

# The Jerusalem Passion - an Eschatology in Song

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***“Christ Your passion  
Has become our passion  
Unto perfection,  
Through Your provision.  
Christ Your passion  
Has become our passion,  
And in deep repentance,  
We renew our vision.  
Come and make us one,  
Come and make us one,  
Make us one.”***

## Introduction

The “Jerusalem Passion” oratorio heralds a call to Christian unity. Its setting is the two Jerusalems – the earthly Jerusalem and the new Jerusalem. These two cities illustrate the two passions of Christ – the earthly Jerusalem, the place of the passion of His death, and the new Jerusalem, His heart’s passion for restoring and perfecting the only true Body of Christ, the Church of the Living God.

The lyrics of the call, while poetic in form, are singularly biblical in context<sup>1</sup>.

The message of the call is that the present day Church, while deeply in need of restoration to the apostles’ doctrine,<sup>2</sup> manner of life and administration<sup>3</sup> will find restoration and

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<sup>1</sup> In the programme that accompanied the early performances of the “Jerusalem Passion” the words of the songs are accompanied with the verses from scripture that inspired them. Ninety nine Bible references are given.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:42.

<sup>3</sup> As the Body of Christ expanded in the days of the early church, the apostles inaugurated an administration under their oversight to maintain a network of relationships from one locality to another. This administration first of all involved the seven who were appointed in Jerusalem (Ac 6:1-7), then other “ascension gift” apostles and missionaries (Eph 4:7-16), and later elders, in the huge task of maintaining the Body as one fellowship of the Son on earth (1Co 1:9; 2Co 8:20).

be further formed to participate with Christ in the trials, triumphs and glories of His second coming.

The lyrics above are taken from what is possibly the signature tune of the whole oratorio, “Christ Your Passion”.

## An Eschatology

The dictionary defines the word “eschatology” as “a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of mankind.”<sup>4</sup> It also comments on the diversity of beliefs that exist over the events and timing of the end of the world - “*specif*: any of various Christian doctrines concerning the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, or the nature of human existence upon the completion of history”.

The specific songs of the oratorio that Scripturally deal with end time matters are “The Overture”, “Where are the Eagles?” “Jerusalem Come Down”, and the verses of “They Shall be One”.

The lyrics for “Where are the Eagles?” were inspired from Christ’s discourse in Matthew 24 which arose after His disciples asked “*Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*”<sup>5</sup> The song also draws from Revelation 4 and 5 when it cites

***“There’s and Eagle, there’s a Man,  
There’s a Lion, there’s a Lamb,  
There’s a Body gathered here,  
But where, Lord?  
Where are the eagles?”***

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<sup>4</sup> Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 24:3

The lyrics for "Jerusalem Come Down" poetically incorporate five passages from the Book of Revelation each of which is sung as a plea for their fulfilment to be realised.

***"Come and tabernacle with us"<sup>6</sup>  
Spread Your mighty wings upon us,<sup>7</sup>  
Drive away every fear,<sup>8</sup>  
Dry away every tear.<sup>8</sup>  
Come thou bride of heaven down,  
And feed us with Your bread of heaven,<sup>9</sup>  
City of history, finish thy mystery"<sup>10</sup>***

In the verses from "They Shall be One" these references are made to events recorded in the book of Revelation.

***"Every tribe and every kindred  
and tongue shall come,  
And they shall be one."<sup>11</sup>  
Out of great tribulation,  
They shall come  
And shall be one in My name"<sup>12</sup>***

The song that is the theme of this paper, however, is "The Overture". Here in the opening words of the first song of the "Jerusalem Passion" the attention focuses on chapters 1-3 of the book of Revelation, where Christ's Church is pictured as seven lampstands, but with its lights greatly diminished due to lack of oil and blackened wicks.

***"He that hath an ear to hear  
let him hear  
What the Spirit's saying  
to the Churches,  
Listen to the trumpet,  
Listen to the trumpet sound.  
Hearken to the trumpet,  
Hearken to the trumpet sound."***

While the other passages refer to future

events in Christ's coming, these events call for an immediate readiness. Christ's voice, like a trumpet blast, calls His Church to overcome in its present state of rejection, division and apostasy. Before taking a detailed look at the significance of Revelation 2 and 3, consider these thoughts about the book of Revelation as a whole.

