



# *Staying Up Higher Ministry*

## *Additional Teachings*

# **Hear What the Spirit Says to the Churches**

(Revelation Chapters 2 and 3)

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**Prelude:** In September of 2012, during our first discussion time in Kay Arthur's Precept Study of the Book of Revelation ([Jesus' Message to the Church](#)), the Holy Spirit impressed on my heart that this was to be a personal communication to me from the Lord Jesus Himself. It would be just as though He were standing in front of me as He did with John the apostle when He said to him on the island of Patmos, "*Don't be afraid...*" For this is how God always speaks to us in Christ Jesus: face to face, and especially in specific seasons and at appointed times in our walk with Him.

Having been imprisoned on the isle of Patmos for his faith in Jesus Christ, John was God the Father's selected recipient of Jesus' revelation during a very trying time in his life here on earth. It was also in the midst of Job's own fiery ordeal, that he too was brought to understand his God in a fresh new way. Job answered the LORD and said to Him, "*I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore, I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore, I retract, and repent in dust and ashes.*" (Job 42:1-6)

Perhaps this is what it was like for many of us as the Holy Spirit called us and led us through a study of this prophetic book - and thus, a book of both promises and warnings: "*Behold, the LORD GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him.*" (Isaiah 40:10)

When we began to delve into the second and third chapters of this book, I found myself with a continuing desire to write down on paper what the Holy Spirit was communicating to me from these particular chapters. As I continued to ponder the Lord Jesus' seven messages...seven being God's perfect number of completeness and fullness...I came to realize that the desire was His and not mine. Then as I listened quietly to His speaking Voice, these messages became to me like a grand orchestra made up of various instruments – each one having a part unique to their own design, and yet all coming together into one harmonious and resounding sound!

Although what you are about to read is not an exhaustive commentary by any means, I do believe it will bring out tones and pitches that lend light to the whole. For the seven messages are a complete and full message in which there is nothing lacking...a unified message to the elect in Christ: the general assembly of God, Christ's mystical body, the church. (Luke 1:1-4; Psalm 29:3-9; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 27)

**The backdrop:** Some 60-90 years after the Lord Jesus' resurrection and bodily ascension into heaven, God His Father who sits upon the throne in heaven had something to say to the church on earth. One might wonder why. What had happened to the church and what was on the horizon that so moved His heart to give this revelation to His Son to impart to His bondservants...His godly ones who had made a covenant with Him by sacrifice? (Psalm 50:4-5)

The urgency for this revelation is discovered in part within the seven messages themselves. As we will soon see, the church is actually floundering at this critical point in time. We will see throughout these two chapters the titanic struggle she has had in remaining true to her profession of faith in Christ alone and without any compromise. Jesus Himself, the One who died and rose again on her behalf, had instructed His apostles with these timely words shortly before His crucifixion, *"I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also."* (John 14:3)

Did you hear there within our Lord's words His Father's heartbeat for intimacy with His children? He yearns that each one of them grow up into Christ-likeness...that they continue to advance in truth, faith, love, and the illumination of His Son in His ascension glory...and thereby come into deeper union and fellowship with Him. With their highest good in mind, their heavenly Father is earnestly desiring that they lay hold of that for which they have already been apprehended by His Son Christ Jesus. For being all wise, He knows that only as they are doing that will they not be so easily shaken from their true spiritual foundation in His eternal Son, and will come to realize experientially their true calling and purpose in the days before them while on earth! You might be wondering what that might that be. Jesus Himself alluded to it in a parable as He neared Jerusalem because those around Him supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. *"...And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come.'"* (Luke 19:11-13 KJ)

A part of growing up as His children is that we learn to distinguish between the things that differ. It is important to note before I start this devotional reading that the Greek word *angelos* is read as *angel* in our English translation of the Scriptures. The Greek word means *messenger*. Whether angelic or human, a messenger in the Bible is always a sent one: one sent with a commission...or you could say, one sent with an official, authoritative sending. One of the first challenges in reading The Revelation of Jesus Christ is to know whether the English word *angel* in Chapters two and three is referring to a heavenly being or to a human person. Whenever you are searching for the meaning of a scripture or even a word within a

scripture, you must have the immediate context as well as the whole counsel of God in mind from His written Word. Throughout the Bible...in both the Old and New Testaments...you never see a man writing to an angel with a message from God. Never. Always, it is a heavenly being who brings His message to a person. In addition, no angelic being from heaven will ever have to stand before their Creator and be responsible to Him for the condition of the Church on earth...only those who have been entrusted with the gospel of His Son and with the care of His sheep. (Genesis 19:1-22; Matthew 1:20-21; 2:13; 4:11; Acts 12:6-9; 1 Corinthians 3:5-15)

In the light of this truth, it is easy to distinguish the difference and clearly see in these two chapters that the word *angel* is referring here to a man and not to angelic beings. Although some have thought they were postal carriers who delivered the messages to the churches, we see in Chapter 1 verse 16 that these *stars* are being held in the grip of their glorified Christ. His grip here indicates that they are to be held accountable to Him for the spiritual condition of the churches they are shepherding and with a stricter judgment...something a postal carrier would not be. These seven messengers then are men who had been called by God into some kind of apostolic or pastoral leadership role within the local churches mentioned. Although a traveling missionary may have delivered the messages to these seven messengers, Christ's message is directed first and foremost to the apostolic or pastoral leader within the church and then out to the congregation at large. The *you* then can be read as both singular and plural since sheep are a reflection of the care of the shepherd! Much like a pebble that is thrown on the surface of a pool of water, each message is to have its own ripple effect...first touching the messenger's heart, then the hearts of the members of his congregation, and then out to the other churches as well. Each of the Lord Jesus' messages speak pointedly to wherever there is need for praise, correction, rebuke, encouragement and exhortation. (Jeremiah 3:15; Romans 10:14-15; Hebrews 13:7; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25; Galatians 2:11-14)

Our heavenly Father wants His children to have a proper mindset at all times...one that is heavenly and eternal. How challenging that can be for us! Listen to how that can happen for us through Isaiah 41:1: *"Coastlands, listen to Me in silence, and let the people gain new strength; let them come forward, then let them speak; let us come together for judgment."* A slow and thoughtful reading of what you are about to read, as well as the scripture references, will facilitate this posture of a humble heart; and will prayerfully bring you into a deeper comprehension of what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

With this in mind, we can listen more readily now to our Father's heart from Watchman Nee's book, The Normal Christian Life:

"When we think of sin, we instinctively think of the judgment it brings; we invariably associate it with condemnation and hell. Man's thought is always of the punishment that will come to him if he sins, but **God's thought** is always of the glory man will miss if he sins. The result of sin is that we forfeit God's glory; the result of redemption is that we are qualified again for glory. God's purpose in redemption is glory, glory, glory."

Consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in further hearing our Father's heartbeat: *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for **training in righteousness**; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

Now that we are more deeply positioned in spirit, let us...

## *Hear What the Spirit Says to the Churches*

**Introduction:** The Revelation of Jesus Christ begins to build upon itself in Chapter 1 with the Lord Jesus' personal manifestation of Himself to John while on the island of Patmos as the Living One. John's spiritual eyes were opened with that manifestation...prepared now in spirit, John receives the Lord's personal messages to the seven messengers as recorded in Chapters 2 and 3. Through these seven messages, God the Father is actually beginning a deeper strengthening of His children as their Vinedresser by lifting up and cutting away the debris of empty opinions and innuendoes and misperceptions of false teachings that had crept into His Son's church...just as the apostle Paul said they would in his farewell to the church at Ephesus. Within these two chapters, the Holy Spirit brings each messenger and the churches into a greater depth of understanding what it takes to remain true to their risen and ascended Lord at any cost. All hear God's call anew to stay up higher in spirit as the Holy Spirit brings them more fully into the reality of who the Father's eternal Son truly is, of who they are in Him, and of what He has already secured for them through His incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension. For herein we will soon discover the loving heart of our heavenly Father just as the Lord Jesus says in Chapter 3 verse 19: *"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline..."* (John 15:1-4; Acts 20:28-32; Psalm 94:12-15; Hebrews 12:7-10)

