

KINGDOM SPIRIT

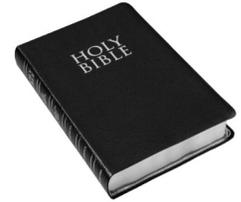
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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 1210

ISAIAH 43-45

Isaiah 43 and 44 are full of assurance that what has happened to Israel is according to God's plan and purpose and that they are not to fear as He has plenty planned for them in the future. (Read Isa. 43:1-7) In I Peter, Peter is addressing the **“strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”** “Strangers” according to the marginal rendering in my Bible means “exiles of the dispersion” which I believe refers to descendents of Israel of the Assyrian captivity. Paul calls them gentiles to distinguish them from Jews. In verses 18-20, Peter says, **“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”** I think this should help us understand that because this was part of God's plan before he created the earth and all that is in it, He can say in 43:1, **“Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.”**

Keeping in mind that Israel and a large part of Judah are already in captivity and located in the area south of and between the Black and Caspian Seas, verse 2, looking into the future, promises them that when they escape their captiv-

ity He is going to be with them as they migrate. Looking even further into the future following their dispersion or scattering, verse 6 promises a re-gathering into His kingdom because He says, **“for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”**

(Read Isa. 43:8-13) God makes the point in verse 10 that Israel is His witness and His servant that they may believe Him and understand that He is the one and only God. He is telling them ahead of time what is going to happen so that when it happens they will know that it is truth. This re-gathering is yet to be completed, but I don't believe there will be a problem with people believing that God is God and that all of this is by His plan when it is complete. Many of the pastors and statesmen among our forefathers saw the development of our nation as a partial fulfillment of this prophecy.

We need to understand that when King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians conquered Judah or Jerusalem, they had already conquered the nations around them including Assyria, thus the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom formerly in the Assyrian captivity were now in captivity to the Babylonians. Though Jerusalem was taken into captivity, they were dealt with separately from the Israelites that were already in captivity. However, when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians, not only was Judah released, so also were the Israelites. This doesn't mean that they were in prison and suddenly the doors were opened and they all left. They had been in captivity for nearly 200 years, so leaving was not a sudden thing nor was it necessarily easy as in some

cases they had to fight their way out.

(Read Isa. 43; 14-21) God foretells His bringing down the Babylonian Empire and He tells Israel that He has done it for their sake. He tells them not to remember the past, but to look for what He was going to do for and with them in the future. He promises to be with them as they leave their captivity.

However, they need to keep in mind why they are in captivity. They have been disobedient and have not worshipped Him as He had asked them to do. He reminds them that it is He who has blotted out their sins (again looking ahead at Jesus Christ and His work on Calvary). He asks them to put Him in remembrance and to contend together with Him that they might be justified. Because of their sins, He tells them He has profaned the princes or priests of the sanctuary and brought the curse of captivity upon them all.

God continues in chapt. 44 to encourage the people of Israel. He very affectionally identifies them as His servant whom He has chosen and will continue to care for and bless. (Read Isa. 44:1-20) In verse 6 He says, **“Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”** In verse 8 He tells them to **“Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.”**

He then mocks those that make graven images to be their gods whether they make them of metal or wood. He ridicules those that take a tree and use part of it to warm himself, another part to cook his meals on and then makes an image of what is left and calls it his god. It is hard to believe a man could deceive himself in this manner, yet this seems to be the way of man even in our time.

(Read Isa. 44:21-28) God tells Israel to remember the ridiculousness of their idol worship and know and acknowledge that He is the true God. Again He reminds them that He has redeemed them and blotted out all their sin in His plan for them and the world. In telling them what

He is doing, He tells them He is the one that frustrateth the liars, makes the diviners mad and turneth wise men backward making their knowledge foolish. Then He tells them that He is going to tell Jerusalem that she is going to be inhabited and the ruins would be rebuilt. Keep in mind that Jerusalem has not yet been destroyed by the Babylonians, so Isaiah is prophesying something that is to happen at least 170 years in the future. He even names the man, Cyrus, through whom He is going to give this message to Jerusalem. While He is calling Cyrus His shepherd, Cyrus was the king of Persia that defeated the Babylonians.