## **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

Greek was the language of the day when John recorded visions and scenes he experienced concerning the end of the world. These writings became the book of Revelation. This book was included in the Canon of Scripture, and although it was not the last to be written, it has rightfully been placed at the end of the Bible.

The word translated into English as "Revelation" is the Greek word "apocalypse". It is used in Greek literature to express an unveiling, manifestation, or disclosure. Some would have become acquainted with this word in recent years through Francis Coppola's award-winning movie, "Apocalypse Now". This film was named with the book of Revelation in mind as the movie deals with the horror, atrocities and hopelessness of the Vietnam War - a theme which seems similar to what John saw and recorded.

As the title of the last book of the Bible, the importance of the word "apocalypse" is twofold. Firstly and primarily, it expresses the book's task of unveiling the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in power and majesty. Secondly it discloses the woes, sorrows, and defeat this Coming will bring to those who reject, or oppose it.

## **The Christ of Glory**

The complete title of the last book of the Bible is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ".

<sup>6</sup> Rev 21:3.

<sup>7</sup> Rev 7:15.

<sup>8</sup> Rev 7:17.

<sup>9</sup> Rev 7:16, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Rev 10:7; 12:1.

<sup>11</sup> Rev 7:9.

<sup>12</sup> Rev 7:14.

This adequately describes its content, for throughout its pages Jesus Christ is revealed in many different forms and attributes, all of which portray various aspects of His Second Coming. Furthermore, the Second Coming of Christ as portrayed in the book of Revelation, brings to our attention a very different impression of Christ than does His First Coming. The Christ of the four Gospels came:

- as an embryo within a virgin's womb;
- as a babe in a manger;
- as a carpenter's son in Nazareth;
- as a disciple of John the Baptist;
- as a servant of God among the people of Israel;
- as a prophet in His Father's house;
- as a sacrificial Lamb upon the Cross;
- as the Saviour of the world through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

In the "Revelation", God wants us to know His Son beyond the Christ of history - now as the coming Lord of Glory; no longer Christ "*according to the flesh*",<sup>13</sup> but "*according to the power of an endless life*".<sup>14</sup> Thus, the Christ of "Revelation" is unveiled:

- as the Great High Priest coming to judge the world with His Church;
- as the Lion/Lamb in the midst of the throne of God, worthy and able to minister the full inheritance to His saints;
- as the Mighty Warrior, riding forth to conquer every foe;
- as the Bridegroom receiving and rejoicing with His Bride;
- as the King of Kings overcoming the ten kings of the Antichrist reign;
- as the Lord of the Harvest, reaping the earth of its tares and wheat;
- as the Alpha and Omega, the Root and Offspring of David, the Faithful and

<sup>13</sup> 2Co 5:16.

<sup>14</sup> Heb 7:16.

True Witness, the First Begotten from the Dead, the Messenger (angel) with the Seal of the Living God, etc.;

## The Whole Truth

To understand the full significance of these final unveilings of Christ, we need to appreciate the theme of the Bible as a whole. Briefly put, the Bible is a manuscript from God outlining His purpose for creating the heavens and the earth and their inhabitants - angels and man. It is also a record of the opposition to His purpose from fallen angels (including Satan, or Lucifer) and fallen mankind.

The first five books of the Bible, and notably the book of Genesis, contain the seeds of the many themes which are later consummated in the book of "Revelation". The historical, poetic and prophetic books of the Old Testament develop these themes through typology,<sup>15</sup> shadows<sup>16</sup> and prophecy. In the New Testament, the Apostles declare the same themes, *but "in spirit and in truth"*,<sup>17</sup> as they relate to the Christian Church.

The "Revelation" is the final chapter of this ongoing story showing the glory of God's purpose fulfilled and His final triumph over all opposition.

## Where are we now?

The most dramatic chapters in the "Revelation" are those which describe what takes place in the opening of the seven seals

<sup>15</sup> "A hermeneutical concept in which a Biblical place (Jerusalem, Zion), person (Adam, Melchizedek), event (flood, brazen serpent), institution (feasts, covenant), office (prophet, priest, king), or object (tabernacle, altar, incense) becomes a pattern by which later persons or places are interpreted due to the unity of events within salvation-history" The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia P.930

<sup>16</sup> See: Col 2:16,17; Heb 8:5, 10:1.