...**to the messenger of the church of Ephesus:** Revelation 2:1-7

Stop here for a moment and reflectively consider the church of Ephesus - the first of the seven churches mentioned in chapters two and three. The apostle Paul, who laid its foundation on his return to them from his second missionary trip, then wrote a circular letter to them while he was imprisoned and awaiting trial in Rome. His letter is truly one of the highest mountain peaks of revelation in all the Holy Scriptures. Therein the Holy Spirit unveiled to the saints a breathtaking picture of God's mystery and manifold wisdom in His strategy for the world through His Son and His church. Her relationship to Him is seen there as that of a Bride. As such, she is to be a reflection of her Bridegroom's ascension glory during His absence and until His return. A glorious church, she is also to be a ministering church alongside of Him in the heavenlies while extending His victory out over every kind of evil. This is the truth which had been illuminated to the church by the Holy Spirit in her earlier years, and now is the backdrop for what the Lord Jesus is about to say to the messenger of the church of Ephesus. (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:4-7; 3:4-6; 5:25-27; 6:10-12)

The messenger is in a state of deception when the apostle John wrote His message to him. This becomes obvious when you realize that he is unaware of his fallen state (vs.5a). What had happened? First having believed a lie, he then stepped down into error over a period of time. Now living an external life of mere religiosity...a form of godliness that was empty of true life...he is unaware and oblivious to the fact that he had only an outward appearance of Christian living and ministry, not its living reality. And isn't that what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after their own fall from God's high estate for them? (2 Corinthians 11:2-3)

The Living One who holds the seven stars in His right hand and who stands in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks inspecting these churches uses bridal language in pinpointing for this messenger the true issue at hand. He admonishes him with these words: *“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”* Those words, *first love*, refer to the exclusive love of a bridegroom and a bride for each other...a devoted love to one another that is so deep and so wide that it involves the very deepest affections of their hearts towards each other. Like a lovesick bride who earnestly longs for the companionship of her bridegroom, his soul is to be athirst for the living God: *“O God, Thou art My God; **early will I seek Thee**: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee. Thus I will bless Thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.”* (Psalm 63:1-8 KJ)

The Lord’s selection of the word *left* in Chapter 2:4 is also significant and probes more deeply into the heart of the messenger. It is actually a compound word that means “to send away from oneself, to dismiss.” It also means “to neglect, forsake, leave alone.” The word is actually a reflection of what happens in a divorce. The Lord Jesus is saying then that this messenger has dismissed - neglected, forsaken, and left Him alone as First Love. Another way of saying that is to say that this messenger has been unfaithful to Him as a wife. Do you remember Jesus’ answer to a young expert in the Mosaic Law who put Him to the test with his question of what commandment is the first of all? Hear His answer: *“The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God is one LORD: and you shall love the LORD your God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”* The word *all* there is what is missing in this messenger’s relationship with his Bridegroom! The love that once burned in his heart for Christ alone was now but embers. Perhaps he had forgotten his Lord’s words of greeting to Mary when she turned around from looking into His empty tomb. Her risen Lord, He said to her, *“Whom are you seeking?”* (Mark 12:29-30 KJ; John 20:15)

Distracted and no longer focused in spirit, the messenger of the church of Ephesus is living below his proper position in the spiritual life: *“But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, **and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...**”* (Ephesians 2:4-6) In the light of that truth, the Lord Jesus Christ admonishes the messenger in verse 5 with these words, *“Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works...”* The Lord redirects his gaze first back to Him at his side, and then brings him full circle by using more bridal language with His use of the words *first works*. You may be wondering now what that could be and how they are connected with where the messenger had fallen from in spirit.

The Lord’s supper - a covenant meal - was amazingly instituted by Him on the evening before His crucifixion with the past, present and future in mind for His people. Each believer having been brought into union with Him through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion, this memorial time is a solemn reminder to His Bride of the new covenant of grace which she has entered into,

of His covenant love for her and hers for Him, and of the future kingdom of God upon His return. It is a sacred time...a special set apart time in which to sit quietly in communion with Him and for Him as the host to be present with her in a most intimate way. Here she may pour out all her heartfelt love and devotion in adoration and thanksgiving to her risen and exalted King! (Exodus 12:11-14; 23-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26; Luke 22:28-30)

Now listen to the message Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah in their backslidden condition and what had been found missing in their lives. *“So they established a decree to circulate a proclamation throughout all Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should **come to celebrate the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem. For they had not celebrated it in great numbers as it was prescribed. The couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes, even according to the command of the king, saying, ‘O sons of Israel return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that He may return to those of you who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD God of their fathers, so that He made them a horror as you see. Now do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the LORD and enter His sanctuary which He has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, that His burning anger may turn away from you.’”*** (2 Chronicles 30:5-8)

Also listen to Jesus’ words on the night when He was betrayed by Judas, *“This is My body, which is broken for you; **do this in remembrance of Me**...This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For **as often** as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”* (1 Corinthians 11:23-27)

When Jesus reclined at the table with His apostles for the Passover meal, He shared with them His heart’s desire: *“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover **with you** before I suffer...”* Sadly, years later Paul had to admonish the church at Corinth about the importance of the Lord’s Supper. Obviously, something had happened; in fact, something was missing. So too, for the messenger of the church of Ephesus. Although he may have practiced an outward form of the Lord’s supper in the church’s gatherings, its significance had paled and become more of a tradition rather than its center and substance of life. (Luke 22:14-20; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 24:30-35)

By God’s design, the church has entered once and for all into the Holy of Holies - Christ Jesus Himself being that. There she is to look fully into the glorious and wondrous face of her Passover Lamb as First Love...and be richly filled and satisfied with Him and His love for her. Without such spiritual intimacy alone with Him and without such rest in Him, there can be little illumination in her spirit of her sovereign Christ, little true worship of Him alone, and little true obedience to Him on her part. For from His table of covenant blessing where the sacrificial elements are, she may arise to trust in her God as never before and go forth in spirit and truth into the world with the beauty and power of her ascended Lord within her and upon her. (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5)

Sadly, for the messenger of the church of Ephesus the reality of Christ in him is but a dim memory.

...to the messenger of the church in Smyrna: Revelation 2:8-11

Smyrna was a commercial city along a well-known ancient trade route, and so it is likely that the gospel of Christ's glory reached Smyrna from the church of Ephesus during its early days. At the time of this message the messenger of the church in Smyrna was encountering fierce opposition from those who said they were Jews, but in truth were not. As always, these Jews were in bitter opposition to Jesus Christ and anyone who claimed loyalty to Him. (John 8:37-41; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16)

Which brings us directly into the first point: this messenger is in a high state of persecution...of being oppressed and harassed with ill-treatment for his fidelity to his risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His gospel message of the kingdom of God. He is suffering for what he knows to be true about Him as well as himself. Having begun His message to this messenger with these illuminating words, "*The first and the last, who was dead and has come to life...*", the Lord Jesus is amplifying for him the truth of His having abolished death...having reduced it to inactivity through His own death and resurrection. It was through His own vicarious death for mankind, that his Lord had indeed robbed death of its sting and "*...brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*" "*...for since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection from the dead.*" The messenger of the church in Smyrna knew these truths beyond any shadow of doubt...not only of Him, but like Stephen the first martyr of the church, of how they applied to his own life as well. (1 Corinthians 15:21; 2 Timothy 1:9-10)

This messenger preached this gospel. Unashamed of his Lord's testimony, his church was not a silent church. Faith in Christ emboldened him to speak up in the face of adversity out of a sure hope that had anchored his soul in truth. "*But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.*" (2 Corinthians 4:13-14)

The messenger of the church in Smyrna knew his future and of all the redeemed. With such a focus and belief structure, he was single-minded. "*But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*" He had also perceived what Jesus said to Martha in the face of her own brother's death: "*'Your brother will rise again'. Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?'*" The messenger of this church believed this! (Acts 20:24; 2 Timothy 1:12; John 11:25-26)

The Lord Jesus had no rebuke for the messenger of the church in Smyrna. With eyes that see past the externals of what the world calls poverty, the Lord sees him as he really is...rich in and through Him. For this messenger had indeed taken hold of that which is life and had not let go of his inheritance even under the most pressing of circumstances: "*...the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" (Colossians 2:2a-3)

We can see then in this message that the messenger of the church in Smyrna was indeed a proven bondservant of the exalted Christ. A bondservant at this time was a servant by choice...a slave who, having been granted freedom by his master, loved him so deeply that he voluntarily chose to be his servant until death. In light of this, the Lord pointedly uses more bridal language in His exhortation to this messenger with these words “...*faithful unto death.*” That is what a bridegroom and a bride pledge themselves to when they exchange marriage vows with each other. It is another way for saying they will not allow anything to come between them except death. It is in the face of tribulation that the Alpha and Omega calls to His Bride to fulfill her vow to Him in the deepest way...up to the very point of death. What that means is that in spite of the sacrifices she may have to make and in any perils she may have to face and endure for her profession and proclamation of Him as the Christ, she is to guard with her very life the true gospel and maintain her faith in Him at all times.

