heresy, and has departed from the truth of God’s Word! Now remember – if they are not for Christ (and, very evidently, they are not), then they are against Him; if they are against Him, then they

<sup>64</sup> Pope Paul VI, on March 1974, stated: “... this devotion [of Mary] necessarily reflects God's redemptive plan, in which a special form of veneration is appropriate to the singular place which Mary occupies in that plan.” ([http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs\\_pa06mc.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_pa06mc.htm))

<sup>65</sup> Strong’s Online.

any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed [delivered over to divine wrath]” (Galatians 1:8).<sup>66</sup>

In practical terms, what does this mean for us today? Keep in mind that not everything that comes from the ecumenical crowd will be blatant error; Satan is crafty enough to dress his lies in garments that will show some truth. Even his enticement of Eve contained an element of truth, for they did, in fact, come to know good and evil (Genesis 3:5). Therefore, when we face those who are ecumenical, or those who are unwilling to separate from them, do not be surprised that they say things that will agree with the Word of God. Nevertheless, their declaration of the truth of God’s Word does not come from a heart that is right with God, and, consequently, their teaching will be alongside of God’s truth, and so we must avoid them (Romans 16:17). Jesus told us that there would be those who would prophesy (speak forth the Lord’s truth) in His name who would be rejected because they did not do so according to the will of God (Matthew 7:21-23); we should not be surprised by what we might hear, but that in no way gives us license to sit under their teaching – God’s command is still to separate from them! A really good way to test them is to look at their associations. Being ecumenical, they will have spiritual connections with those who, like the Catholics, hold to doctrines that are contrary to Scripture. Within our small town, we have a ministerial association where the Evangelicals, the Charismatics, the Anglicans, the Catholics, and others join together to share ministry opportunities within the community, and hold joint services. Anyone within any of these local, participating Evangelical churches, even though they might still claim that Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6), is committing spiritual fornication; they have joined together with those who deny the Lord, and are, consequently, *unclean*. Therefore, to put it very simply, a Bible study led by someone from any of these participating churches is *unclean*, and we must have no part in it (2 Corinthians 6:17) – yes, the Bible study is tainted because the leader is unclean! “For this ye know, that [absolutely] no ... unclean [same Greek word used in 2 Corinthians 6:17] person ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:5).

John has described the One Who is sitting upon the throne in heaven, he has spoken of the lamps that are burning before the throne as being the Spirit of God, and he will soon speak of the Lamb of God, thereby providing us with a view of the three Persons of the Trinity in heaven. However, as these living creatures proclaim the holiness of God, they do so in the singular. Each of the Greek words translated as *holy*, *Lord*, *God*, and *Almighty* are singular in form.<sup>67</sup> In similar fashion, the proclamation of the seraphim of Isaiah is made in the singular form, and is made to *Jehovah* (“the LORD of hosts”), which carries neither singular nor plural characteristics.<sup>68</sup> The seraphim go on to proclaim that the fullness, or the entire contents, of all the earth is the glory of God (Isaiah 6:3).<sup>69</sup> The living creatures that John sees, describe the Lord within the framework of time: He was, He is, and He is coming – there is no part of time where God is not present. He is not only eternal, but He is also ever present within all of time; “in the beginning God ...” (Genesis 1:1); as John beheld the new heavens and earth, God proclaimed, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 21:6). “And he [Jesus] is before all things, and by him all

<sup>66</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>67</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks 8*.

<sup>68</sup> BDB.

<sup>69</sup> Leningrad Hebrew OT; BDB.

things consist [endure, hold together]” (Colossians 1:17). God did not create this universe and man, and then step away from it; He is actively present, and is keeping everything in order. As a result, after Noah and his family had left the ark, Jehovah gave them His promise that “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). Despite all that still lies ahead in what Jesus will reveal through His servant, John, we can be assured that God will not cease to remain a part of what He has determined for the days ahead. However, it is incumbent upon us to live, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the declared holiness of God; “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).



