

Sunday January 26th 2020
The Word of God
A Survey of the Bible – Lesson 18C
'I Know Your Works....'

1). Re 1:20 *The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. 2:1 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write....."*

We have seen from a previous study that the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ has been written using figurative language after a similar fashion to the way that John wrote his Gospel account, drawing on God's affinity for signs, types, numbers, metaphors, similes etc.

a). And at the end of Chapter 1 we are given 2 metaphors, the 7 stars and the 7 golden lampstands which are described as a 'mystery'. And these metaphors are explained to us, so that we are in no doubt.

b). And because of the use of the word translated 'mystery' we know that, that which is pictured through the 7 stars and the 7 golden lampstands will be found within the pages of the OT Scriptures.

c). The 7 stars are clearly stated to be 'the angels of the 7 churches' and although the word translated 'angels' can also mean messengers there is no reason to suppose that we are dealing with anything other than angels, particularly when we consider – Heb 1:13 *But to which of the **angels** has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? 14 **Are they** not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

So, to see this kind of angelic activity among the 7 churches in Revelation is in complete accord with Hebrews 1:14 – they are 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will [Lit. are about to] inherit salvation'.

d). Both the 7 angels and the 7 churches give us the completeness of what is in view, and so we can see a complete angelic ministry among all Christians during this dispensation for a specifically stated purpose. It is a ministry on behalf of those Christians who are about to inherit salvation. A ministry then that has nothing to do of itself with the eternal salvation we presently possess, but rather the salvation which is yet to be inherited. And angelic ministry of this nature with regards to the eternally saved and an inheritance, can be seen in the giving of the Law at Sinai – Ga 3:19 *What purpose then does **the law** serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and **it was appointed through angels** by the hand of a mediator.*

And Hebrews talks of this very same thing – Heb 2:1 *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if **the word spoken through angels** proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation,*

‘The word spoken through angels’ here in Hebrews is the same word ‘appointed through angels’ from Galatians Chapter 3 – the Law given to redeemed Israel at Sinai, with a view to the Jewish people, delivered from Egypt, attaining their inheritance in the land of promise.

e). And a parallel is drawn between redeemed Israel and Christians in the verses from Hebrews Chapter 2. Jewish disobedience to the word spoken through angels ‘received a just reward’ [a just recompense of reward] and in like manner, Christians will not escape a just recompense of reward if they neglect ‘so great salvation’. The ‘so great salvation’ of Hebrews Chapter 2 being the same inherited salvation from Chapter 1.

f). And as we know, the warning given to Christians in Hebrews Chapter 2 has to do with not giving ‘the more earnest heed to the things we have heard’ – things relating to an inheritance with the Christ in His coming Kingdom and the judgment of Christians with regards to reward or loss in view of that Kingdom.

g). And it is the judgment of Christians with regards to reward and loss that we have been studying for the last 2 weeks having come to

the Judgment Seat of Christ, seen in the opening Chapters of the Revelation, where the determination of reward or loss will be made –
1 Cor 3:11 *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

And because it is certain that – 2 Cor 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

Our merciful Savior has made known to us, through His servant John, the details of the judgment of all Christians that will take place as His revealing begins, in the first 3 Chapters of the Revelation – Re 2:1 *“To the angel of the church of..... write,*

We know that our understanding of the Scriptures is ‘brought forth from above’ by a work of the Holy Spirit, but, because of what we have seen, we must also allow for the ministry of angels in the administration of this process.

h). And the Scriptures are replete with examples of angels being messengers to bring the word of the Lord to those on the earth, with probably the most well-known of these examples being found in the Book of Daniel. A Book which of itself is a companion Book to the Revelation – Da 10:11 *And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. 12 Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had*

been left alone there with the kings of Persia. 14 Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

Now, that which the Lord spoke to the angels of the 7 churches, recorded by John, concerns what will happen to Christians 'in the latter days', but what the Lord has to say to us is not referring to something that awaits 'many days yet to come', but to that which is just around the corner.