The messenger of the church in Smyrna is consistently living his life at this level of commitment...he is living for the glory of His name alone! (1 Corinthians 10:31)

**...to the messenger of the church in Pergamum:** Revelation 2:12-17

Under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, the church in this city is third in order because of a Divine sequence being mapped out. Besides being a city of temples and pagan cults devoted to sensuous worship...nothing of an unusual nature for cities in those days...Pergamum was also the seat of Roman emperor worship. That means to worship him as being divine. Interestingly enough, it was considered to be the hallmark of civic loyalty at that time. Thus, in verse 13 the city of Pergamum was said by Jesus to be where Satan’s seat is - in other words, where he is enthroned. It was another way of saying the city itself was where Satan was worshipped and therefore dwelt.

Much like in the days of Nebuchadnezzar when three young Hebrew men refused to serve his gods by falling down and worshipping the golden image he had set up, this state of affairs in this city also marked a crisis for the messenger of the church in Pergamum. Who would he worship? Would he as a follower of Christ compromise in some kind of way in order to avoid martyrdom? Just as Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, no one can worship the living God and Satan at the same time: “*What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?*” (1 Corinthians 10:19-22)

We know from the whole counsel of Holy Scriptures that God must act in harmony with His very own perfections. We also know that whenever He has been provoked to the point of anger, He moves swiftly in righteous judgment. That is why the Lord Jesus addresses this messenger as “*The One who has the sharp two-edged sword....*” Those words...*the sharp two-edged sword...*are an abbreviated way of saying the sharp two-edged sword of judgment. Jesus is revealing Himself to this messenger as the Righteous Judge. Having already heard the case, He now proceeds to render a proper verdict to the messenger. (Deuteronomy 32:16-18; Acts 17:30-31)



Even though the messenger of the church in Pergamum has held fast the Lord's name, and did not deny the faith even in the days of Antipas the martyr, he is in a state of laxity...of being negligent. In fact, he has been ignoring and failing to act upon truth. Sin is in the camp: false doctrine has crept into the church! As a Jealous God, the LORD is never passive towards sin as some think. There does come a time when He will judge it in any one of its various manifestations for what it really is...idolatry. His righteous standard for His people has never changed: there are to be no other gods before Him.

In the Old Testament Balaam was a prophet for hire. Unable to curse God's people directly as requested by King Balak, he instead taught the king to put a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel...one that would cause them to fall away from the living God and, in this way, bring a curse upon them. The end result of Balaam's counsel to the king was that he successfully seduced God's people into compromise, and they then began to fall away from their God and play the harlot. In the same way, the messenger of the church in Pergamum has gone astray from the narrow path of righteousness into that same path of error through compromise. He has been passively tolerating within the congregation of God's people those who adhered to the false teaching of the Nicolaitans: the practice of fornication and the eating of things sacrificed to idols. In verse 15 you can hear the gavel of God's judgment in His words, "...in the same way." It is surely the goodness of the Lord that leads one to genuinely repent of their sin! If it had been left unchecked by the Lord, the result of his continued indulging of this fleshly passivity would have been a loss of reverence for his God and the inability to recognize true greatness. (Numbers 22-24; Micah 6:8)

*"Or what agreement has **the temple of God** with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and **be separate,**' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you.'" (2 Corinthians 6:16-17)*

The temple where God dwells is not an edifice manufactured or built by man. No! For under the new covenant of grace which has been ratified by Christ's shed blood on the Cross, His dwelling place on earth now is no longer made by the work of a man's hand. Since the day of Pentecost His sanctuary is made up of living stones - those who have actually believed on Jesus' Name and thus are one with Him in spirit. This temple is where God Himself dwells and where He is worshipped. Here the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling place holy, and He speaks and moves here by His Spirit in power. Just as in the Old Testament, the glory of the LORD...His holy presence and character and power...is to fill His church. Enthroned here in glory, the Holy Spirit desires to manifest the Lord Jesus Christ - the brightness of His Father's glory - through His church in the earth. Here in glory, the church is to proclaim the true gospel of Christ while demonstrating its power by the Holy Spirit! (1 Kings 6:7; 8:6-11; Acts 17: 24-25; Acts 15:15-18; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Ephesians 2:19-22)

Having been set apart for the LORD'S glory, His temple is to be as holy as He is. The One who has the sharp two-edged sword is coming again for a pure Bride...one without a spot or blemish. As such, her doctrine is to be pure. After all, there has been a stewardship entrusted to her: nothing polluted is to enter in through her portals which would encroach on His enthronement in glory and thereby bring a reproach to His holy Name. That stewardship is the picture of a pillar - one that is set on a firm foundation standing alone from top to bottom, supporting the building by carrying its weight.

Like that pillar, the church's primary responsibility is to preserve the truth of Christ Jesus and the apostolic teaching of the New Testament apostles. For a brief moment now, consider the Lord's tribute to John the Baptist set before us in the gospel of Luke. (Luke 7:24-27) Notice He said that John was not a reed shaken by the wind. Instead, like a strong pillar that does not bend or sway, he had instead steadfastly refused to compromise any of his convictions based upon the inerrant revelatory Word of God; and in the light of it he preached His commandments without fear of others. John the Baptist never yielded to the popular opinion of his day whatever it might be. Just like him, the church is not a reed to be shaken by the wind either! She is to uphold the faith and practice of the gospel of Christ at all times not only by proclaiming it, but by receiving and obeying it. She is never to engage in the various evils of the society in which she lives, and she must immediately reject any form of immorality...including false doctrines, which in reality are doctrines of demons and, thus, deceptions and counterfeits. Moreover, she is to carefully test any teaching attempting to come in AND the spirit of that teaching. Does that teaching bear the same kind of spirit and emphasis as the Lord Jesus' and the apostles' teaching in the New Testament? What about the life of the teacher? Are they living their life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Who do they say that He is? And what about their relation to the spirit of this age that tries to undermine the authority of God's Word AND their relation to the ungodly world in which they live? Do they live a separated life?

Again, the church is not a reed to be shaken by the wind! She is to proclaim God's Word without fear of what others may think or say or do and not yield to popular opinion...whether from within or without. She must immediately refuse to compromise truth and steadfastly refute error of any kind. As the pillar of truth, she is to stand with her God in the earth against sin AND false doctrine. In this way, she demonstrates her absolute fidelity to her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in spite of any of the consequences thereof, unlike the religious authorities of Jesus' day who ignored Herod's sin in silence...and unlike the messenger of the church in Pergamum in the apostle John's day! (1 Timothy 3:15; Luke 7:24-25; 1 Timothy 4: 1; 1 John 4:1-3; Ephesians 4:14

**...to the messenger of the church in Thyatira: Revelation 2:18-29**

*"The Son of God, who has His eyes like a flame of fire and His feet are like burnished bronze"* is the Son made perfect forever! The word *perfect* means to accomplish, to carry through to the end, to make perfect by reaching the intended goal. The thought then in *the Son made perfect forever* is that Jesus Christ remained obedient to His Father's will even in the most pressing of hardships, temptations and sufferings. He followed this path of testing in His earthly life right up to its appointed end of death on the Cross having never sinned. That perfecting of Christ was one in which He consistently chose good and refused evil as a Man. The second Adam, He thus proved Himself to be fit not only as the Savior of all who would believe in Him, but also as Judge of all the people. Having taken on and successfully fulfilled God's assignment and full judgment against sin in His own body on the Cross, the Lord Jesus now addresses the messenger of the church of Thyatira as the last Adam - the perfect Man and Judge of all! (Revelation 1:14-15; Hebrews 7:28; 1 Corinthians 15:22-21; 45-47)

In spite of his deeds and his love and faith and service and perseverance, this messenger is actually in a state of tolerance. As a shepherd of His flock and a spiritual leader within the church of Thyatira, he has

given leeway to a variation from the standard of God's own inerrant Word. In some way or another, there has been an official recognition of the rights, opinions and practices of others whether he agreed with them or not. For within the church in Thyatira unrighteousness and unbiblical and heretical teaching is being tolerated in one of its spiritual leaders. To be specific (which He always is), the messenger of this church and even the church itself is tolerating that woman Jezebel: one who calls herself a prophetess, yet is teaching and leading the Lord's bondservants astray from the faith. The Lord Jesus' use of the words, *"that woman Jezebel,"* is an Old Testament word picture pointing to idolatry, sensuality, and manipulative control. It is used especially of one who misrepresents truth in such a way as to seductively gain the freedom to sin for God's people. That Jezebel is actually functioning unchallenged in a leadership position of preaching and teaching within the local church in Thyatira!

