

The Time of the End – Part 6.1

A Series on the Book of Revelation

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Adapted from Arlen Chitwood's book; Presented by Jeanne Alley

1). At this point in our series on the Book of Revelation, we have established that the final book of our Bible is a record of a vision(s) given to John, by the Lord, signified by angels, concerning events that are still yet future – events that will occur immediately subsequent to the Church's removal from the Earth, through the 7-year Tribulation which occurs after that, through the 1,000-year Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and unto the beginning of the ages of the ages occurring after the Kingdom ends.

- Around the year 67 AD, John was taken “in spirit” to this future time – what is called “The Lord’s Day” or “the Day of the Lord” –and received this vision while he was on the island called Patmos. He recorded it not only for the benefit of the churches existing during that century, but for all subsequent generations of churches from that point forward.
- Today we’ll be reading in detail the seven distinct letters that Jesus Himself directed that John write to seven *literal* existing churches scattered about Asia during that first century. Within this literal rendering of the record of what John saw and recorded, we can also see that these seven churches are standing amidst Jesus Christ, *dressed as a Judge*, at this future time, depicting for us a scene of the actual Judgment Seat of Christ – a place where all Christians will have to stand and give an account of their works to their Savior and Judge and King, Jesus the Messiah.

2). These seven literal Churches were specifically chosen by the Lord to not only receive the message given to John in the future Day of the Lord but to also set forth certain evident, spiritual truths in the opening part of this message. At the time John was removed into heaven to receive “the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” it is obvious that there were many Churches scattered throughout Asia [groups of believers in different communities, comprising various Churches], far more than the seven referred to in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation. There were probably some five hundred to one thousand townships in Asia at this time, which translated out would mean that there were far more than 7 existing churches in just 7 cities at that time.

- Meaning, these seven Churches were chosen by the Lord from among numerous existing Churches, for specific, particular reasons.

3). In each of the seven promises, “overcoming” is related to existing conditions in the particular Church to which the promise is given. And God chose these 7 churches, with

their particular situations, to pull out spiritual truths with which to teach all of the Church – from that first century to the present – His truths concerning what awaits the Church at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

- One promise in one epistle is not to be looked upon as standing alone and being peculiar to only one Church. The seven Churches viewed together, as seen in these chapters, comprise an indivisible unit (because of it also being a scene depicting the Judgment Seat of Christ); and the seven overcomer's promises viewed together, as presented in connection with all Christians comprising these seven Churches, are indivisibly related in such a manner that one is not realized apart from the other.

So let's now take a look at each individual letter (although today we will only get through the first one – Ephesus – and the first part of the second one – Smyrna) --

Revelation 2:1-29

1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 4 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent. 6 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.'

4). Following the warning to the Church in Ephesus (that they “left their first love”), reference is made to the “Nicolaitans.” This is an Anglicized form of the compound Greek word, *nikolaites* [from *nike*, “a victor,” “a conqueror”; and *laos*, “people.” So the word “Nicolaitans” means, “to conquer, or be victorious over, the people.”

- Within Church history, there is no record of a group of individuals known by the name, “Nicolaitans” – in the Church in Ephesus, or in any other first-century Church (note that a reference to the “Nicolaitans” is also repeated in the epistle to the Church in Pergamos). So the best we can do when coming across a reference like this is to stick with its definition and try to understand that in its context. We can then understand the use of “Nicolaitans” as a reference to the actions of a group of individuals, described by the meaning of the word itself.