2). We have seen then, that the 7 golden lampstands are the 7 churches 'which are in Asia', 7 literal, historical churches, which through the use of the number 7, are used to picture all Christians from this dispensation appearing at Christ's Judgment Seat.

a). But before we look at that which was said, and will yet be said, to all Christians, let's just state something about the word 'church'. And we need to do this so that we are absolutely clear who is being talked about here, because there is teaching within Christian circles that wants to place the eternally saved and the unsaved together within the use of the word 'church' here in the Revelation.

b). Such thinking is entirely a result of Man's ideology and may have arisen because of the presence of unsaved individuals in the building where the church meets and they are therefore said, to be 'in the church'. Which of course is utter nonsense.

c). The word translated 'church' we will remember is the Greek word 'ekklesia', which simply means those who are called out and within a Christian context at the simplest level, this refers to those who have been called out of the world through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

d). So, if anyone who is not eternally saved came into the building here week after week and even became friends with us all, they cannot be part of the 'church' until they are called out of the world through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. This 'church' is made up of us as eternally saved Christians, where we meet is just a building.

e). Does understanding this really matter? Yes, it does, because those who place the unsaved at the Judgment Seat see Christ's negative statements in the letters to the churches as referring to the unsaved and not to the eternally saved. And if there is one thing all Christians must

know and be constantly reminded of, is that we will all be judged at the Judgment Seat in relation to what we have done in the body whether good or bad and that there will be age lasting ramifications for this with respect to reward and loss. To believe or perpetuate the lie that says otherwise has serious consequences – Ro 1:18 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

One last thing – Re 2:2 *“I know your works.....”*

That which is to be judged at the Judgment Seat is ‘our works’ and as far as the eternal part of salvation is concerned, ‘our works’ cannot enter the picture – Eph 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

It cannot be stated anymore clearly than this. But if we then continue in Ephesians Chapter 2, we find something that is only possible following eternal salvation – Eph 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [the one new Man in Christ] for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

It is our faithfulness or unfaithfulness with respect to the ‘good works prepared beforehand that we are to walk in them’, works that can only be done by the eternally saved, that will be judged at the Judgment Seat, with a view to receiving the reward of the inheritance, the salvation of our soul and therefore having a position of rulership with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom as part of the Bride, one of the many sons to be brought to glory, or losing our soul/life for the age to come and therefore being separated from Christ’s Kingdom rule for the 1000 years of the Kingdom age. This is no small matter. Remember Lot and his wife.

f). Clearly then, what is to be judged are our works, works that can only be done once we have passed from death to life; works that can have no bearing on our eternal standing at all. And nor can they because, according to the Scriptures we will never enter into judgment with regards to our eternal standing because that judgment has already taken

place on our behalf, in Christ's sacrifice on the cross – Jn 3:18 *“He who believes in Him is not condemned [judged]; but he who does not believe is condemned [judged] already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

2 Co 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

But beyond the moment of our eternal salvation, works in relation to the salvation yet to be inherited, the salvation of the soul, are seen, and based on the judgment of these works, reward or loss will follow. Just as we have seen in 1 Corinthians Chapter 3.

g). And this separation that will take place among Christians at the Judgment Seat has been prophetically pictured through the foundational type of Christ and His Bride seen in Genesis Chapter 2 – Ge 2:21 *And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Adam, as we know, is a type of Him who was to come and within this foundational type we see that after Adam had been put into a ‘deep sleep’ his side was opened, and the Woman was built from his rib. Let’s note that the Woman was built entirely from Adam’s body, but was not the whole of Adam’s body.

i). The One whom Adam typifies, the Christ, was put into a deep sleep 2000 years ago through His death on the cross and the time is soon coming, before the end of the 6th Day, when the body of Christ, the Church, will be gathered together in the heavens – Ro 12:5 *so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*

And from Christ’s body those Christians will be taken out who will comprise His Bride. The Bride for Christ will come entirely from His

body, the Church, all those called out of the world, but will not be all of His body. This is simply the way matters are presented from the beginning – Eph 5:30 *For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.* 31 *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* 32 *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

It is a separation with respect to the body of Christ that the Lord spoke of in anticipation of that Day in – Mt 22:14 *“For many are called, but few are chosen.”* [Lit. ‘called out of the called’- from a word that means to choose the one from the many - 14 *for many are invited ones but few are chosen-out ones.* – Wuest]

And it is this same separation that Paul so earnestly desired to be a part of – Php 3:10 *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.*

And it is the body of Christ, the Church, all Christians from this dispensation, appearing at the Judgment Seat for the purpose of the Bride being taken out of the body as a result of the judgment of works, that is the subject of Revelation Chapters 1-3.