Listen now to what the Word of God had already instructed this messenger in.

*"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."* (Acts 20: 28-30)

*"For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ."* (Jude 4)

Indeed, like a flame of fire, the Son of God's eyes see the hidden things of darkness, making manifest the counsels of the heart. In the Sacred Scriptures, fire is often symbolic for judgment and purification. Just as fire tests precious metals and purifies them of dross, the Lord's righteous judgments make those necessary distinctions that purify faith of the impurities of unbelief. The intensity of His judgments separate out that which is true from that which is false, and that which is eternal from that which is not. Having passed through the purifying fire Himself without any taint of sin, His holy jealousy and anger and judgment burns within Him against any who compromise His Word and depart from His righteous ways into various forms of idolatry.

Another bridal thought actually comes into play now when we begin to understand more deeply who God is. Always holy and righteous, His jealousy is the same holy jealousy that guards the affection and love of one spouse for the other in the marriage union of a man and a woman. Marriage partners rightfully expect exclusive love and loyalty to each other, by requiring in a holy way that each will remain completely faithful and true to the other in their marriage relationship. The Son of God (verse 18) is making it known to the messenger of the church in Thyatira that God Himself is no different! The Son's holy jealousy is His absolute intolerance for anything that can divide the affections of this messenger's heart towards Him and His Father, and in this way forfeit His Father's best for him and the people he is shepherding. For the Lord Jesus passionately desires that His people come into the fullness of an intimate knowledge of who their heavenly Father is and who they are in Him. (Exodus 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 4:23-24; Jeremiah 17:9-10)

*"Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire*

*itself will test **the quality** of each man's work (lit. of what sort each man's work is). If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know ye that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."* (1 Corinthians 3:10-17)

*"Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:15-23)*

Did you hear in those scriptures that God is not a respecter of persons? It means He never shows partiality in any one of His judgments. Perfect in both love and justice, He will not leave the guilty go unpunished...regardless of who the person is or is not. That very truth is threaded throughout both the Old and New Testaments and is purposefully intended to bring a holy and sobering trembling within us. For once handed down and executed, the Son's judgment is not only thorough and final, but also purposeful. For it accomplishes not only His perfect justice, but accountability as well.

Just like Pharaoh in the book of Exodus, *that woman Jezebel* in the church in Thyatira has willfully and repeatedly refused to repent of her sin at every gracious opportunity God has given her. Time has run out. The Son of God will throw her into a bed of sickness. And for those who have been committing spiritual adultery with her, He will throw into great tribulation unless they repent of her deeds. And that's not all, He will also kill her children with death - for He gives to each one according to their works. Truly it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God! (Exodus 20:18-21; Job 34:10-19; Romans 2:4-11; 1 Peter 1:17:19; Acts 5:1-6)

The Son's message in Revelation 2:23 - "*and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and the hearts; and I will give to each one according to your deed,*" - like the epicenter of an earthquake, it sits square center in the very middle of the seven messages to the seven churches. The Son who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze is going to move so swiftly as Judge in this church and deal with its sin in such a thorough way by His Spirit that no one will mistake His sovereign hand in having done so! The Lord's words then are a strong word of reproof to this messenger and are intended by Him to bring in a holy and reverential fear of God within him...a holy awe that actually strikes one speechless with astonishment and humbleness of heart. The fact that the Son of God does not instruct this messenger to repent of his sin for tolerating *that woman Jezebel* and her spiritual offspring in the church does not mean he didn't need to. Jesus' words of reproof here and His pending judgment of her has accomplished that for him. Instead, the Lord is directing this messenger and the rest in Thyatira who do not hold *that woman Jezebel's* teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, to consider a deeper issue at hand: "*...and I will give to each one according to your deeds.*"

God's righteous judgments will not only bring about His justice, but its accountability as well. Every preacher and teacher of God's Word and every congregation should be especially alert here and take heed. Through his anger, Moses seriously compromised God's direct word to him and disobeyed Him before His people...he did not treat the LORD as holy before their eyes at the waters of Meribah. The LORD'S judgment for **that sin** was that Moses would not enter into the promised land of Canaan. Even though Moses later entreated Him with strong pleadings to change His mind, God stoutly refused his plea because of the seriousness of his sin in the midst of His people. Moses would only see Canaan at a distance and not cross over the Jordan with them as their leader. King David and the death of Uzzah are another example of God's righteous judgment in a leader's life. Through David's own irreverence and misplaced enthusiasm in bringing up the ark of the Divine Presence to Jerusalem another man died. That is a sobering thought indeed! And it took that to bring an about face for David...one in which he, too, learned a very humbling and sobering lesson in accountability before a holy God. (Deuteronomy 3:23-27; 4:21-22; 2 Samuel 6:1-13)

Leaders in the church of God have been entrusted with keeping the gospel of Christ pure as well as with being examples of righteous living to His flock. The Son of God who has His eyes like a flame of fire and His feet like burnished bronze is continually evaluating their ministry, character, and stand against sin and evil, and with a stricter judgment. After all, to whomever much is given, much will be required. For where the shepherd goes, the sheep follow! Paul understood this kind of accountability and in the light of it admonished his spiritual son Timothy on how to fulfill his responsibility as a church leader with these words: "*Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.*" He also wrote to the churches of Galatia addressing more deeply the issue at hand. "*For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still striving to please men, I would not be a **bondservant of Christ.***" (2 Timothy 1:13; Galatians 1:10)

A spiritual leader's life and ministry have as much potential for harm as it does for good. It is in the light of that sobering truth, that the Lord's stricter judgment for a leader (as well as a church) may mean that the consequences for serious sin will not be removed from them. With this in mind, the Son of God then said to the rest in Thyatira who were not holding the teaching of *that woman Jezebel*, "**...I place no other burden on you...**" He was saying to them, live accordingly.

That exhortation, if deeply appropriated by the messenger of the church in Thyatira, will instill in him the holy habit of seeking Him above all else and living humbly before Him at all times in the care of His flock while he sets in order the things that are lacking either in himself or within His flock...here a measure of true greatness in the eyes of the living God! (Luke 12:47-48; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; Galatians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 5: 6-7; Psalm 131)

### **...to the messenger of the church in Sardis:** Revelation 3:1-6

By God's creative design, He placed the sun, the moon and the stars in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth. Stars, in a variety of sizes and colors, along with the moon purposefully light up the night sky; for God Himself created them to stand out in the dark country sky! Now let's listen to how the

Lord Jesus addresses the messenger of the church in Sardis.