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

The object of the praise of the living creatures is described as the One Who is sitting on the throne, the One Who is living unto the ages of the ages (*for ever and ever*).<sup>70</sup> *Ever* comes from the Greek word *aion*, from which we get our *eon* – an indefinitely long period of time.<sup>71</sup> Here, eternity is described as ages within (of the) ages – there is no end. Collectively, these living creatures offer unto the eternal God glory, honor, and thanksgiving (*give* is plural); individually they acclaim the holiness of God, and together they voice their praise to Him. Whenever (*when*) they come together in praise, John goes on to describe what takes place.



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

The 24 elders, who possibly represent the faithful overseers within the *ekklesia* that Christ is building, will prostrate themselves (*fall down* – future tense) before the Lord Almighty whenever they hear the collective praise of these four living creatures. We’ve already seen that the elders are probably not sitting in a two-dimensional circle around God’s throne, which now leads us to the understanding that all sides of God are *before* Him; there is not a front and back to God, Who is a spirit.

You may well recall, and wonder about, Moses’ experience with Jehovah: “And he [Moses] said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he [Jehovah] said, I will make all my goodness [glory] pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not [not able to] see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift [crevice] of the rock, and will cover thee with

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<sup>70</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>71</sup> Strong’s Online; <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/eon?s=t>

my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen” (Exodus 33:18-23).<sup>72</sup> From this it would appear that God has a front and back; however, a more careful reading will put it all into perspective. Moses’ request of the Lord was that he might behold His glory. Jehovah makes it clear that no one, while in their natural, sinful state, can look upon Him and live; in other words, Moses will not be able to look upon the fullness of His glory. Therefore, God will permit His glory to pass by him, He will shield him from its full intensity, but He will permit him to glimpse His glory as it fades away. This fading glory is referred to as the *back parts* of Jehovah; it is a restricted glimpse of the majesty of God, yet sufficient that, when Moses returned to the Israelites, he covered his face because they were afraid to come near him (Exodus 34:30,33). Moses caught just a glimpse of the passing glory of God, and was forced to cover the after-glow from this experience; we cannot possibly appreciate the glories of heaven while we still occupy our mortal bodies. “For now we see through [by way of] a glass [mirror], darkly [literally, *in an enigma*, in obscurity, indistinctly]; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).<sup>73</sup> Our ability to see clearly what will be in heaven, the place where God’s glory shines forth in all of its intensity, is hindered by our humanity – our sinfulness.

*Worship* is a word that has become very misconstrued within our culture. The definition of the word might be known, but there is little regard for it. *Worship* means to show reverent honor and veneration for someone (or something) considered to be sacred.<sup>74</sup> The Greek word, so translated, is *proskuneo* (*pros-koo-neh’-o*), which literally means toward (*pros*) and to kiss (*kuneo*);<sup>75</sup> Strong adds the illustration of a dog licking the hand of its master.<sup>76</sup> Within the Christian context, this means to honor the Lord, our Creator and Savior. However, it is important that we understand what that means in practical terms; what we do not need is further theoretical knowledge that does not find expression in our daily living.

“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me [this is the appearance of *worship*], but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept [commandment] of men ...” (Isaiah 29:13). Isaiah writes of the external actions that might appear to be worship, but the Lord reveals that these actions are merely superficial (their heart is far from Him), and their feigned fear of Him is simply their liturgy, which has been prescribed by men, not by the Lord. Earlier, Isaiah wrote of the liturgical compliance of Israel: “To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full [filled to the point of being sickened] of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread [trample] my courts? Bring no more vain oblations [empty or worthless offerings]; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies [convocations or sacred assemblies], I cannot away with [cannot endure]; *it is* iniquity [wickedness], even the solemn meeting” (Isaiah 1:11-13). Jehovah is nauseated by the sacrifices that Israel is making, and He considers all of their

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<sup>72</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>73</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Vine’s “darkly.”

<sup>74</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/worship?s=t>; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>75</sup> Vine’s “worship.”