<sup>17</sup> John 4:23

(chapter 6-), the blowing of the seven trumpets (chapter 8-), and the pouring forth of the seven last plagues of God's wrath (chapter 15-). It is usually from these chapters that many seek to interpret past and present events.

The speculations are endless, and some are quite imaginative. It is apparent that not only have film makers interpreted the events of history in the light of John's vision, but so too have the theologians of many generations. Indeed the numerous disasters of history, as well as the spiritual revivals, have all to some degree appeared to be a fulfilment of events described in the "Revelation". However, the particular emphasis of the Spirit of God in this present hour is the message to the Church contained in chapters 2 and 3 of the "Revelation". This is more vital and relevant to us today than the interpretation of apocalyptic events and signs that so often preoccupy the attention of people everywhere. In these chapters we see a picture of the Lord correcting the whole Church to restore her and her leadership to true glory and accountability.

At this present time, the Spirit is also giving us an inspired glimpse of chapters 4 and 5 which show the Church restored as the light of the world, abiding in heavenly places, united in divine order, and able to go forth bringing God's will to perfection "on earth as it is in heaven" (Mat 6:10). For some the interpretation of Rev 4 and 5 is thought to be a picture of the saints in heaven. It would seem, however, that the sealed book being open marks the specific commencement of the time of the end, for this book which results in the final triumphs of the Lamb being accomplished in the earth was "sealed until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). In these chapters, Christ is setting in motion the final actions that bring to pass the full inheritance of the saints described in Ephesians 1:13,14 as the "*redemption of the purchased possession*". Daniel calls this occasion, "*the time of the end*", declaring it will

*initiate "a time of trouble such as never was" (Dan 12:1-4).*

This scene further declares that there is a fellowship in prayer (golden bowl of incense) and the experiences of faith (harps and new song) that transcends time, life and death and which, through the actions of the Lion/Lamb brings to pass the hope of every creature who died or lives in the faith of Christ's accomplished redemption.

This scene is similar to Hebrews 11 where the realisation of the faith of believers of the old dispensation is said to be in the faithfulness of a future generation "*and all these having obtained a good testimony through faith did not receive the promise, God having provided some better thing for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us*" (vv. 39, 40). In Rev. 5 these saints who died "in faith" are the "*great cloud of witnesses*" of Hebrews 11 and 12. They are in His presence in Heaven with the *alive "living in faith saints"* who are in His presence in heavenly places together beholding the Lamb standing to take the book of full redemption.

### **A Glorious Church?**

In Revelation chapter 1, the first unveiling of Christ is of Him standing in the midst of His glorious Church, symbolically portrayed as the Lampstand of the Old Testament Tabernacle, which was made of one beaten piece of pure gold.<sup>18</sup> It is quite likely that the various descriptions of His attributes and apparel depict His priestly authority (garments), His preparedness (girdle), His holiness (hair), and glory (face), His intent to expose (eyes), judge (feet), shake (voice), and divide asunder (two-edged sword). The leadership of His Church is portrayed as the seven stars, or messengers, firmly held in His right hand.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ex 25:36.

<sup>19</sup> Rev 1:13-16.

The importance of this is to declare the priority of the Church in relation to Christ's Second Coming, in particular, His intention to restore and perfect the Church, and then to judge His enemies by and through the Church.

The picture of the Church given in Chapters 2 and 3, however, is vastly different! In these verses His Church is anything but pure, anything but "one piece of gold". On the contrary, it is divided and gripped by "*the depths of Satan*" (2:24) (false doctrine, immorality, even apostasy) with a leadership that has fallen from the position of "*His right hand*" (1:20).

Apostasy happens so subtly and silently that often it is hard to accept that we are a party to it. According to Rev. 2:1-5, it begins with the context of the leaving of first love, which the context indicates is a relational departure (from Christ and from each other) before it is ever doctrinal ("*You have tested those who say they are apostles*") or moral ("*You cannot bear those who are evil*").<sup>20</sup> However, the leaving of first love in the first Church was soon followed by the leaving of the true doctrine, and the true lifestyle of Christ in the subsequent Churches. The clear call throughout Christ's brief letters to the seven Churches is that the Church and its leadership is in need of restoration.

The message of restoration is not unique to the book of Revelation. It is a subject that is mentioned often in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, Joel 2:25, "*So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, and the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust...*", and from the NT,

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<sup>20</sup> The troubles that developed between Paul and the churches he established usually came out of relational difficulties. Even the major problem of not accepting his apostleship was more in reaction to his personality and ways or disappointments at his departures and intensity rather than a rejection of his message. However, as the letters to Galatia, Corinth, and Timothy record, the doctrinal breakdown quickly followed.