He addresses him as, *“He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.”* The number seven in the Bible speaks of both sufficiency and fullness. As the seventh day began, all of God’s work of creation had been finished. In other words, His work of creation was now sufficient for the purpose for which it had been designed. Right before Jesus bowed His head on the Cross and released His human spirit to His heavenly Father, He spoke these words: *“It is finished.”* Those words were His seventh utterance from the Cross. His use of the word *finished* means to complete something...not in the sense of having ended the work, but of having brought it all the way through to perfection - or you could say to its destined goal. The whole work of salvation for which God the Son came into the world was *finished* when He spoke those words on the Cross of Calvary. Having met all the demands of Divine holiness by never sinning, Jesus Christ - the second Man - through His death and resurrection is now and forever the last Adam. Being the first to rise from the dead and never die again, Jesus then ascended bodily into heaven and upon His enthronement at the right hand of His Father received His promise: the fullness of the Spirit. (Genesis 2:2; Hebrew 10:5; Acts 17: 30-31; 1 Corinthians 15:22-21; 45-47; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:29-35)

This Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. This Jesus is the head of His church! This Jesus is the One who says to the messenger of the church in Sardis that He knows his works: he has a name he is alive and is dead. Even though he is a child of the resurrection, this messenger is now in a state of sleep. What contradiction! Having neglected so great a salvation, spiritual lethargy has set in like poisonous fumes that seep in under an unsealed door sill. His affections have not been set on the things above where the glorified and exalted Christ is seated, but rather on the things of the earth. A child of His Father by nature, this messenger is actually in a state of masquerading: he is acting like something he is not! Thinking and acting and talking and looking like those around him in the world, he has abandoned himself to loose living and is heaping his treasures together on earth instead of in heaven. (James 5:5; Colossians 3:1-2; Matthew 6:19-21)

In teaching His disciples during His earthly ministry, Jesus’ opening words to them in the sixth chapter of Matthew are, *“Take heed...”* Those are very strong words of caution. To take heed means to hold the mind or the ear toward someone. It is to listen carefully and attentively to what someone is about to say because they are going to alert them to a hidden and lurking danger. Whenever it used as a nautical term, it means to hold a ship in a direction or to sail towards a point of destination. It would especially behoove the messenger of the church in Sardis to take heed now!

*“The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”* (Matthew 6:22-23)

The fact that this messenger is actually acting like something he is not, says that the light within him is really darkness...and indeed the darkness is very great. Having failed over a period of time to remember - to call to mind and reflect on - the perfect law of liberty and see therein his purification from his former sins, that spiritual blindness is keeping him now from seeing his glorified and exalted Christ who has passed through the heavens. This messenger cannot see afar off. Having lost sight of his Lord’s promised second coming, his motives, attitudes, and desires are no longer centered in His Father’s will. Thus, his

life, values, goals and pursuits are falling far short of His eternal destiny for him. What a sad state of affairs! Having ignored correction, he and most of the church in Sardis are secure and unconcerned in their sin and are being careless and lazy in their call to duty! (James 1:25; 2 Peter 1:9; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 2:5; Hebrews 9:26)

*“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; **walk as children of Light** (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, ‘Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’” Ephesians 5:6-14*

*“Awake to righteousness, and sin not: for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” (1 Corinthians 15:34 KJ)*

*“Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” (Romans 13:11-14)*

The messenger of the church in Sardis would do well now to take heed by returning to how he used to receive and respond to the reading and teaching of God’s Word, the Holy Bible: in humbleness of mind, taking the position of a servant and immersing himself in the truth of His Word with God as his portion. As he does that and reflects upon the truth with all his heart, he will have the strength and the power and freedom to live as a child of light and fight the good fight of faith, separating himself from evil and all that offends God. Presenting himself to his heavenly Father in this way now as an instrument of righteousness, he can indeed be light in the world around him! (1 Thessalonians 2:13; James 1:21; 2 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 2:1-5)

*Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as wise – sensible and intelligent people; making the most of the time – buying up each opportunity – because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and **firmly grasping** what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17 AMP)*

*“Let your love be sincere – a real thing; hate what is evil (loathe all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness), but hold fast to that which is good. Love one another with brotherly affection – as members of one family – giving precedence and showing honor to one another. Never lag in zeal and in earnest endeavor; **be aglow and burning with the Spirit, serving the Lord**. Rejoice and exult in hope; be steadfast and patient in suffering and tribulation; be constant in prayer. (Romans 12:9-12 AMP)*

*Do all things without murmurings or disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God,*

*without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, **holding forth the word of life**; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.*” (Philippians 2:14-16 KJ)

Knowing the hour, Jesus said to Peter and the two sons of Zebedee in the garden of Gethsemane, “...*remain here and keep watch **with Me**.*” Like militant sentries who guard a post at night, theirs was the duty of vigilance and alertness combined with prayer as He prayed. Upon entering into heaven itself after His resurrection to appear in the presence of God for us, He lives to make intercession for His people. The early believers had that mindset: “*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*” Paul also understood this when he instructed Timothy with these words: “*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*” He also wrote to the church in Colossae, “*Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*” And to the church in Ephesus, he exhorted the saints with these insightful words, “*Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all saints.*” (Matthew 26:38; Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:1; Colossians 4:2; Ephesians 6: 10-18)

Only to His church has the risen and exalted Christ given this sacred trust of standing in the gap with Him in prayer. And only here in the solitude of time spent alone with Him in the Scriptures is her fellowship with Him refreshed...the heavenly life in her soul being renewed and invigorated and strengthened for the day before her. Having been given the authority of His name and having received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, she has the power and the efficacy of prayer itself...the capacity to produce its desired effect at all levels. She is to be found keeping watch and standing in the gap while interceding before Him under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit until His return.

It was to those who were buying and selling in the temple, that Jesus said these words, “*It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robber’s den.*” (Matthew 21:13) As an ambassador of Christ’s kingdom, the messenger of the church in Sardis would do well to take heed!

**...to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia:** Revelation 3:7-13

“*Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.*” What the Lord Jesus is about to say now to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia comes from Him as “*He who is holy.*” To be *holy* means to be morally pure, upright, and blameless in both heart and life. The *holy* One who is true is the Seed of Abraham and the Root of David: the promised and expected Messiah! Having entered into heaven after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus received the key of the Messianic kingdom from His Father in recognition of His exaltation and office as King. Thus, His use of the words *the key of David* is a confirming word to this messenger that He not only has the official right to be part of the Davidic dynasty and its authority, but He also has unlimited power in His royal household, the church. (Acts 15:18 KJ; 22:5-36; Isaiah 22:22; Hebrews 7:26)



He who is holy, who is true, is the Prince of life. The word *prince* means one who takes a lead in, and/or provides the first occasion of something. When the apostle Peter boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Prince of life to those awe struck Jews in Solomon's Porch, he was declaring to them that the life Jesus had was not from another. He Himself being the origin of life, Jesus then walked the path of righteousness and faith in His earthly life without any deviation from it for us. In this way, He brought life to its fullest expression and perfect end in His own Person. As its Author and Source, He continues to have in Himself the power of that endless life. This is He who addresses the messenger of the church in Philadelphia and says He knows his works. (John 1:1-5; Acts 3:11-16; Hebrews 7:15-16)

*"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."* The messenger of the church in Philadelphia is in a state of true fidelity. That state of faithfulness is indicated by the Lord's words in verse 8, *"...because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name."* Having very little of his own strength and in the midst of fiery trials, crushing afflictions and intense persecutions - specifically jealous insinuations and false accusations by those who said they were Jews and were not - this messenger is remaining true in his pledge of loyalty to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ even while in the midst of those fiery ordeals. (1 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 1:8)

When you read the prophet Hosea's description of the LORD'S relation to Israel in covenant terms (Hosea 2:14-23), you see there His promise of faithfulness to her at all times. Yet you will also see that such faithfulness is not one sided, and neither is it optional! As in the marriage relationship, both parties are expected to respond to each other in faithfulness. This is so their betrothal relationship can be solidly established in trust and thus be unshakeable. The messenger of the church in Philadelphia has done just that in his abiding relationship with Christ. Out of his deep love for Him, he has responded in obedience to whatever He has had to say to him with a trust borne out of the Holy Spirit's illumination of the truth in his heart.