<sup>76</sup> Strong’s Online.

celebrations (the new moon, Sabbath, convocation, and sacred assembly) to be wickedness. How can this be? Did not Jehovah prescribe these things for Israel to keep? Yes, He did! Even though Israel was carrying out the prescribed activities, yet the Lord says that their “hands are full of blood” (Isaiah 1:15); they were making many sacrifices, but there was no cleansing – it was activity, but without faith to make the sacrifices efficacious. It was only through faith that the sacrifice for sin became effective for cleansing, even as it is today; the rituals of doing what God had said were of no value because they had permitted their persuasion (belief) in God’s promises to fail. Their faith rested in the liturgies that they perpetuated, and not in Jehovah, Who had prescribed the sacrificial practices as a reminder of the promised One Who was coming to cleanse them from sin. Fulfilling the ritual of sacrifice obviously did nothing for Israel; unless the sacrifice flowed out of a heart of faith in Jehovah, there would be no cleansing (Isaiah 1:15), and the *worship* would end with the liturgy. In other words, if the individual did not believe the words of Jehovah and have faith in Him for the cleansing of their sin, then the sacrifice was of no value, their life was not changed, and there was no cleansing from sin – they walked away from the liturgy of their sacrifice in the same spiritual condition as when they came. *Worship*, without faith in God, was unacceptable to the Lord.

Therefore, when the Evangelicals refer to their church service as a *worship service*, are they correct? Keep in mind what we have just learned about the perpetuated religious activities of Israel – unless faith in God is an active ingredient in the heart of the participant, the activities will be rejected. To be a *worship service*, it is essential that there be a reverence for the Lord, which includes both awe and fear.<sup>77</sup> “... let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence [respect] and godly fear [reverence] ...” (Hebrews 12:28).<sup>78</sup> Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), and “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21). What should be very obvious is that in order for *worship* to be acceptable, it must begin with a heart of faith in the Lord Jesus, and, equally important, that heart of faith must produce a life of righteousness and holiness, which is the will of the Father (Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; James 2:18). With this as a backdrop, how do most Evangelical services fare? Externally, the *worship* music is often worldly, and the preaching from the Bible is shallow and based upon a false gospel (the gospel of ecumenism); individually, there might be a faith in the church (its constitution or social involvement), in the particular brand of theology to which the congregation ascribes (along with its rituals), or in the preacher. However, faith in the God of the Scriptures seems to be largely missing because there is a deep-seated ignorance of the Word of God and what the Lord requires of those who are His; it is only faith in God that saves, and how can we profess faith in Someone about Whom we know nothing? Like Israel of old, most of today’s Evangelicals continue with their religious traditions, but the Lord takes no pleasure in their activities because they hold no faith in Him; “*But* without faith *it is* impossible to please *him* [it cannot be done] ...” (Hebrews 11:6).<sup>79</sup> Evangelical faith is focused on their prayer when they asked Jesus to be their Savior; there is little concern about knowing and doing the will of the Father.

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<sup>77</sup> [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=r&p=31&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=r&p=31&allowed_in_frame=0)

<sup>78</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>79</sup> Strong’s Online.

The 24 elders, who are seated upon thrones in the presence of God, express a *worship* for the Lord that is acceptable – it is based upon a living faith in the Lord. You will recall that it is to the one who is overcoming, the victorious one, who will sit with the Lord Jesus Christ on His throne (Revelation 3:21). After referring to the prophets of old, and before considering the patience of Job, James writes: “Behold, we count them happy [think of as blessed] which endure [*hupomeno* – remain faithful through trials; persevere]” (James 5:11a).<sup>80</sup> James echoes the words of the Lord Jesus: “... he that shall endure [*hupomeno*] unto the end, the same [this is the one!] shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).<sup>81</sup> Truly, those who remain faithful to the Lord to the very end will be among the blessed; “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places in Christ* ...” (Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 3:14).

