

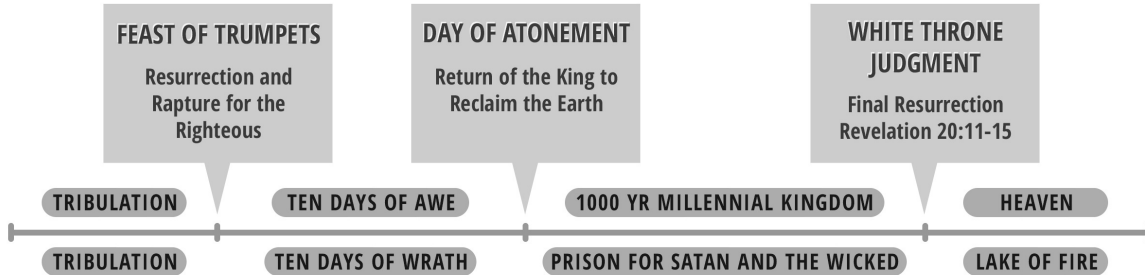
This is Part Six of the Serial Publication in PDF and Video, including all of Chapter Three.

The
PRODIGAL SON
PROPHECY

God's Amazing Plan for the Restoration of the Two
Hebrew Houses and the Salvation of the Gentiles

By Dr. Scott Lively

LETTERS TO THE "LEFT BEHIND" - REVELATION 2-3



TRUE CHRISTIANS Resurrected and raptured on Trumpets to join the Wedding Feast and return with the King on Atonement (Rev 19:11-21).

PSEUDO CHRISTIAN Left behind in "outer darkness" with ten days to repent and earn Heaven if they "endure to the end" (see below).

THESE INCLUDE: The "Saved by Works" people of Matthew 7:21-23. "I never knew you" (v. 23).
 The "Unprepared Wedding Guests" of Matthew 22:1-13. "Outer darkness" (v. 13).
 The "Foolish Virgins" of Matthew 25:8-12. "I don't know you" (v. 12).
 The "Worthless Servants" of Matthew 25:14-30. "Outer darkness" (v. 30).

All or most will die during the 10 Days of Wrath but those who repent and endure to the end without renouncing Christ will have their names written in the Book of Life (Rev 2:10-11) and earn rewards retroactive to the Day of Atonement (Rev 19:11-21) which they can claim in Heaven after the final resurrection and the White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:12).

LETTER 1: EPHEBUS Ephesus and Laodicea are bookends to the other letters with a common theme: If you repent before the rapture you will not face the wrath. Ephesus Message: All 7 letters are for all believers (Rev 2: 7). Ephesus Reward: Tree of Life (Rev 22:14).

LETTER 2: SMYRNA

Smyrna Message: If you do not repent, you will face the wrath for 10 days and will probably die.

However, if you repent during the 10 days and do not renounce Christ you will not face the second death, which is the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14).

Smyrna Reward: The Crown of Life (Rev 19:12).

LETTER 3: PERGAMUM

Pergamum Message: Those who fail to repent during the 10 days will be numbered with the wicked and slain by Christ the returning King with "the sword of His mouth" (Rev 19:15).

Pergamum Rewards: Hidden Manna (Rev 11:19). White Stone with New Name (Rev 19:12). (Per Roman custom, contest winners got this prize.)

LETTER 4: THYATIRA

Thyatira Message: Those who do not repent of adultery with Jezebel will face the wrath where they will be judged by their deeds.

Those not aligned with Jezebel have no other duty but to endure through the Tribulation.

Thyatira Reward: Reign with Christ and wield "iron scepter" during Millennial Kingdom (Rev 19:15).

LETTER 5: SARDIS

Sardis Message: Many believe they are saved but aren't and will be left behind to face the wrath.

Those who repent during the wrath will not have their names blotted out of the Book of Life.

Sardis Reward: Wear white garments eternity (Rev 7:9) (but not "walk with Him" during Millennial Kingdom (Rev 19:14).

LETTER 6: PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia Message: Those who have been faithful to Christ and do not deny His name will not face the wrath.

Those left behind who repent and endure during the wrath will accepted into heaven.

Philadelphia Reward: Bear the name of God and the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-21).