- We can loosely understand “Nicolaitans” to be a reference to individuals forming a hierarchy within the Church, ruling over the people. And these individuals were undoubtedly responsible, at least in part (along with the false apostles mentioned in v. 2), for the existing conditions in Ephesus, as well as the conditions subsequently seen existing in Pergamos.
- These “Nicolaitans” were perhaps individuals in the Church who had subjugated the remaining Christians to their self-imposed authority – individuals comprising a ruling class (the clergy over the laity), something condemned by Scripture in no uncertain terms. *Authority* within the Church must *always* be based *solely* upon “service.” Those occupying positions of leadership (elders, deacons) must always minister (serve) within this sphere of activity, which is to bear no relationship whatsoever to authority exercised by those in the world (*cf.* Matt. 20:25-28; I Cor. 16:15, 16).
- “Nicolaitanism” appears to be a corruption of delegated authority within the Church, exercising this authority after a forbidden pattern – after the pattern set forth by the world.
 - Interesting to note, Christians in the Church in Ephesus were said to hate “the deeds of the Nicolaitanes” (2:6), but this was not said about Christians in the Church in Pergamos. Rather, in the Church in Pergamos, Christ alone is mentioned as hating their “doctrine”; and the Nicolaitanes appear to have found acceptance in the Church by this time.

5). Christ’s warning concerning the removal of the candlestick in Rev. 2:5 – the removal of the Church in Ephesus, the Christians in Ephesus – must be understood in the light of the two ways in which the word “Church” is used in Scripture.

- The word *Church* in the Greek text is a compound word (*ekklesia*, from *ek* and *kaleo*) which means “called out.” And the word is used in the New Testament in two senses: 1) as the Church appears *preceding* the Judgment Seat, *and during* the issues of the Judgment Seat;
 - and 2) as the Church will appear *following* the issues of the judgment seat (which would be as the Church is seen in Rev. 19:7-9, as the bride of Christ [*cf.* Heb. 12:23]).
- Only the “called” (all of the saved) can comprise the Church today (“the entire body of Christ” as it is looked upon in Rev. 2, 3), for the “called out” (meaning those pulled from the body to be made into the Bride) are yet to be revealed. The Church will appear in the true sense of the word itself (*ekklesia*, “called out”) only

after the “called out” have been removed from the “called,” which will occur following Christ dealing with all Christians at His judgment seat (note that all those being addressed in Rev. 2:1-7 are in the Church [as the Church presently appears], but some are in danger of being removed [as the Church will one day appear]).

- The messages contained in the 7 letters in Revelation are to individuals in the Church as it appears today, which comprises all of *the called*, not *the called out* (for the “called out” Church is yet to be revealed. And any of the called who leave their “first love” and do not “repent, and do the first works,” cannot be among *the called out*. They cannot comprise the Church as it will appear in that coming day. Rather, they will *be removed*, spoken of elsewhere as *being disapproved* (Gk. *adokimos*“ [cf. I Cor. 9:27; II Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:16; Heb. 6:8]).

6). In the letter addressed to the Church at Ephesus, eating of the tree of life is mentioned as a reward for those overcome.

- The tree of life first comes into view in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. This tree was one of numerous trees in the garden in Eden of which Adam was commanded to eat (Gen. 2:9, 16). Adam had been created for the specific purpose of assuming the rulership over the earth (Gen. 1:26, 28), and the fruit of the tree of life was a provision for Adam as he exercised this rule.
- An evident connection between man’s rule and his partaking of the tree of life can be seen by noting the appearance of this tree in the Book of Genesis when man was in a position to rule, the absence of this tree during the entire period when man is not in a position to rule, and the reappearance of this tree in the Book of Revelation when man will once again be brought back into a position to rule (cf. Gen. 1:26-28; Rev. 2:26,27).
- The period during which man has been banned from eating of the tree of life began following Adam’s fall (which resulted in his disqualification to rule); and it will *end* following the issues of the judgment seat, at which time man will once again find himself in a position to rule.
- But another issue came into view relative to the tree of life, following Adam’s fall – an issue beyond the thought of ruling. Adam, after the fall, was driven from the garden to prevent his partaking of the tree of life for another purpose. Adam could not be permitted to eat of this tree in a fallen condition, for had such occurred he would have lived forever in that fallen state. Thus, not only did God in His grace and mercy remove Adam from the garden, but “Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way,” were placed at “the east of the

garden...to keep the way of the tree of life [to prevent fallen man from reentering the garden and partaking of this tree]" (Gen. 3:22-24).