*"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by faith."* The words *the just shall live* has within it the thought of staying alive...of being preserved, flourishing and enjoying life. In the Old Testament the Hebrew concept is to live and breathe. Thus the last part of that verse in Habakkuk 2:4 literally reads, *"The righteous person in (or by) his faithfulness (firmness, consistency, belief, faith, steadfastness) shall live!"* Paul says the very same thing in different words in his letter to the churches in Galatia: *"...The man in right standing with God (the just, the righteous) shall live by and out of faith, and he who through and by faith is declared righteous and in right standing with God shall live."* James, a half-brother of Jesus, also depicts a beautiful dance between faith and love when he wrote in the New Testament about faith's exercise: *"But, do you desire to come to know, O senseless man! that the aforementioned faith [that exists] apart from works is unproductive? Was not Abraham vindicated by works [justified as to his claim to a living faith] in that he offered his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice? You see that the aforementioned faith was cooperating and working with his works [and thereby was responsible for their production], and by his works was this faith brought to completion in a well rounded whole. And the scripture was actually and fully realized [brought into operation] which said, 'And Abraham believed God, and it [his act of faith] was put to his account for righteousness. And a friend of God he was called.'"* (Galatians 3:11 AMP, James 2:20-23 Wuest)

Before we go any further, it is important to remember that true Biblical faith is a confident reliance upon God and never mere mental assent. True faith presupposes a revelation of God by the Holy Spirit and has

three components: a steadfast trust in God that He is and that His ways are right, a personal surrender and allegiance to that truth through His eternal Son Jesus Christ, and then a steadfastness in heart that desires to follow His Son in His ways. Paul helps us to remember this in his letter to the saints of Rome. There you see that Abraham's faith actually rested in God Himself, not in His promise to him. Just like Enoch, His promise to him was simply the occasion of the exercise of his faith! "...for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." To Nathaniel, Jesus asked, "Do you believe?" (Deuteronomy 32:4; Romans 4:21; Hebrews 11:6, John 1:45-50)

"Because you have kept the word of My perseverance..." Having entered into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus' sufferings, this messenger's heart is fully engaged with His. From a humble heart, his burning desire is to be in fellowship with his Lord...listening to His voice and keeping His Word. To *keep* means to watch with the eye upon and in this way to guard. It is much like sentries being set up as a watch in order to guard from loss or injury or to detain in custody. To *keep* the Lord's word means to keep an eye upon His discourses, teachings, and instructions in order to obey them. Much like sentries, it involves the fulfilling of a duty. With his gaze fixed upon the Lord Jesus, the messenger of the church in Philadelphia is faithfully and vigilantly performing the works He requires of His disciples even in the most difficult afflictions.

That is what "...the word of My perseverance..." means. For *persevere* means to remain under...or to bear up under. Thus it involves endurance, patience, and constancy under the most severe suffering in both faith and duty. For the Christian it is an exercise in spirit and involves a strength in character which does not allow them to surrender or succumb to pressures of any kind; and for this reason: *Therefore, brethren, be all the more sure diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior will be abundantly supplied to you.* (Revelation 3:10; John 6:27-29; John 14:23-24; 2 Peter 1:5-11)

"...and have not denied My name." In the days of king Nebuchadnezzar three young Hebrew men gave a striking witness to their allegiance to the only true God when in a rage he threatened them with certain death in a burning fiery furnace for not bowing down and worshipping the gold image he had set up in the plain of Dura. When confronted by him, they stood their ground. They stood true to the God of heaven without any hesitation. You see, they truly understood the seriousness of sin itself and that God's holy wrath against their disobedience would have far worse consequences for them than the wrath they were presently encountering from a mere human being. These three young men did not want to forfeit their lives by bowing down to his image! Therefore, they said to king Nebuchadnezzar with hearts full of faith, complete trust, and total loyalty in their living God, "But if not..." These young men were giving evidence here of a true faith that trusted in God and obeyed Him regardless of any of its consequences to them. (Daniel 3:16-18; Hebrews 11:35-38)

In the same manner, the messenger of the church in Philadelphia has his trust in God who raises the dead. He has persevered and refused to back down from His Name...the essential nature of His Person...even when it meant disappointment, suffering, trouble, persecution and personal loss. Through his absolute dependence upon, adherence to and trust in the Prince of life, he has continued in refusing to compromise the integrity of his faith. And through his words and actions, he has not rejected, disowned or renounced

the Lord Jesus Christ. And just like those three young Hebrew men, it was this messenger's life of faith in Christ in the very midst of suffering and persecution that constituted and gave evidence of his faith - not the experience of personal deliverance from it.

At this juncture one might wonder why. Why would he be willing to be a partaker of the sufferings of Christ at such cost? Paul instructs us in the book of Romans of a greater glory. The messenger of the church in Philadelphia had this mindset even when the intensity of his external circumstances became unbearable to him and his human strength became so very small. Having already submitted himself to God's righteousness in Christ, this messenger purposefully remained under the Holy Spirit's leadership in order that he might indeed attain to the resurrection from the dead. For he had learned an invaluable lesson in the life of faith just like Paul when he too was burdened beyond his own strength...even to the point of despairing of life itself. Jesus said to Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake: **for when I am weak, then I am strong.**"* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

*"And in your patience possess ye your souls."* The church is on a journey in which she is to blossom forth into full spiritual maturity. The fullness of Christ Himself resides within her where He is all and in all. An earthen vessel, His bride actually comes to realize her full potential in Him by especially persevering in true faith in the midst of tears, perplexities, fears, weaknesses, and buffetings. As her gaze remains focused on the Holy One, she engages in true intimate devotion - time spent in communion with Him, in reflection on His word and in a daily resistance to sin. Here Christ Himself may manifest His glory in her. For in His hands suffering, when properly submitted to, is a transforming tool that opens her up to the abundance of His grace and allows His life and the stature of His fullness to flow through her to others. For in God's wisdom, victory for a Christian is not necessarily the removal of weakness, nor is it simply the manifestation of His divine power. Victory for a Christian is oftentimes the manifestation of His divine power through human weakness! (Luke 21:12-19)

*"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever."* (Jude 24)

The messenger of the church in Philadelphia certainly understood this for he knew what true strength is and what it accomplishes! (2 Corinthians 4:8-15; John 14:12)

### **...to the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans: Revelation 3:14-22**

In the heavenly Father's strategic order of things, this is the last of the seven messages to the seven messengers of the seven churches in Asia. As such it is considered to be the closest to His Son's return! It is an especially serious and somber message when you come to understand that it is actually describing the spiritual condition...that of worldliness and apostasy...that will be prevalent in the professing church of the Lord Jesus Christ as we are being brought into the end of the age of grace.

Now we can begin. The church of the Laodiceans lived in the midst of a city that was well known for its wealth and self-sufficiency. Laodicea lay at a very important crossroad of commercial routes and therefore prospered and thrived as a commercial center. In fact, its inhabitants had become so wealthy that they were able to rebuild their city from their own resources and wealth after a devastating earthquake leveled it. Yet in spite of all their apparent successes, the city actually lacked a sufficient and permanent supply of good water!

With this as His backdrop, the Lord Jesus amazingly speaks to the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans in all his failures and spiritual breakdowns as *“The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”* Amen means to be firm, steady and trustworthy. That is who God Himself is. He is the certainty - the it is and shall be so - of all that He is and all He has promised...of all He has said He will do. He is The Amen. Using that as His Divine title, Jesus is especially testifying to this messenger of His eternal deity and of who He is: the God of Truth. He is directing him to the truth that He is the One who is the true and faithful witness of God His Father. Since truth is infallible, He is saying that He is not only the fulfillment of all His Father’s promises, but their proof as well because of His resurrection out of death. What direction of life the Lord is pointing this messenger to!

*“Because he who is blessed in the earth shall be blessed by the God of truth; and he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My sight! **For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;** and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.”* (Isaiah 65:16-17)

The Amen knows this messenger’s works. Those works indicate that he is in a state of living independently from God and is now spiritually bankrupt. Having carelessly turned away from Him to the world as his reference point and source of fulfillment, he is indulging and gratifying the cravings and desires of his flesh. Now in a state of self-indulgence and its various self-assertions, he is destitute of anything of eternal value. Like a vehicle without any gas, the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans and the church is on empty - the glory of his God has departed from their midst.

The Lord’s use of the word *lukewarm* brings about more light on those works. It is a no nonsense word of strong rebuke. Water out of a faucet that is either cold or hot is always useful to its owner and beneficial to the one who comes to it. For cold water is refreshing to the thirsty while hot water is soothing and relaxing to those who are tense or ill at ease. On the other hand, tepid water from that same faucet is really of very little use...except perhaps for inducing vomiting. In this way, The Amen is expressing the intensity of His holy frustration and displeasure with this messenger’s seriously backslidden condition. His lukewarmness - his non-productivity as His own offspring - is nauseating to Him to the point of vomiting him out of His mouth. What the Lord Jesus is desiring of him is a full surrender to Him as The Amen.