LETTER 7: LAODICEA If you repent before the rapture you will not face the wrath. Laodicea Message: Buy gold refined by fire (Rev 3: 18 & 1 Peter 1:7), white garments (Rev 3:18 & Rev 3:4) and eye salve, items associated with the righteous at the time of the rapture. Reward: To sit with Jesus on a throne (Rev 3:21 & Matt 19:28), a reference to the Millennial Kingdom.

CHAPTER 3:

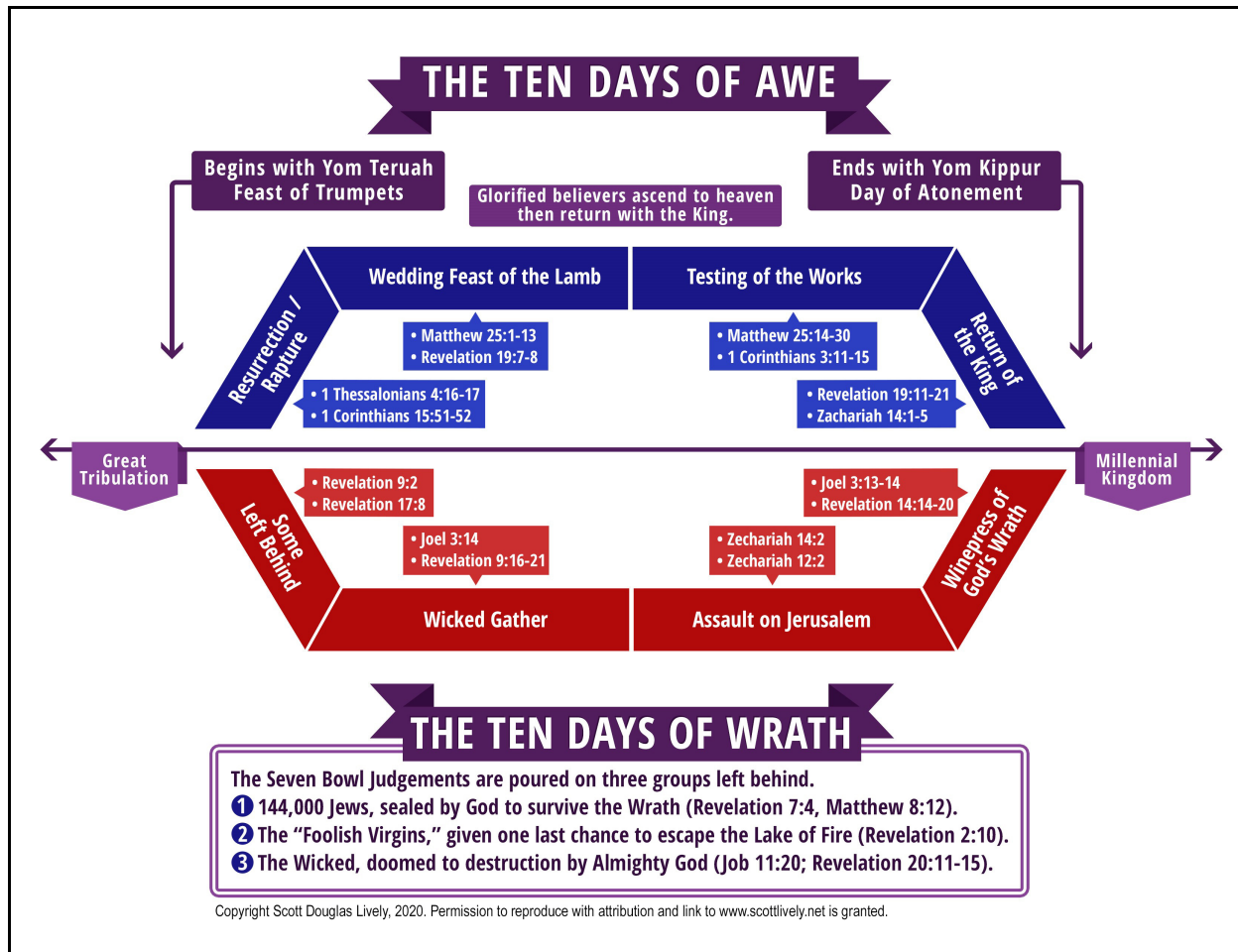
LETTERS TO THE "LEFT BEHIND"

The Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3 contain a message about the 10 days of Awe/Wrath during which Pseudo-Christians will have a chance to repent after the rapture if they endure till the 10th Day (or their death). True believers are also exhorted not to deny Christ during the tribulation leading to the resurrection and rapture or they may lose their salvation, just as the Lord warned in Matthew 10:32-33. While some readers may hold belief in "eternal security," meaning one cannot lose salvation under any circumstances, we have chosen to accept the plain meaning of the text at face value, while admitting that the doctrine of eternal security is plausible according to the internal logic of its arguments, but not definitive.

As explained in chapter two, the resurrection and rapture will occur on *Yom Teruah*, the Feast of Trumpets, when the Bride of Christ will be glorified and enter into the spiritual realm for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb and the Calculation of their Reward (through the testing of their works by fire -- 1 Corinthians 3:11-15) before returning to the physical realm as a part of the Host of Heaven that accompanies the Messiah, where He will slay the wicked with "the sword of His mouth," and claim His rightful place as the King of Kings over all the earth (Revelation 19:11-16 and Zechariah 14). (*Yom Teruah* is the first, and *Yom Kippur* is the tenth of the Days of Awe, the final ten days of the tribulation.)

Meanwhile, three groups of people will be left behind to face the wrath of God that will be poured out on the earth in the form of the Bowl Judgments (Revelation 16). These groups are:

1. The Wicked (the willful God-haters).
2. The 144 Thousand Torah-Faithful Hebrews (sealed against death -- Revelation 7:2-8).
3. The Deceived Unsaved: the followers of false religions, and Pseudo-Christians -- all of whom hold false beliefs that caused them to trust in something other than the blood of Christ for their salvation, and (for various reasons) do not take the Mark of the Beast during the tribulation).



This chart from Chapter One uses the designation "Foolish Virgins" to denote the broader category of the "Deceived Unsaved" because it is the terminology used in Matthew 24-25, which is the basis for our end-times chronology. But for the purposes of Chapter Three, "Foolish Virgins" is synonymous with both "Deceived Unsaved" and "Pseudo-Christians" to identify those who are left behind with a second chance to repent and be saved and who are not included among the 144,000 Jews or The Wicked).

This section will address the Psuedo (false)-Christians, whom I believe are the intended recipients of the teaching in the Letters to the Seven Churches. ["Pseudo-Christians" is a sub-category of the Deceived Unsaved, just as "Foolish Virgins" is a sub-category of "Pseudo-Christians."]

First, let's identify who these Pseudo-Christians are. Importantly, they are not "The Wicked" who are defined by depravity and extreme rebellion against God, men who (during the wrath) "*blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds*" (Revelation 16:11). Obviously, neither are they the Torah-faithful 144,000 Hebrews or members of false religions (e.g Buddhism), though the tenets of false religions are often a factor in the confusion of Pseudo-Christians.

The Pseudo-Christians believe themselves to be Christians but through false thinking accepted false notions about salvation. These would include members of various cults such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons who, because of false doctrines, worship a false version of Christ. Similarly, those whose embrace of "gay theology" causes them to believe in a "nicer-than-Jesus" version of Christ -- one who condones what God has condemned as abomination -- may also be Pseudo-Christians (though I believe that there are repentant homosexual strugglers who genuinely believe in the true Christ and receive His mercy). Some Roman Catholics and others who may put their faith in their own works rather than the atonement of Christ are also Pseudo-Christians.

I want to be clear that I believe there are genuinely saved people (true believers in Christ per Romans 10:9-10) in every Christian and quasi-Christian denomination and Bible-based cult, irrespective of whatever false doctrines these individuals may also hold. Likewise, I also believe there are unsaved Pseudo-Christians in every authentically Bible-believing denomination. Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

The Bible addresses Pseudo-Christians in several passages. The first and most obvious is Matthew 7:21-23:

*"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**"*

Clearly these are people who believe they are saved by works but have no relationship with Christ.

Another is the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:8-12:

*"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. . . . And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. **But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.**"*

Also in Matthew 25:14-30: is the familiar Parable of the Talents, in which the recipient of the single talent proved to be an unfaithful steward who made no effort to serve his master, and heard the fateful rebuke, "**cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth**" (v. 30).