- Why did God need to prevent man from partaking of the tree of life in his fallen condition? Studying Gen. 3:22-24 apart from the context and related Scripture could lead one to believe that the purpose for the tree of life was to provide perpetuity of life for Adam in his unfallen state.
- However, such could not have been the case at all. "Death" *did not* enter into the picture until *after* Adam's sin, at which time he was barred from the tree of life. Adam had lived in an *undying state* prior to his sin, as he continued to live in an antithetical *dying state* following his sin; and to say that the tree of life was given to Adam in his unfallen state to provide perpetuity of life, preventing death, cannot be correct (even though, PERHAPS [if one were to read the text a certain way] it *could have* provided such perpetuity following the fall – *just a thought*).
- In Rev. 2:7, partaking of the tree of life has been promised to the overcomers from among those *already possessing* eternal life. So again, we see the tree of life present when there is absolutely no need for it in the sense of giving a person the ability to live forever.
- Consequently, in this passage in Revelation, the tree of life can have nothing whatsoever to do with perpetuity of life; and it is the same in the Genesis account when man was first brought upon the scene to rule and to reign.
- The tree of life reserved for Christians (in Revelation) is associated peculiarly with a provision for those who will rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ; and viewing Adam's position in the Genesis account – created to rule and reign, in possession of eternal life, with the fruit of the tree of life at his disposal – the same would hold true. That which is seen relative to the tree of life in Revelation chapter two is drawn from that which was *first* seen relative to this tree in Genesis chapters two and three (Scripture makes this connection for us). The fruit of the tree of life *was in the past* (seen in the Book of Genesis) and *will be in the future* (seen in the Book of Revelation) a provision for the rulers in the kingdom. *This is an evident fact which must be recognized.*

7). Let's take a look at another mention of the tree of life to grasp a better picture of what it actually provides for those who are in a position to rule.

Proverbs 3:13-18

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of

silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is everyone that retaineth her."

- Following the introduction to "the tree of life" in the opening chapters of Genesis, there are only four references to this tree throughout Scripture until one arrives at Rev. 2:7. Solomon used the expression, "a tree of life," four times in the Book of Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4); and it is within this revelation given through Solomon that one finds the connection between the tree of life in the Books of Genesis and Revelation. And through putting all of this together, the reason then becomes apparent why this tree, with its fruit, was among the trees provided for Adam and Eve to eat in their unfallen state, and why fruit from this tree is being reserved for overcoming Christians to partake of during the Messianic Era.
 - There is also a connection between this tree and the complete restoration of the nations of the earth beyond the Messianic Era, with all of mankind realizing the purpose for man's creation in the beginning [Rev. 22:2]. The reason for the tree of life's existence there is easily understood if one first examines the purpose of the tree of life relative to the Millennial Kingdom.
- In the first of the four passages in which we find "the tree of life," *wisdom* and *understanding* are said to be "a tree of life." Viewing this in the light of the wisdom and understanding possessed by Solomon as he ruled over Israel is the association provided by Scripture to correctly understand *one facet* of the tree of life. Solomon possessed wisdom and understanding as he ruled; and Christians, in like manner, must possess wisdom and understanding as they rule, as would have been necessary for Adam had he ruled.

8). Shortly after Solomon ascended the throne following the death of David, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon, recognizing that he was but as a "little child" in understanding the affairs of state within the kingdom over which he ruled, asked for *wisdom* and *knowledge*. Solomon asked God for the ability to judge the people of Israel in equity, justice, and righteousness.

- Such a request pleased the Lord, and Solomon was granted not only "*wisdom* and *knowledge*" but also "*riches*, and *wealth*, and *honor*." His ability to rule, his material wealth, and the respect which he commanded — all coming from the hand of the

Lord — would later be shown to exceed that of any king upon the face of the earth (I Kings 3:5-15; II Chron. 1:7-17).