*“Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”* (1 Corinthians 15:34)

What happened to bring this messenger into such a state of rebellion? In his self-centeredness, he believed and acted upon a lie that in the worldly riches around him there is happiness. He erroneously equated

prosperity and success with money and then pursued the promises it makes to those who are foolish. Rather than continuing to live in the presence of his God and in complete submission and obedience to Him, he turned back to the weak and worthless things of what the world had to offer him. Now ensnared in the trap of measuring success by the world's standard rather than by God's, he has become so engrossed in its false promises of prosperity that he is actually missing the mark of God's glorious and larger intention for His sons. What a wretched condition! Like the rich man who reasoned within himself about how to hold onto all of his grain and his goods by tearing down his barns and building larger ones, the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans is living a life of grasping and holding onto things rather than of sharing and sacrificially yielding up his self-life to death. Having increased in material goods, he has sadly believed the lie that he is secure and in need of nothing. (Ecclesiastes 5:10; Luke 12:13-21; Matthew 7:21)

“Jesus said to him, *‘If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and **come, follow Me.**’*” (Matthew 19:21)

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, *‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but **whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.’*” (Matthew 16:24-27)

“*A disciple is not above his teacher, now a slave above his master. **It is enough** for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.*” (Matthew 10:24-25a)

“*He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and **where I am, there My servant will be also;** if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*” (John 12:25:26)

The messenger of the church of the Laodiceans is indeed standing on the brink of a spiritual cliff and must now choose which life he is going to live during the rest of his earthly days...the self-life or the higher one of everlasting life in Christ and self-sacrifice. For freedom in Christ was never intended to be a license to commit sin...neither a cloak for coveting and evil. Freedom in Christ is that one be a true bond slave of God as he is keeping in view the day of the Lord's return. For the reality of true life has always been Christ Himself; and the full light of freedom in Him is this “...*through love serve one another.*” But having set aside the grace of God to live his own life, this messenger is dangerously close now to being just like Isaac's firstborn son Esau. Through a careless attitude regarding his own birthright, Esau sold it contemptuously to his younger brother Jacob for a plate of food. And even though Esau regretted doing that later on and then sought for the blessing with tears, no place was found in his heart for a repentance with godly sorrow. (Luke 6:24-26; Galatians 5:13-14; 1 Peter 2:16; Genesis 25:24-34; Hebrews 12:15-17)

In Revelation 3:17, it becomes obvious that this messenger is indeed blind for he cannot see he is naked. Having fallen into a lifestyle of feeding the appetites of his flesh, his soul now is unclothed having not been nourished with the Word of God and thus clothed with Christ Himself. Blind to his own condition, he is actually living like a beggar on earth instead of a son with a glorious high calling and a heavenly

inheritance before him. His spiritually blind eyes need to be anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit so he can perceive truth and see once again! For this messenger's reference point is ever to be God's glory - the incarnate Son of God crowned with glory and honor and seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high now as head over all things; and he His spiritual offspring. (John 8:31-32; Ephesians 4:20-24; 1 Peter 2:4-6)

*“Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him **when he comes and knocks.**”* (Luke 12:35-36)

Christ's imminent return here is a sobering thought not only because it will happen suddenly, meaning at any time, but also because it will be final. What this means for both His true converts and the nonbeliever is that there will no longer be opportunity for a genuine repentance before a just God. Time has run out! Even though all the saved have been delivered from the penalty of sin and God's wrath in Christ, it could still be a perilous time for those who are unprepared because they must still give an account for their lives on earth and be rewarded or not rewarded accordingly. (Romans 5:9-10; Revelation 11:18)

The question often arises at this point as to whether the messenger or the members of this church are true believers...given the seriousness and the depth of his backsliding. The answer to that question is discovered in verse 19...*“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.”* The love mentioned here is of a parent's love that carefully brings a child to mature adulthood through correction, rebuke, training and guidance. The Lord Jesus Christ is speaking then to His children not to sinners. *“The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God...”* is also the One in whom all things hold together. He sees this messenger's real need. Not welcomed, He stands on the outside of His church and knocks on the door of a closed heart...

*“Better it is to be of a humble spirit than to divide the spoil with the proud.”* (Proverbs 16:19)

The Lord's call always comes to us with a direct and precise word, doesn't it? In that spoken thought is His call for the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans to adopt His perspective as his own. Notice in verse 20 though that The Amen's call is not limited to him. It is to *anyone* in the church who hears His voice speaking and then responds in obedience by walking in the light of that truth by faith. It behooves us to ask the question, “Why does the Lord Jesus use the word *anyone*?” The Lord is letting all of us know that what a church is morally responsible for does not lie solely with its messenger. All its members are responsible for their own individual acts of sin. Corporate responsibility will not be a shield to anyone of its members when they stand before Him at the great white throne of judgment. These truths are very sobering thoughts indeed! It is actually the cumulative weight of this messenger's sin plus each member's within the church that has contributed to its apostate condition...a condition possible only for nominal Christians and one which is characterized by rebellion against God and a deliberate rejection of Christ's deity and His atoning death on the Cross. To such a church as this, the invitation is given to *anyone* who acknowledges and receives His calling to come out from among them and be separate.

Amazingly, a precious promise is given here to *anyone* who actually hears His voice and opens their heart to Him. The Amen says, *“...I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”* In the King

James translation, the word *dine* reads *sup*. It means *to banquet*. For the Jews, Greeks and Romans of this era, a banquet was the chief meal taken at or towards evening and often prolonged into the night. In this scripture that word is especially figurative of Christ's kingdom...not only for the future though, but as we will soon see with the present in mind as well. When you *dine* with someone, you sit across from each other face to face. That position speaks of both nearness to and personal intimacy with the other person. For those in Christ it is being together in a living union where love is answering love. In Him there is a depth of communion in which the two see themselves and reflect themselves in each other...the face being the likeness, and therein the reflection of the person. Can you imagine such love and intimacy? In the eyes of the Lord Jesus as He gazes into the face of a believer, He sees Himself in them; and in the eyes of a believer as they also gaze into His face, they likewise see themselves in Him. In this place of closest intimacy, the Son is privy to all the secret thoughts and desires of His beloved; and His beloved is privy to His...for here they actually come to know Him in the deepest bond of intimacy, being in both union and fellowship with Him. Inseparably united in each other, the believer is in direct fellowship with Him and He with them ever enjoying their love together. Here they will receive and reflect His glory together with Him, the One who fills all in all. (Matthew 11:25-26; John 17:3; Ephesians 1:22-23)

The Lord's promise is that if *anyone* hears His voice and then turns from their sin and begin to seek His face anew, they will in time grow up even more into Him. As they purposefully live out what they are learning, they will learn even more. For this is how their capacity to know Him is enlarged to receive even larger and fuller revelations of Him! And what lies ahead of them are other such Divine appointments with their heavenly Father. At each one of these junctures will be a personal transformation through obedience and the rigorous training of righteousness and holiness. There is much wisdom here in their Father's disciplining them in this way. Without it, they would be unable to receive their inheritance and know and mirror His Son. (Luke 19:26; 1 John 3:2-3; Hebrews 12:4-11)

It is much like seeing through a new pair of glasses. Here each child of God looks beyond themselves to Jesus through the Scriptures and the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, they see that the things planned long ago in eternity are a present reality to them. These things, though being eternal, are not out of their reach after all! For their Father's good pleasure has always been that they enter by faith into the reality of the good news of the glory of Christ and His kingdom even while they are still here on earth. (1 Corinthians 13:9-12 AMP; 2 Peter 1:10-11)

*"For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us."* (2 Corinthians 1:20)

In humbleness of mind born out of a deep repentance, a proper and fitting response for the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans would be to say with all his heart, "Amen - let it be so." Having in this way submitted himself to the Lord Jesus Christ and come into full agreement with Him, he may begin now to live out his Christian life in a way that is truly worthy of the One who is *The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God*. Each step of obedience will be of utmost importance to him. For with each step of obedience in the truth He has already spoken to him through the Scriptures, this messenger will be entering through the narrow gate of righteousness into the kingdom of God

experientially as he gains new ground in Christ: a new dimension in the life of Christ will open up before him with vistas in eternity his spiritual eyes had not yet seen!