Acts 3:19-21, "*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven and earth must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*"<sup>21</sup>

The Joel verse seems to be applicable to the Church in the time of the end for although Peter quoted from Joel to describe the events on the day of Pentecost, much more was to occur for the prophecy to be fully realised.<sup>22</sup> The verses from Acts leave no doubt as to the time of full restoration being prior to Christ's return for the heavens are holding Him back until all is restored that the prophets declared.

### Judgment Begins

Revelation chapters one and two indeed describe the beginning of Christ's revelation, of His "apocalypse", of His Second Coming. But it is not quite what we expected! Yes, eventually He will "*descend from heaven with a shout*" to meet His people (1Th 4:15-18), but here, in this first aspect of His coming, His attributes which were to deal with the sinfulness of the world, have become attributes which deal with the worldliness of His Church, and so judgment begins "*at the house of God*".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The meaning of restoration in the OT is to restore back something stolen or owed, to set again. In NT times the Greeks, when using restoration as a medical term, understood it to mean "complete restoration of health; the restoring to its place of a dislocated joint" (Word Studies in the New Testament, Vincent, P231).

<sup>22</sup> There is a number of times in Scripture where prophecies were partially fulfilled and then had a greater fulfilment years later. One of note is the sending of Elijah in the great and terrible day of the Lord (Mal 4:5). This prophecy was partially fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist (Luke 1:17), but its full import is yet to be realised in the second coming of Christ.

<sup>23</sup> 1Peter 4:17.

In particular, the revelation of Christ's judgment begins with the leaders (called the "seven stars", or "angels" of the Churches. [Rev 1:20;2:1]). These are the ones whom God holds accountable for the fallen state of His Church. In recent years, the reality of this judgment has become a media spectacle. Television programs and newspaper reports have openly disclosed Church scandals which expose the decadence, self-indulgence and independence of Church leaders. This is but the beginning of the anger of the Lord, designed to arrest the fallen condition of the Church so that He may restore her to be a glorious Church, ready for His Second Coming.

Christ's judgment is harsh and impartial, but it is not without hope and mercy. His intention is not the destruction of those who are found fallen, but rather their deliverance. We read of "stars" who do fall without hope (Rev 8:10; 9:1; 12:4), but the fallen ones in these early chapters are given a chance to remember from where they have fallen and to "repent and do again the first works" (Rev 2:5). Christ's purpose in exposing things within His Church is not for evil, but for good. Those who have been "lording it over" God's people must humble themselves among the body of believers. Those who have become "hirelings" must again become "true shepherds" who serve the flock of God "from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from unhyprocritical faith"(1Tim 1:5)

The Church needs her leadership as never before, but this leadership is required by Christ to be morally, theologically and relationally sound.

## Remember

It seems likely that Christ's call for the leaders and the Church to "remember" from where they had fallen

would have taken some of the leadership at Ephesus back to two occasions in their history. The first would have been when Paul called the elders of Ephesus together to Miletus for a final address in which he shared with them the discourse recorded in Acts 20:17-38, and the second when Paul left Timothy among them with the direction to "*charge some that they teach no other doctrine*".<sup>24</sup>

The Ephesian elders would remember Paul's departing words from Asia as a sad time, but would later remember a perilous time when his words were fulfilled. In the first instance they wept at the loss of Paul's presence; in the latter at the loss of God's. The seriousness of these times must have been in their reflections too - In Acts 20 because of the charge Paul was giving them and in Timothy because of the charge being made against them.

The "weeping of Paul" and the "charge to Timothy" are the two headings under which much can be learned as to the true state of unity God desires for His Church and its leadership, and the true life style He requires of its leaders and members. We will also comment on the prophetic declaration of these events and their relevance to the present day Church.

## Remember the Weeping of Paul

*"Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).*

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<sup>24</sup> 1Tim 1:3.

Paul's discourse in Acts 20 has fascinated many commentators on the book of Acts. This is because its content seems out of place in a book that is primarily a narrative. It would appear, as is the case in the epistles, that there is a word for the Christian Church throughout the ages to the present day, in what Paul says.