- Solomon's ability to judge among his people in a unique manner through the wisdom and knowledge which the Lord had bestowed began to be displayed through a decision which he rendered concerning two women and a child. These two women dwelled alone in the same house, and both had given birth to sons, one three days before the other. The son born last died one night because his mother lay upon him; and as the other mother slept with her son at her side, the mother of the dead child took the living child from his mother's side and placed the dead child in its stead. However, upon awakening, the mother now in possession of the dead child realized that the child was not hers and found that her child was still alive and being claimed by the other mother. Not being able to resolve the matter between themselves, their case was brought before Solomon.
- Solomon was told what had allegedly occurred; and as he listened to both women claiming the living child, he was unable to ascertain which was the true mother. He then called for a sword and commanded that the child be divided into two parts, giving half to each woman. Solomon, in his wisdom, knew that the true mother would be revealed through the actions which each woman would take when they heard his decision.
- And this is exactly what occurred. The true mother pleaded for the child's life, telling Solomon to not harm the child but to give him to the other woman. The other woman, whose child had died, on the other hand, insisted that the child be divided. Solomon then knew which of the two was telling the truth, and the child was returned to his true mother (I Kings 3:16-27).
- Solomon's *wisdom* in this matter spread throughout all Israel, and the people "feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment." Not only did God give Solomon wisdom to judge in all matters, but Solomon possessed wisdom of such a nature that it spread throughout the entire known world. His wisdom "**excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men...and his fame was in all nations round about...and there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom**" (I Kings 3:28; 4:29-34). The queen of Sheba came "to prove him with hard questions" (I Kings 10:1ff), and in the end stated,

"It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes

had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (I Kings 10:6b, 7).

- The wisdom and understanding which Solomon possessed as he ruled in the kingdom of Israel (associated with "a tree of life") provides the central reason why the tree of life is found in association with Adam's rule in Genesis and with the Christians' rule yet future. The fruit of this tree *would have provided* (for Adam) and *will provide* (for Christians) the necessary wisdom and understanding to govern in equity, justice, and righteousness. God's bestowal of *wisdom, understanding, riches, wealth, and honor* upon Solomon typifies that which He will bestow upon overcoming Christians during the coming age. Through the fruit of the tree of life, God will provide the necessary *wisdom* and *understanding* to rule in the kingdom; through being co-heirs with God's Son, Christians will come into possession of unlimited *riches* and *wealth*, for all the Father's possessions will belong to the Son; and in these positions, Christians will realize a status of *honor* and *glory* befitting those elevated to such noble rank (Gen. 24:10, 36, 53; John 16:13-15; I Peter 1:9-11; 4:12, 13; Rev. 4:11; 5:12).

9). The second mention of the "tree of life" in the Book of Proverbs is in connection with *righteousness* and *soulwinning*. This is the identical connection one will find in the New Testament when studying the Christians' association with the tree of life.

Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

- The "righteous" are the ones who will be allowed to partake of the tree of life. With respect to Christians, such a righteousness cannot be looked upon as synonymous with the imputed righteousness of Christ, for every Christian possesses this righteousness. As is plainly revealed in Rev. 2:7, not every Christian will be allowed to partake of the tree of life. The righteousness in this verse can only have to do with "the righteous acts of the saints," which form the wedding garment.
- The "righteous" are those Christians who will be properly clothed at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9, ASV). These are the Christians who will comprise the Church consisting of firstborn sons (Heb. 12:23) and subsequently enter into the kingdom in positions of power and authority with Christ (Matt. 24:45- 47; cf. vv. 48-51).
- Soulwinning in the New Testament is largely misunderstood in Christian circles today. The common terminology, which is not correct at all, is to equate soulwinning with carrying the message of salvation by grace to the unsaved. In

fact, equating soulwinning with the message of salvation by grace serves only to obscure both issues, leaving one hopelessly mired in a sea of misinterpretation.