Similarly, the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22:1-13 highlights a wedding guest who is disqualified because he is not wearing wedding clothes (he is not properly prepared to enter the banquet) and ends badly:

*“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. **Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’** “ (v.11-13).*

Lastly, this is the same place to which Jews (i.e. the 144,000) are sent who have not yet accepted Christ at the time of the resurrection and rapture:

*“I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; **but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**” (Matthew 8:12).*

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE OUTER DARKNESS

To properly understand the above parables we must first recognize that the “Kingdom of Heaven” is not the heaven of eternity, but the Millennial Kingdom. The following is an excerpt from “Jesus' Teaching on the Kingdom & Land Inheritance,” by Pastor Tim Warner of Answers in Revelation:

“Jesus' teaching is often misunderstood by modern Christians because it is usually divorced from the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus frequently spoke of the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ in His parables. Many assume that this refers to a kingdom IN heaven. From such statements Christians often suppose that He meant believers would fly away to heaven to live in this ‘Kingdom.’ This thinking is the result of imposing false presuppositions onto Jesus. When His words are understood from a Jewish perspective, compared with other statements He made, and in light of a host of Old Testament prophecies, it is quite evident that the “Kingdom of heaven” is not a kingdom IN heaven, but the Kingdom FROM heaven.

“The phrase ‘Kingdom of heaven’ was used by Matthew only. It always refers to Christ’s future reign from Jerusalem, when the dominion of heaven will be imposed on the earth. The places where Matthew records Jesus referring to the “Kingdom of heaven” all have “Kingdom of God” in the parallel passages in Mark and Luke. Thus, the terms are synonymous. The “Kingdom” is the one prophesied by Daniel. *“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.’*

“Thus, the full title is really ‘the Kingdom of the God of Heaven,’ which the Gospel writers shortened to ‘Kingdom of God’ and ‘Kingdom of heaven.’ And this is the

Kingdom 'under heaven' that Daniel said would be given to the 'Son of Man' and all of the 'saints.' www.answersinrevelation.org/Jesus.pdf.

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is the Millennial Kingdom, not eternal spiritual heaven, a fact with enormously significant implications for our theology, which every reader of this study should take time to ponder (consider, for example 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Likewise, the "Outer Darkness" is (I believe) not eternal spiritual hell, but an earthly "hell" during the 10 Days of Awe/Wrath, where the Deceived Unsaved are "left behind" with a final chance to repent and have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The Bible identifies two different places where there is "*weeping and gnashing of teeth*." One of them is a place of fire, which may represent either (or both) a place of torment for the wicked dead prior to the Great White Throne Judgment (Luke 16:23-24), or the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:40-42).

The other place of "*weeping and gnashing of teeth*" is called "Outer Darkness," and I believe it will be earth during the Bowl Judgments of the 10 Days of Awe, for indeed there will be such great suffering that "*they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores*" (Revelation 16:10-11). Importantly, the "outer darkness" is the place outside the "Wedding Feast of the Lamb" which we have shown takes place in the spiritual realm while the bowl judgments are poured out on earth.

SALVATION WILL STILL BE POSSIBLE DURING THE 10 DAYS OF AWE

In Hebrew teaching, the 10 Days of Awe is the time when God decides whether one's name will be written in the Book of Life or the Book of Death. How fitting that teaching is in light of this study and our assumption that those left behind will have a second chance to accept Christ and spend eternity with Him -- though clearly they miss out on being a part of the Bride of Christ, and have to die as humans (most likely during the wrath) and wait till the end of the Millennial Kingdom to be resurrected and receive their spiritual bodies.

*"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, **and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them**; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake*

of fire. And *if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire*" (Revelation 20:11-15).

There are two separate holding pens for those who die after the resurrection and rapture. The Pseudo-Christians/"Foolish Virgins"/lazy servants get a second chance to have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, however, it's not going to be easy! That is the message of the Letters to the Seven Churches.

THE LETTERS TO THE LEFT BEHIND

This section is not intended to be a comprehensive study of Revelation 2-3, nor to contradict any other teaching on it. As I have stated, I believe the Bible offers multiple layers of meaning and supports multiple interpretations. This analysis will only address the aspects of the Seven Letters that speak to the consequences to Pseudo-Christians of not repenting of their false beliefs (and the actions based upon those beliefs).