Paul lived among the Church members and leadership of Ephesus for three years, and wept every night and every day.<sup>25</sup> He wept as he warned the elders that savage wolves would come in among *them* "not sparing the flock"<sup>26</sup>, and furthermore, that some of the elders, by speaking perverse things, would draw disciples away from the counsel of God to themselves, and in so doing innocent ones would be slain.<sup>27</sup>

In Deuteronomy 21 there is a ceremony described which was required when anyone was found slain and their killer was not known. The elders of the city nearest to where the deceased was found were to take a heifer to a valley flowing with water and their break the animal's neck and wash their hands over it, saying, "*Our hands have not shed this innocent blood*". It is quite

likely Paul was alluding to this when he said, "*I am innocent of the blood of all men*", for he was in effect washing his hands of the guilt of the many innocent he foresaw would be slain because the Ephesian elders would not take seriously his warning that they "*Take heed to themselves and to the flock*".

There is something more that needs to be considered in Paul's three years of weeping. Was he prophetically seeing down through the years to the present state of the flock of God? We are certainly scattered, divided and broken. Savage wolves have roamed freely scattering the flock, and many leaders continue to draw away to themselves, jealously guarding their own positions and authority, often more interested in position than togetherness, in acclaim than function and in being acquainted than related. We are more able to unite against things God hates than to unite for very long in what He loves.

Whether Paul was weeping for our day or not, the same state exists as that which he saw would befall the Church at Ephesus. If this is so, does it not follow that the same accountability will be reckoned?

The context of Paul's statement in v.28 ("*therefore take heed to yourselves*"), not only takes us back to v.26 ("I am innocent of the blood of all men"), but it also takes us forward to his admonition to ("*Shepherd the flock of God which he has purchased with his own blood*") The warning of accountability is clear; the hands of any elders who draw away the flock to themselves are guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>25</sup> Acts 20:31.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 20:29.

<sup>27</sup> It is disconcerting to some that Paul not only knew that the deeds of the wolves and the erring elders would happen, but he knew for three years. Surely in so much time the capacity of his ministry could have stopped this! The issue, however, is one of accountability. Paul, in the capacity of his ministry, let what he foresaw happen, and then once it did, addressed the problem, which seems to be the purpose of the letters to Timothy. At Miletus Paul was pointing out that the guilt for those innocent would not be on his hands, but on those of the elders. By asserting his innocence he was not avoiding responsibility, but rather, declaring that he had fulfilled it. He goes on to show that the elders would be innocent too, if they would take heed and fulfil their responsibility. Paul implies strongly that his part was to declare the whole counsel of God and their part was to shepherd the flock of God wholly in it.

### Remember the Charge of Timothy

*“Remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in the faith” (1Tim 1:3,4).*

The letters to Timothy, with the epistle to Titus, are commonly called the “Pastoral Epistles”. They seem rightly placed in our Bibles, and in the sequence of time between Acts 20 and Rev 2. What is recorded in them is the sad account of how true the last words of Paul to the Ephesian elders proved to be, for *indeed* “*savage wolves*” had come in among the elders and certain of the elders were speaking “*perverse things*” to draw away disciples after themselves. They also indicate how quickly his predictions of apostasy came to pass.<sup>28</sup> These writings not only record the fallen state of some leaders, but also how to address this problem, and what qualifications are required that leadership might be respected again and the Church might again be the pillar and ground of all that is true.

To magnify how serious the charge to Timothy was, it is quite likely that the word “leader” could be added wherever the word “*some*” is used in Paul’s first letter to him.

- “Charge some *leaders* that they teach no other doctrine” (1:3)
- “From which some *leaders* ... have turned aside to idle talk desiring to be teachers of the law” (1:6)
- “Which some *leaders* having rejected have suffered shipwreck” (1:19)

<sup>28</sup> The Miletus discourse was thought to have occurred around 58 A.D., while First Timothy was considered to be written around 67 A.D.

- “in latter times some *leaders* will depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits...” (4:1)
- “Some *leaders*’ sins are clearly evident.. some follow later” (5:24)
- “For the love of money... some *leaders* have strayed from the faith” (6:10)
- “By professing ... falsely called knowledge, some *leaders* have strayed concerning the faith” (6:21)

### Wolves and Hirelings

There are two kinds of fallen elders that Paul warned against and who are being addressed in 1 Timothy. There were those who had become wolves and those who were about to do so because they were hirelings.