- Soulwinning is one thing, and proclaiming the message of salvation by grace is another. The former has to do with the saved, and the latter has to do with the unsaved. The messages involved in both issues *MUST* be kept separate and distinct, which necessitates Christians understanding proper distinctions in these two realms.
- “Soulwinning” has to do with *winning those who are already saved to a life of faithfulness to the Lord*. “Soulwinning” is *winning one’s life*. This involves winning Christians to be occupied with the Lord’s business during His time of absence, anticipating His return. And more specifically, this involves winning Christians to be occupied in this manner with that portion of the Lord’s business delivered to them personally.
- Soulwinning is associated with the righteous acts of the saints, with overcoming, and with one day being extended the privilege of partaking of the tree of life. This is the reason that soulwinning is found within a context of this nature in Prov. 11:30. It is *the wise* who win souls (lives) –

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

10). The third mention of the tree of life is –

“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12).

- Notice that the context of it is in connection with *hope* that is realized, not a hope deferred. There is no tree of life as long as one’s hope is deferred. Only when “the desire cometh [hope is realized]” does the tree of life come into view.
- This thought from the Book of Proverbs is in perfect accord with the Christians’ present hope in the light of the two previous references to the tree of life in this book. Christians have been “begotten” from above unto a “living hope” through the “resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” These things we “hope” for are revealed as an “inheritance” and a “salvation.” (I Peter 1:3-5).
- “Hope,” “inheritance,” and “salvation” are inseparably linked in Scripture. It is only because we are saved (passive, salvation of the spirit) that we can possess a

“hope.” And the hope which Christians possess looks ahead to the reception of an inheritance within a salvation (future, salvation of the soul) to be revealed.

- Christians realizing their present hope, and the overcomers in Rev. 2:7 who will be allowed to partake of the tree of life, are one and the same. This is the reason Prov. 13:12 teaches that *hope realized* is “a tree of life.” Those Christians one day coming into a realization of their present hope will be the ones who constitute the rulers in the kingdom, the ones allowed to partake of the tree of life to equip them for service in their respective capacities in the kingdom.

11). The last mention of the “tree of life” in the Book of Proverbs is this –

“A wholesome [‘tranquil’] tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit” (Prov. 15:4).

- And the Epistle of James gives us commentary on this passage, demonstrating a number of things about the use of the tongue and showing the connection between Prov. 15:4 and the three previous references to the tree of life in this book.
- James is an epistle dealing strictly with the salvation of the soul, providing certain indispensable information necessary for a proper understanding of this all-important subject. The tree of life is reserved for those Christians realizing the salvation of their souls; and a proper understanding of the tree of life is integrally related to a proper understanding of this salvation.
- James mentions the tongue in chapter one (vv. 26, 27) and then goes into a lengthy discourse in chapter three concerning this small member of the body and what it is capable of doing (vv. 1ff):

“The tongue...boasteth great things...is a fire, a world of iniquity...it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell [*Gehenna*]...the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (3:5-8).

- A Christian’s spirituality can be seen through the control of his tongue, for the tongue can be properly controlled only through the use of that *wisdom* and *knowledge* which comes from above (James 3:13-18). This thought from the Epistle of James takes one back to Prov. 3:13-18, where *wisdom* and *knowledge* are associated with the tree of life. And it is in this same respect that “a wholesome tongue” also finds its association with the tree of life. A wholesome (tranquil) tongue results from the proper use of Divinely imparted *wisdom* and *knowledge*.

- Man's rule over the earth must await the time when Rev. 2:7 will be brought to pass. He that "overcometh" will realize *the salvation of his soul (life)*, realize *that blessed hope*, come into possession of *the required wisdom and knowledge* necessary to rule as a co-regent with Christ in the kingdom, and be shown to have *a wholesome tongue [a tranquil tongue]* in this rule.