The elders not only prostrate themselves before the Lord in worship, they also lay down (*cast*) their crowns before Him.<sup>82</sup> If, in fact, these are crowns that the Lord has given to the faithful elders of His people, then they are offering back to the Lord what He has given to them. Here is an example to follow. Whatever the Lord has given to us, are we prepared to offer it back to Him completely and without reservation? Before we hastily respond, “Of course,” perhaps it would be appropriate to consider this more carefully.

Remember that Israel of old offered to the Lord many sacrifices, which were all made according to the very precise specifications outlined in the Law of Moses. Nevertheless, the Lord rejected their offerings because they were mere liturgy, and did not come from a heart of faith in the promises of God. This is where we must be very careful. Jesus said that if we love Him, then an expression of our faith in Him will be our obedience to His commandments (John 14:15; James 2:18; Luke 14:26-27). Within our Evangelical montage today, it is extremely easy to allow our obedience (an expression of our faith) to slip. Consider this: Jesus is God; the Scriptures are the Word of God (or Jesus); therefore, when we read the Scriptures, we are reading what the Lord Jesus Christ has said to us, even if they are not words that He spoke during His earthly ministry. In Romans 16:17 we read the words of Jesus to us: “Now I beseech [exhort] you, brethren, mark [keep a watchful eye on, watch out for] them which cause divisions and offences [that which causes a person to sin] contrary to [alongside of] the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [turn away from, shun] them.”<sup>83</sup> Ecumenism is the blight of Evangelicalism; it is deeply entrenched and thoroughly integrated. Jesus tells His child, who desires to live according to His commands, to have no part with anything ecumenical. As we have adequately proven, ecumenism is spiritual fornication, and it embraces teachings that are contrary to God’s Word. Furthermore, everyone, who continues to abide under the instruction of, and in the spiritual fellowship of the ecumenical, is violating the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to avoid everything ecumenical (that which is alongside of the truth), and is, in fact, participating in that which is spiritual fornication! You cannot participate with those who are unclean without becoming contaminated; Jesus has commanded us to release our grip on what is unclean so that the Father in heaven might receive us (2 Corinthians 6:17). If we are unwilling to turn away from that which is spiritually unclean, then we must not be surprised if the Lord will not welcome us some day. “Not every one that saith unto

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<sup>80</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>81</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven [which includes having no part with what is unclean]. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [Many ecumenical Evangelicals will find their place here – they have done marvelous deeds for the Lord, and even in His name!] And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). The wonderful works (speaking forth God’s truth, casting out demons, and performing miracles) of the disobedient are called works of *iniquity* (sin, lawlessness).<sup>84</sup> It is eternally important that we live in obedience to the Lord’s commands; it is our holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), and must be placed ahead of family, possessions, power, prestige, and self (Luke 14:26-27); if we are not prepared to be obedient in all things, then we cannot claim to be His disciples.

As much as we might like to follow the example of these elders, we must ensure that what we offer back to the Lord comes from a heart of faith, which can only be expressed through a life of obedience to His Word; anything less will not be acceptable in His sight.



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

Here is the praise that the 24 elders offer to the Lord. As we have noted earlier, the Greek word from which *worthy* is translated means “bringing up the other beam of the scales.”<sup>85</sup> In other words, the praise that is about to be proclaimed is fitting for the Lord – it is only right that He claim such an acknowledgment because the balancing aspect to this praise is Who He is and all that He has done.

The elders proclaim that the Lord is *worthy to receive glory and honour and power*. We might well wonder how the Lord, Who is omnipotent, can *receive* power. The word *receive* is translated from *lambano*, which can mean to receive, but also means to take what is one’s own.<sup>86</sup> What we must therefore understand is that the Lord is not receiving these accolades from the elders, but they are proclaiming, for all to hear, that the Lord is indeed worthy of holding these as His own. It is only right that the one who is created should acknowledge the glory, honor, and power of the One Who created him.