The theme and purpose of the 10 Days of Awe is a final chance for repentance as God decides who will be written in the Lamb's book of life and who will be written in the Book of Death. The final decision is not made until the Day of Atonement, when all of those who have not accepted Christ as Savior will be killed.

The letters taken together contain a dual message: favor for those who repent and remain faithful unto death, but increasing levels of punishment for those who fail to repent. "*God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). The Letters to the Seven Churches (and the 10 Days of Awe warned about in them) are His last effort to persuade men to turn from their sin.

EPHESUS -- FIRST WARNING: REPENT TO BE SPARED THE WRATH

Both Ephesus (the first letter) and Laodicea (the seventh and final one) advise the readers in general terms that if they repent they will be spared the wrath. In this way they are bookends that point to and emphasize the messages between them.

But the Letter to Ephesus makes clear that the messages of all seven letters are relevant to all individual believers and should be taken together as one teaching:

"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).

All are exhorted to heed the warnings of Revelation 2-3, and those who do (both the members of the Bride of Christ and those who accept Christ during the wrath) will be with Him in eternity. This exhortation is repeated throughout the seven letters.

The Tree of Life is not found in the Millennial Kingdom but in Heaven (Revelation 22:2) after the physical world has been destroyed (Revelation 21:1). In other words, the letters address all of those who will come to salvation, whether or not they are “left behind” during the 10 Days of Awe.

Likewise, all must “overcome” to receive their reward, a reminder that there is great pressure to deny Christ during the suffering of the tribulation as well as during the wrath.

SMYRNA -- ‘LEFT BEHIND,’ YES. BUT FOR HOW LONG?

The Letter to Smyrna is the first letter to warn of a specific consequence for not repenting before the time of wrath.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Revelation 2:10-11).

Remember that all those who are not in Christ have not been ransomed by His blood and are thus owned by Satan (John 3:18). They will not be resurrected or raptured as a member of the Bride of Christ, but will be left behind, in the hands of the evil one.

They shall suffer not for seven years but for ten days! These are the 10 Days of Awe/Wrath.

Importantly, those among the left behind who receive Christ and remain faithful to Him until death will earn the crown of life that saves them from the second death at the end of the Millennium. In other words, their names will be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life but most likely will not survive the time of wrath.

PERGAMUM -- ABANDON FALSE DOCTRINES OR DIE WITH THE WICKED

The Letter to Pergamum warns that those left behind to face the wrath and then fail to repent during those ten days will be killed with the wicked upon the return of Christ on the Day of Atonement.

*“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16 **Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth...** To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it”* (Revelation 2:14-17).

Note the clear reference to Revelation 19: 11-16, which describes the return of Christ in power on the Day of Atonement, especially the reference in verse 15 of the “sword of His mouth.” This is unmistakably classifying the unrepentant Pseudo-Christians with the wicked whom Christ slays upon

his return with the Host of Heaven.

*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called *The Word of God*. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. **15** And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, *KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*.”*

Note also the references to some of the rewards of the repentant in this same Revelation passage: a crown of life (Smyrna), a secret name (Pergamum), “my new name” (Philadelphia), clean white linens (Laodicea), authority over the nations (Thyatira). These all align the teaching of Revelation 2-3 with the 10 Days of Awe.

The Pergamum letter emphasizes two false doctrines that may help to identify why the Pseudo-Christians are left behind. The reference to Balaam invokes the demonic idolatry of the Canaanites, involving sexual perversion and child sacrifice (see Sections Three and Four) and in the present-day context would seem to encompass believers and churches compromised by worldly attitudes on sexual morality and abortion. The reference to the Nicolaitans relates to human-created doctrines taught as equivalent or superior to Scripture (the “the leaven of the Pharisees”), especially by ecclesiastical authorities who hold themselves out as superior to the laity, and in the modern context would seem to encompass both Pseudo-Christian cults and some aspects of denominationalism in mainstream Christianity.