3). Re 1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”* 2:1 *“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,*

The ‘seven churches which are in Asia’ provide us with a multi-faceted picture. Not only through the use of the number 7 do they give us all Christians from this dispensation appearing at Christ’s Judgment Seat but they also give us potential insight into the historical phases of the church, as well as giving us a complete overview of the history of the Church with regards to the Word of the Kingdom, from the beginning to

the end of this dispensation. And then within that which the Lord says to the churches through the 7 angels is what we need to know concerning our own race of the faith.

a). As we begin to look at some of this let's keep in mind that what the Lord says to each individual church is in fact being said to all the churches and should be applied to all. This would include both the comments made about each church's 'works' and the promises given to those who overcome.

b). There are 7 overcomers' promises that are given, and again the number 7 gives us the completeness of that which is in view. Therefore, putting the promises together gives us the completeness of that which will be received by those Christians who are overcomers, those who are called out of the called, those who will experience the out-resurrection from the dead.

c). There are 2 places in Scripture where the Lord gives an overview of the history of the Church – one is in the first 4 parables in Matthew Chapter 13 and the other is in Revelation Chapters 2-3.

d). This is of course a history of the Church as the Lord sees it rather than as man sees it, and it is a history of the Church as it relates to one specific thing, that which is the focus of all of Scripture –
Mt 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom.....

The Apostle Paul was taken into the 3rd heaven where he was taught the message he was then to take to the Gentiles who would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and that message he referred to as the gospel of the glory of Christ – *Ga 1:11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

1 Ti 1:11 according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

The word of the Kingdom and the gospel of the glory of Christ deal with exactly the same thing, the coming of that Day when the Christ is revealed in His power, when Satan and his fallen angels are replaced

with a new order of rulers and Christ's Kingdom is established; when Man's Day will come to an end and will be replaced by the Day of the Lord on the earth as it has always been in heaven.

e). And the hope that is set before all Christians is the hope of participating with the Christ in the administration of His Kingdom as a firstborn son and therefore, part of the Bride, having been called out of the called at the Judgment Seat – Tit 2:11 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*

Because of the construction of the Greek language here, 'the blessed hope' and 'the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior' are synonymous. And as we have said, our hope to be realized at the appearing of Christ's glory, if we are found worthy, is regal – Ro 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

2 Ti 4:8 *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

But, what do we find with regards to the Christians in Ephesus, the first of the 7 churches seen in the Revelation? - Re 2:4 *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

The church of Ephesus is used to represent the Christians at the beginning of the dispensation within the first century. And at the beginning of the church the word of the Kingdom/the gospel of the glory of Christ was the message proclaimed.

f). Following the preaching of the gospel of grace, those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ were then told the reason for their salvation. They were told that the Christ had gone away to receive for

Himself a Kingdom and would return to settle accounts with His household servants and then implement His Kingdom along with His joint heirs, His household servants who had proved faithful during His absence.

g). And those who received this message patiently endured through the trials and testing of life as they continued in the Lord's business – Lk 19:13 *So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' 17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'*

But as time passed and the Lord had not yet returned, things began to change – Mt 13:33 *Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven [Lit. the proclamation of the word of the Kingdom has become like] is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."*

3 is God's number for Divine perfection and it is meal, or fine flour, that was used to make bread. Here then is a metaphor for the Divinely perfect word of God, the bread from heaven, but not the word of God in a general sense, rather it is the word of God as already identified by the Lord at the beginning of the Matthew 13 parables, 'when anyone hears the word of the Kingdom'.

h). Leaven, which is always used in Scripture as a metaphor for that which corrupts is seen placed into the word of the Kingdom at the beginning of the dispensation. This was a work accomplished by the 'tares' seen in the second of the Matthew 13 parables – Mt 13:24 *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven [Lit. the proclamation of the word of the Kingdom has become like] is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.*

And as the leaven began its corrupting process through the work of the 'tares', so Christians early on in the dispensation, pictured through the church of Ephesus, left their first love, the love of His appearing when their hope would be realized – 2 Ti 4:3 *For the time will come when they*

will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Ga 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

2 Pe 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

And as the leaven continued and continues its corrupting work even to this day, so we come to the 7th of the 7 churches, Laodicea –
Re 3:17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

Given the dispensational overview the 7 churches provide for us, Laodicea brings us to where the state of Christendom is today and will be when the dispensation comes to an end with respect to the teaching and preaching of the word of the Kingdom – *2 Co 4:3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

Because of the corrupting work of the leaven, introduced by the 'tares' into the word of the Kingdom, the Church developed in a way that is completely unnatural, giving rise to its 'wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked condition', prophesied in the 3rd of the Matthew 13 parables – *Mt 13:31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven [the proclamation of the word of the Kingdom has become like] is*

like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

Satanic deception, having produced the leavening process that has corrupted the word of the Kingdom, has over the centuries, found its home among Christians. So much so that the truth is perceived to be the lie and the lie is embraced as the truth.

i). And the mechanisms by which such actions have come about are shown to us through the detail of the Lord’s comments to the 7 churches recorded in Revelation Chapters 2-3 – Re 2:14 *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate..... 20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*

We will have to continue with this next time though – if the Lord is willing.