Let the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans now say, "Amen."!

**The final word:** The very simplicity and brevity of these seven messages to the seven messengers of the seven churches gives an eloquent testimony of the living reality of their risen and exalted Christ...not to mention the Holy Spirit's progressive illumination to the church of seven aspects of the Lamb standing...He now in His ascension glory!

*The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lamp stands. (Revelation 2:1)*

*The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life. (Revelation 2:8)*

*The One who has the sharp two-edged sword. (Revelation 2:12)*

*The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze. (Revelation 2:18)*

*He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. (Revelation 3:1)*

*He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens. (Revelation 3:7)*

*The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God. (Revelation 3:14)*

There the present glories of the eternal Son shine forth in their Redeemer and High Priest - Jesus, the Man in glory!

*"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Hebrews 1:3-4)*

When the Lord Jesus is unveiled in His glory by the Holy Spirit, it cuts through a lot of deception. It is intended by God our Father to transcend the smallness of our own thinking! It then lifts us up in spirit and truth so we may indeed be at peace and rest in His Son. The great Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus moves in manifestation because He sees, as only He can see, the real need of each messenger and the churches. For whenever He is seen in His transcendency, the heart is humbled and strengthened simultaneously.

Here there will be lessons to be learned of their entire dependence upon Him as the Lord of all: lessons not only in what lays before them, but especially of His sufficiency to meet all their needs in all those



details of life and service as His faithful stewards. And just as the apostle John fell down like a dead man at the Lord's feet on the island of Patmos, a lesson to be well remembered by every true servant of His is that at every new juncture of growth they must first be broken by Him in order for Him to use them more effectively and more efficiently in His kingdom work: for only in their weakness, may He be exalted and seen.

With each revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in His present glory there also comes an intentional and purposeful strengthening and empowering of the elect on earth for fruitful living. This strengthening and empowering equips and enables them to overcome their own flesh patterns and any of the wiles of Satan by the Holy Spirit's power as they continue to stand firm in the faith and live in obedience to the truth. Here they may minister in His Name. For God had no intention of disowning or even of destroying His people in these two chapters as some might think or say; a covenant-keeping God, He already had all His promises for them in His eternal mind!

Listen carefully now and reflect for a moment on the words of Anne Graham Lotz from The Vision of His Glory.

“The vision has caused the martyr in the flames of death to smile.  
It has given strength to the weak,  
    faith to the doubting...  
    courage to the timid...  
    peace to the fearful...  
    victory to the defeated...  
    hope to the hopeless!  
Behold the Man! The vision is glorious!”

The Lord's use of the word *overcomes* in His seven messages is a military word and implies combat with an enemy. For the Christian, it is especially indicative of combat with the adversaries of Christ's kingdom and the forces of Satan. *Overcomes* means to be victorious, to prevail; and, interestingly, the Hebrew word means to be pure. All believers in Christ are overcomers. That is absolutely true. (1 John 4:4; 5:4-5) Yet there are various challenges to be faced by all of them during their lifetimes here on earth: challenges in which they are to adhere to God's standard of holy living found in the Bible, and challenges in which they are to remain faithful to Christ Jesus until that day of redemption when He returns to set up His kingdom here on earth. As this Day draws near, and in the midst of all its intense persecution and doctrinal error and with its great opposition and rebellion, overcomers in Christ are to steadfastly refuse to conform to the world's standard of living and its ungodliness...not to mention, any ungodliness within the visible church and its lukewarm culture. As each is overcoming, they are giving living proof to their faith in the living Christ!

There is wonderful grace made available to all overcomers in Christ in these two chapters of The Revelation of Jesus Christ. These graces are encapsulated in, and can be discovered in, His precious promises made to those overcomers who are overcoming...whether in baby steps or in the steps of the more mature. Each of these graces can be accessed through faith in God the Father who made the promise, and a genuine repentance whenever called for. For their heavenly Father is a promise-making

and promise-keeping God: this is who He is, and this is how He works: all that He has promised to be and do for His covenant people He will do. The overcomers part in this equation is to believe. (James 1:17; 2 Peter 1:4; Hebrew 6:13-14)

Within these two chapters you see not only specific promises to specific people - those who are in a state of overcoming - but specific promises for specific ailments as well. These promises from the Father have been given by the Lord Jesus Himself...eternal promises to encourage them to overcome specific and various hindrances to their faith. His promises are for both the ground and strength of a deeper walk with Him in this life, as well as for a much richer fulfillment in the life to come. For His magnificent promises here are for time and eternity with a present and future reward in His mind! (1 Timothy 4:8)

The Lord's command to all overcomers in Christ is to "...*hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*" (Revelation 3:11) To *hold fast* means to take hold of or grasp. It is what you do when you take hold of someone by the feet and don't let go. It also means to have power over, to be dominant, or become master of. *Holding fast* implies here a certain degree of force...the kind of force with which someone brings a person or thing wholly under their power even when resistance is encountered. It is much like what happens when a ship makes its bid to sail in a turbulent sea and runs aground - it is now stuck in the sand and remains immovable. It can also mean to be strong, to be mighty, to prevail...like Jacob with whom a Man earnestly wrestled throughout the night and who refused to let go of Him unless He blessed him. It was at this point that Jacob's name was then changed by Him to Isaac. Here there was an encounter with God Himself that so changed Jacob's perspective and way of life that when he lifted his eyes he could see God's face as he looked at Esau approaching him. With all of this in mind, the writer of Hebrews encouraged the saints to *hold fast* to their profession in Jesus Christ so they could attain to its full benefit! (Genesis 32:24-33:10 NKJ; Hebrews 4:14)

To see God's face is indeed a life-transforming encounter for His people! Consider now Moses who quietly waited in the cleft of the rock in order that God's glory might be revealed to him. Moses didn't hear any thunder or see any lightning or feel the earth shaking there as he had on Mt. Sinai. Instead the LORD's glory came down to him in an illumination of the reality of His Person...His infinite goodness and His perfect love and matchless character. Surely one of the most profound truths in all the Holy Bible is that God the Father wills to reveal His glory to His elect in the face of His Son. In both her design and establishment His intention has always been that the church give Light into this dark world. The Holy Spirit works then in accordance with the Father's will to bring His people into His deeper works in them...places in their souls where there is a greater need of purification and of conformation into the image of His Son. There the Lord Jesus Himself increases and they decrease as they yield - give the right of way - to the Holy Spirit and surrender to His Lordship and the work of the Cross in them. For the pathway to life in God's mind has always been through the Cross: here where the self-life is dealt with by a death blow and the self-will broken and where His only begotten Son is seen. Think here for a moment of the power released whenever an atom is broken. How much more then when any one of His children are broken in the Father's Hand! For in eternity past God never intended her to be without the power of the supernatural. For in the King's house there is to be power for miracles...miracles that set the captives free and that heal the brokenhearted. (Exodus 33:18-23; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Lamentations 3:40; Psalm 139:23-24; Ephesians 1:22-23; Hosea 10:12; Isaiah 64:8)

A fruitful branch, the church then is to remain in her true abiding position here in Christ the Rock - *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20 KJ) There she cleaves to the Lord Jesus by holding fast to Him in faith as her Savior and exalted King. It is right here at this very juncture of faith that she can enter more freely and more fully into the Father's work of establishing His kingdom here on earth. By taking hold of the Lord's Name and abiding by all it implies, by accepting God's standard of holy living as revealed in His Word, by holding fast to the Lord Jesus' teachings, by remaining in fellowship with other believers in a local church, and by laying hold of the sure hope set before her in His promised return, she will remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ as she is reflecting Him in the earth during His absence.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!

*"But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angles, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.*

*Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.*

*Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning - in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all. 'Be on the alert.'*" (Mark 13:24-37)

Let the church now say, "Amen."

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## **For Deeper Reflection in Truth**

*For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:1-3)*

*But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:31-32)*

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul. For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds." (Matthew 16:24-27)*

*We are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward.*  
(Romans 8:16-18 KJ)

*But let us, who are of the day, be sober; putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:8-10 KJ)

*But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only for a little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.*  
(1 Timothy 4:7-10)

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)*

*And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:27-28)*

*For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken. (Isaiah 54:10)*

*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*  
(2 Peter 3:17-18)