There is another spiritual bombshell in Revelation 2:17, “*To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna.*” Does this suggest that God will supernaturally sustain some of those who repent during the wrath allowing them to survive it? Or is this the hidden manna of the Ark of the Covenant in Revelation 11:19 (the perfect spiritual Ark on which the earthly Ark was designed), suggesting that the subjects of verse 17 are killed during the wrath? Intriguing questions, but I think the former is correct. Some will survive the wrath and be a part of the “mixed multitude” of Jerusalem who are rescued by Christ on the Day of Atonement. Shortly thereafter we find this mixed multitude dwelling safely together in the Millennial Kingdom:

“For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob” Isaiah 14:1.

THYATIRA -- SECOND WARNING ABOUT CAANANITE IDOLATRY AND PERVERSION

Those who do not repent of their adultery with Jezebel will face the wrath.

*“I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. **Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.** And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

*“**But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.** And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star” (Revelation 2:19-28).*

Two groups of church members are contrasted here: those unfaithful who suffer the wrath v. those faithful who will reign with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. Note that the unfaithful (Jezebel’s “children” are “killed with death” – a otherwise very peculiar turn of phrase that makes perfect sense in the context of the “second death” in the Lake of Fire. Indeed, the warning could even be rephrased “her children will be killed, along with death itself, in the Lake of Fire.”

Jezebel here appears to be synonymous with the great prostitute of Revelation 17 which suggests that one message of the Letter to Thyatira may be to confirm that the 10 Days of Awe is the time in which the bowl judgments will be poured out on the earth:

“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries...’ ” Revelation 17:2-3.

Let us also remember, however, that the historical Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, who “*as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nedab, ... [dared to defy God even more egregiously, and] married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him”* (1 Kings 16:30-33). What made Jezebel such a symbol of evil was her association with Canaanite idolatry involving sexual perversion and child sacrifice.

SARDIS -- DON'T BE UNPREPARED LIKE THE FOOLISH VIRGINS

*“I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. **Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.**”*

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Revelation 3:1-5).

Only a few are already credited as righteous. The others will be among those caught by surprise at the return of Christ and will face the wrath, but if they repent and remain faithful their names will be found written in the Lamb's Book of Life at the Great White Throne Judgment, when Christ will confess their names before the Father.

This letter is a warning for believers to be prepared for the return of Christ, meaning to be diligent in discerning the times and seasons.

*“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. **For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.** Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6).*

“Times and seasons” refers to the Feasts or *Moedim* of the Lord in Leviticus 23, provided to the Hebrews as signposts and rehearsals for the first and second coming of Christ. “*These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons*” (Leviticus 23:4). The Hebrew words for both “feasts” and “seasons” in Leviticus 23:4 are variations of the word “*moed*,” or appointed times. The Greek word *kairos* (“seasons” in 1 Thessalonians 5:1) is used in the Septuagint to translate *moed*.

Thus, the Sardis letter is also a warning to Christians to pay attention to the Hebrew roots of Scripture so as not to be taken by surprise by the return of the Lord.

PHILADELPHIA -- SALVATION REQUIRES ENDURANCE

This church is unified in righteousness, but believers are warned not to waver in their commitment to Christ. They will lose their reward (“*thy crown*”) if they deny His name before the end of the tribulation.

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little”

*strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.** Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name”* (Revelation 3:8-12).

“*If you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father in Heaven,*” Jesus warned the disciples in Matthew 10:32-33, a teaching found throughout the New Testament (e.g., John 15:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

LAODICEA -- FINAL WARNING: REPENT TO BE SPARED THE WRATH

The Letter to Laodicea, like the Letter to Ephesus, contains a general warning to repent or face the wrath, and reminds us that testing through tribulation is a part of His plan.

*“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.... **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.** Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”* (Revelation 3:15-21).

POSTSCRIPT

The Letters to the Seven Churches were written to all believers in every generation from the time John the Apostle first published them, and contain a wealth of knowledge and revelation supporting a wide variety of teachings and interpretations. This section has touched on just a fraction of the truth available in these two short chapters of Revelation that is highly relevant to these last days. In summary, the message is a warning to the last generation that the final years leading to the reign of Christ will be defined by increasing persecution, but all who repent and thereafter cling firmly to Christ will spend eternity with Him in Heaven, even those whose error causes them to miss the wedding feast and end up in the outer darkness of the 10 Days of Awe/Wrath.