*Glory* is from the Greek word *doxa*, and speaks of brightness, splendor and majesty.<sup>87</sup> The elders concur that *glory* is fitting for the Lord, for they can see that it is in keeping with His character and the mighty salvation that He has accomplished for them and all of mankind. *Honor* (*time* – [tee-may’]) includes the thoughts of respect and/or reverence, but the word (in Greek) also includes the concept of value; it is neither an empty respect nor a false reverence that the Lord rightfully claims – it springs from His impeccable righteousness and holiness of character. Once again, we see that the Lord is *worthy* of the *honor* that the elders attribute as being His. Lastly, the Lord is ascribed *power*; the word is from *dunamis*, and speaks of an inherent strength, might, or

<sup>84</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Strong’s Online.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

ability. The Lord, the Creator of all things and the Savior of men, is all powerful. As David declared, “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power [might], and the glory [renown], and the victory [eminence (honor)], and the majesty: for [because of] all *that is* in the heaven[s] and in the earth *is thine*; thine *is* the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chronicles 29:11). David ascribes to Jehovah *greatness, power, glory, victory* (or honor), and *majesty*, and balances that with all that is in the heavens and in the earth, which are the works of His hands (Psalm 102:25).

In keeping with the words of David, the elders look to the creative acts of God for support for proclaiming Him to be worthy of such praise. It is because (*for*) God has created all things (*pas* – one and all) that it is fitting that He be acclaimed to have *glory, honor, and power*.<sup>88</sup> It is very certain that the Lord and Creator of the universe cannot *receive* power, as we might be inclined to think by reading the English translation – from whom would He receive it? However, it is equally evident that, being such a marvelous Creator, He holds all power; truly, He is omnipotent! John wrote: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things [*pas* – one and all] were made [brought into existence] by him; and without [apart from] him was not [absolute] any [one] thing made [brought into existence] that was made [brought into existence]” (John 1:1-3).<sup>89</sup> In his introductory comments, John attributes the world-creating power to the Lord Jesus Christ (the *Word*); the elders proclaim the Lord, Who is on the throne in heaven, as the Creator of all things. What we must learn as we look at Scriptures, such as this, is that Jesus, the Son of God, Jehovah or God, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are all ONE: “For there **are** three that **bear record** in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three **are** one” (1 John 5:7, the verbs in bold are all present tense).<sup>90</sup> This testimony has been removed from all modern Bibles (except the New King James Bible). When Satan formulated the philosophical arguments of the higher critics of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which resulted in a new corrupt Greek text, his purpose for doing so has become obvious in the proliferation of modern translations that are based upon this corrupt text. He did not remove the Bible (his previous efforts to do so had proven ineffective), rather, he simply introduced sufficient variations into the text in order to bring its inerrancy into question; man, in his sinful pride, was more than happy to take it from there.

The New Evangelicalism, which was proclaimed by Harold Ockenga in 1948, emphasized the question mark that they placed over the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and the slide into heresy was on its way. Here is evidence of the subtlety of the enemy when it comes to deceiving those who should know better; nowhere did Ockenga say that what he was proposing would place a question mark over the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, here is how he reflected on his new approach: “Neo-evangelicalism differed from modernism in its acceptance of the supernatural and its emphasis on the fundamental doctrines of Scripture. It differed from neo-orthodoxy in its emphasis upon the written Word as inerrant, over against the Word of God which was above and different from the Scripture, but was manifested in Scripture. It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the

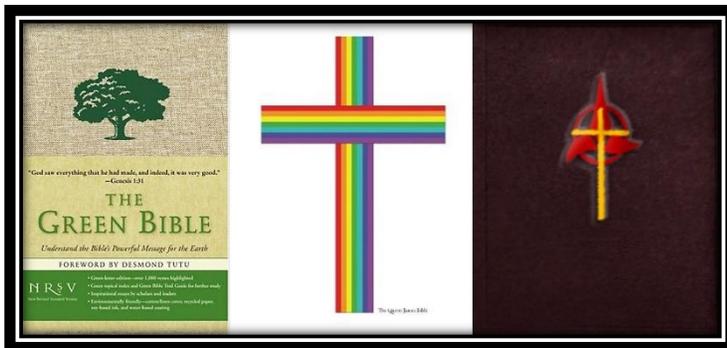
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<sup>88</sup> Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>89</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>90</sup> Strong’s Online.

gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life.”<sup>91</sup> Consider his comments: New-Evangelicalism placed an emphasis upon its central doctrines, and it emphasized the inerrancy of the Scriptures, yet at the same time it repudiated the doctrine of Biblical separation, and was determined to open a dialogue with the heretics of the day. In essence, his position, after some 27 years of reflection (from his announcement in 1948 to when he wrote these words), was that he could hold onto the fundamentals of the inerrant Scriptures with one hand, and, with the other, cling to what was antithetical to the Word of God. Ockenga’s intentions may have seemed to be honorable, but, the moment that he set out to disobey the Word of the Lord, he fell from grace. Ecumenism was his goal (enter the *theological dialogue of the day*), and it took Evangelicalism by storm; the dialogue continues today, but it is not even remotely Biblical in nature. The central doctrines and inerrancy were soon rephrased and philosophized so as to make room for their activities that were actually a contravention of God’s Word, which, for them, flowed out of the newly corrupted texts of Scripture. Jeremiah wrote of just this activity: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). Today there is virtually a Bible for everyone, whatever your interests might be: a Green Bible for those who are environmentally conscious, the Queen James Bible for the homosexuals, the Klingon translation for those who are Star Trek fans, and so the abominations go. Once the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures had been sidelined (the result of the higher critics’ philosophy), there was no longer any concern about tampering with the Word of God. The corrupt modern translations will even include the warnings that God gives about changing His Word: “Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you” (Deuteronomy



Green, Gay, and Klingon Translations available today

4:2, *NIV*); “Don’t add a word to what I command you, and don’t remove a word from it. Keep the commands of GOD, your God, that I am commanding you” (Deuteronomy 4:2, *The Message*) – the warning is included in the very documents that have been horribly corrupted!

As the Creator of all things, the Lord rightfully holds glory, honor, and power. It is then clarified that it was

on account of the desire or will (*pleasure*) of the Lord that they (*all things*) are being created (present tense), and were created. Here is additional evidence that God did not simply create a wonderful universe and then step away from it; His creative powers are still at work within the world today (obviously, not to the same extent as they were in the first six days of creation). “...all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [continue]” (Colossians 1:16b-17); God is ever present, making certain that the creation is perpetuated according to His desire.<sup>92</sup> Here is the reason that we can trust God to reveal to John

<sup>91</sup> Harold J. Ockenga, *Foreword to The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell.

<sup>92</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

those things that will be *after these*; included in what still lies ahead are many things that will impact God's creation – He knows and is in control during all of these coming events. “And we know [*oida* – understand] that all things work together [are joining together] for good to them that love [are loving (*agapao*)] God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose” (Romans 8:28).<sup>93</sup> The plan of God is that we might be found to be *in Christ* by faith (Ephesians 1:4; Romans 8:1; Hebrews 11:6), AND, being *in Christ*, that we would then express, by our living, the righteousness and holiness of God (Romans 8:4; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; 2 Timothy 1:9). If we are living according to His purpose (faithfully enduring – Matthew 24:13), then we can be assured that His plan for us will be fulfilled, despite the difficulties that we will face in the days to come, which will become more apparent as we continue our study. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning [don't be amazed at] the fiery trial [painful suffering] which is to try you, as though some strange [unheard of] thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings [*but to the degree that you are sharing in Christ's sufferings, you be rejoicing*] ...” (1 Peter 4:12-13a).<sup>94</sup>

The elders provide us with a proper view of the majesty and power of God, and the encouragement and comfort that that can be to those of us who are walking according to the Spirit of God, no matter what our circumstances may be.

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<sup>93</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>94</sup> Friberg Lexicon; Stephanus 1550 NT