12). We now move to the next letter in the Book of Revelation, the one addressed to the Church in Smyrna –

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 9 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'

- The words of the Spirit of God to the Church in Smyrna carry a special message to Christians who find themselves passing through times of various trials and testings during their pilgrim walk. The Christians in Smyrna had been called upon to suffer, but not without cause or recompense. "Suffering" is God's *refining fire*, and those passing through the fire in Smyrna were extended a promise: "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The overcomers' promise then comes into view, stating simply and explicitly that such individuals would "not be hurt of the second death" (vv. 9-11).
- The sufferings which Christians in Smyrna were called upon to endure are summed up in the words, "...behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days."
- Over the years there have been numerous interpretations concerning the ten days of suffering in Rev. 2:10. Some expositors have called attention to ten periods of Roman persecution during the first three centuries of the Church's existence and have sought to establish a correlation between the ten days in this verse and these ten periods in Church history, making each day represent a period of time. Other expositors have sought to apply the ten days to a ten-year persecution during one of these periods, making each day represent one year. Still other expositors have taken the number "ten" as symbolic, representing a limited but undefined period, usually within the larger period covered by the ten persecutions.

- Regardless of how one looks upon the ten days of tribulation within a possible historical framework, the significance of the number “ten” must be taken into account. “Ten” is the number of ordinal completion, pointing to all the days of tribulation. Regardless of how one views the phrase “ten days” relative to persecution by the Roman Empire (or whoever else), the thought encompassed in the number “ten” must, of necessity, go beyond these specific persecutions. The seven Churches of Revelation chapters two and three are indivisibly related, revealing messages and promises to Christians throughout the dispensation; and the “ten days,” in their numerical sense, covers the complete period – the entire dispensation. These days must applicably refer to all trials and testings coming upon all Christians throughout the dispensation.

13). Trials and testings are *the norm* for the Christian life, not the exception. The Epistles of James and I Peter have been written to encourage Christians passing through times of trials and testings by holding out before them prizes, rewards, compensations, which are intimately associated with the salvation to be revealed – *the salvation of the soul* (James 1:21; I Peter 1:9).

- This is the identical thought expressed in the overcomer’s promise to the Church in Smyrna. A “crown of life” is in view, and the recipient of this crown is given the assurance that he will “not be hurt of the second death.”
- The Epistle of James begins its message with the statement, “My brethren, count it all joy when you encounter various trials.” Why? Temptations, testings, of this nature “produces endurance [literally, ‘patient endurance’]”; and allowing this patient endurance to have “her perfect work [end-time work],” Christians will become “perfect and entire, wanting nothing [‘mature and complete, lacking nothing’]” (James 1:2-4).
- Christians are to look upon such trials in the same manner as the apostles looked upon trials which confronted them. The apostles, in circumstances of this or a similar nature, *rejoiced* that **“they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his [Christ’s] name” (Acts 5:41).**
- The Christian patiently enduring temptations after the fashion seen in James 1:2-4 is promised in verse twelve that “when he is tried [‘approved’ (at the judgment seat)], he shall receive the crown of life,” a parallel statement to Rev. 2:10. In both instances it is patiently enduring temptations, trials, and testings during the present time, with a crown of life in view; and this crown of life will be awarded *following one’s approval* at the judgment seat.

- Crowns must be won through patiently enduring temptations, trials, and testings during the present “race of the faith” (I Cor. 9:24-27; I Tim. 6:11, 12; II Tim. 4:7, 8). And forfeiture of the proffered crown – resulting in nonapproval at the judgment seat – is *a very real possibility*. Note the warning in this respect:

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11).

- Apart from the thought that a Christian can forfeit his crown, this verse would hold little meaning whatsoever. Christians receiving or not receiving crowns awaits decisions and determinations at the judgment seat. Overcoming Christians will wear the crowns which they have won in the present race of the faith while occupying positions of power and authority with Christ during the coming age; but for nonovercoming Christians, the matter will be entirely different.
- *No uncrowned person will rule as co-heir with Christ in the kingdom.*

In this interest of time, and keeping your rapt attention as long as possible, we will need to end right here. We will pick up next week with the letter to the Church at Smyrna, and we’ll look at what it means for a Christian to be “hurt by the second death.”