Wolves and hirelings have a very worrying similarity - neither cares about the sheep, or rather, they are more concerned about themselves at the expense of the sheep. Paul urges Timothy in the responsibility and capacity of his charge to prevent the hirelings from becoming wolves, while in the authority of his own calling he acted to expose the wolves.

As the wolves among the Ephesian elders were the first concern, they are the first named - “*Hymenaeus and Alexander*”.<sup>29</sup> Remarkably for 1 Timothy, the wolves are the only ones named, whereas the hirelings are referred to anonymously as “some leaders”. By not naming the hirelings Paul was making every room for them to again become shepherds, while at the time defending the scriptural procedures should Timothy have to disqualify or

<sup>29</sup> 1Tim 1:20.



suspend them - *“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke before all”* (5:19,20)

## Conclusion

Although Revelation chapters 2 and 3 name seven Asian Churches to which the judgments and corrections of Christ are addressed, we need to read and interpret these messages as the present word of Christ to the universal Church in the day in which we live. *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches!”* (Rev 2:7).<sup>30</sup> As these judgments of Christ are being experienced it is as though we have arrived at the weakest moment in the Church’s history. The Church is impotent, having become a target for a variety of false responses from inside as well as outside.

From outside, many who are ignorant ridicule and mock the Church, while its outright enemies delight in its apparent destruction. From inside the

<sup>30</sup> Numbers in Scripture have consistent meanings and are often used in certain settings to confirm what is recorded. “There is a sacred significance in numbers, not cabalistic, not fanciful, but proceeding from the very nature of things”. The following are a few statements from commentators on their interpretation of the number “seven”:  
“The number seven is used throughout the apocalypse in a symbolic sense and is admitted to be expressive of completeness or perfection.”  
“Seven is the number of dispensational fullness. It is the complete in that which is temporary, and not the finally complete. It carries with it the idea of sacredness in that which relates to this world, the Divine three and the worldly four. Hence it is always connected with whatever touches the covenant between man and God, worship and the coming together of Creator and the creature.”  
What then, are we to understand of the SEVEN lampstands? Firstly, as the SEVEN spirits are the one Holy Spirit in all the fullness and completion of His offices and powers in this dispensation, so the SEVEN Churches are the one Holy Catholic Church in all the amplitude and completeness of its being in history from the time of the vision to the end” (The Apocalypse, by J.A. Seiss. Lecture V Pp. 55-65.)

Church, some who once claimed to be committed members are departing from it, while others are proclaiming that an elitist group or special company of believers are to be salvaged from it.

Again we must stress that Christ’s judgements are not for the demise of His Church, but for its restoration. He is not turning His people over to Satan to be judged and overcome, but rather, He is removing everything that is in common with Satan from out of the Church. His disciplinary actions declare just as strongly His love for the Church, *for “whom He loves He chastens”* (Rev 3:19), as it does His faith in the Church of which He said *“the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt 16:18), and of which it is written that it is *“the pillar and stay of all that is true”* (1Tim 3:15).<sup>31</sup>

Later, in Revelation, chapter 4, we see the Lampstand, symbolic of the Church, described as burning brightly before the throne (Rev 4:1-5). We conclude from this description that the Church has been restored to its true place and is ready to participate on centre-stage with Christ, the Lamb, in all that is to transpire in the remaining chapters of the “Revelation”.

The will of Christ, which has never changed, is to present His Church to Himself as a chaste bride,<sup>32</sup> and to proclaim to the principalities and powers in high places by His Church, the wisdom and power of His ways.<sup>33</sup> The way in which this will be fulfilled is clearly recorded in the remaining chapters of the book of “Revelation”.

<sup>31</sup> If Christ is dealing so severely with sin among His own people, we could as well ask - how great will be the judgment of those “who do not obey the gospel of God”, who persist in their wickedness (1Pet 4:17)?

<sup>32</sup> Eph 5:25-27; Rev 21:2.

<sup>33</sup> Eph 3:10.

Read them, and then commit yourself to God's mighty purpose for His Church in these last days of history. Beware of the voice that says, "*Christ is in the desert*" (out there somewhere), or, "*Christ is in the inner room*" (of some exclusive thought), for Christ is to be found in the midst of His Church, "the Church which is His Body" (Mat 24:26; Eph 1:22,23).

Retyped Monday, 28 January, RA