There wasn't a chapter break in the original writing and we might understand it better if there was none here. I want us to back up and read Isa. 44:24 through Isa. 45:3 so that we can lay the groundwork as we take a look at this man Cyrus. History gives us a very interesting account of him that will help us understand that he was a type of Christ, even though he was a pagan king. By type, I am saying that what he did to the Babylonian kingdom is a shadow of what Christ will do to the Babylonian system we are dealing with in our time. Keeping in mind that though Cyrus was a pagan king, there are still some similarities between him and Jesus Christ, the true King of Kings that also help exemplify Cyrus being a type of Christ. (We have a brief history of the life of Cyrus that is very interesting, but is longer than we can include here. Should you wish a copy, simply let us know by phone, mail, or e-mail and we will be happy to send it to you or go to our website and look at Spirit Notes #III-54)

(Read Isa. 45:1-8) God is talking to Cyrus through Isaiah. If we study the book of Daniel and understand how God outlines the Babylonian succession of empires through the metal image that He showed to King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel in dreams, that it was to begin with Babylon followed by Persia, and then read what God is saying here to Cyrus, who was to be the Persian king that was to bring down the Babylonian empire, and to know that God is saying this before there even was a Babylonian empire, should help us understand that God has a plan for mankind and that He follows that plan. If we study how

Cyrus became king and how Persia became the dominant power in their time, then we can see that what God is telling Cyrus here that He will do for him as He promotes him and Persia to power is accurate.

But note verse 4. He is doing this not particularly for Persia's benefit, but for Israel's benefit. How does He benefit Israel by calling Cyrus by name over a century before Cyrus was born? Verse 6 gives us the answer, **"That they (Israel) may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else."** God is giving proof here by naming Cyrus long before Cyrus was born and assigning a mission to him so that when the children of Israel see it, they will not be able to deny that God is God.

Then so that they and Cyrus know the full extent of His power, He follows with verse 7, **"I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD to all these things."** If we think about this statement, it becomes mind boggling. Man has learned how to create electricity and through a light bulb to turn that electricity into light. But that only duplicates to a lesser degree what already exists. Man has figured how to use "light" in many different ways from lighting an area to heating with light, sending digital signals on a light beam, even being able to break light down into different colors and using those colors of light in different ways. But where does light come from? Where does darkness come from? God says He created them both. What was before either? It is obvious that while man has learned to use light, like many of the other things God has created, yet we cannot comprehend what would be without light and darkness. To us, one is the opposite of the other, but if both were created, what was before creation? Questions we can't answer.

We discussed in a recent lesson about God creating evil. The thing we need to keep in mind the most about this is only God can bring good out of evil. To accomplish His plan for mankind there has to be evil, but out of that evil, the good and the peace that will ultimately come from God's plan, only He could create.

It hasn't been until recent years that I feel I really got a handle on the importance of the dominion and fruitfulness mandates (Gen. 1:26 and 28) that God gave to Adam when He created him. As we have said before, these combined to be the birthright that was passed down father to son or grandson from Adam to Noah, then Noah to Shem to Isaac and finally to Jacob. Jacob then split the birthright giving the dominion, or the sceptre, to Judah and the fruitfulness mandate to Joseph. The sceptre then passed to David, then to Solomon and on to his progeny who occupied the throne until the time of Zedekiah who was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. While the throne was to continue to exist in accordance with God's promise to David. God took the dominion mandate from the line of David for the time being and bestowed it on Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:38). It has since passed to the rulers of the Babylonian succession of empires, first changing kingdoms with the conquering of Babylon by Cyrus, king of Persia, until this day. Until the crowning of Jesus Christ as King of Kings here on the earth the dominion mandate awaits His return while still in the hands of rulers of the Babylonian system under which we live today. At least until someone can show me different, I believe that the fruitfulness mandate has remained with Joseph, (Ephraim and Manasseh) in spite of their being divorced from God and being cast out of his land. The first part of verse 10 of Hosea 1 says of these people who have just been divorced from the Father and taken into captivity by the Assyrians, **"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered."** When one considers all of the Israelite nations today, I think we can see that this has happened with continued growth down through the centuries.

The responsibility of the birthright is to bring forth the Kingdom of God. Though David and Solomon may have come the closest to it, yet they like all that have had the dominion mandate since have miserably failed to do so. It can only come about through the fullness of the Holy Spirit which is promised with the second coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The amazing point of this to me is here God is addressing a man, long before the man is even born, who is to play a major role in His plan and though he will be considered a pagan king, God is telling him who He is and what He is going to have this man accomplish.

The word “righteousness” in verse 8 can be translated “justice” which helps me understand it better. The Ferrar Fenton translation translates this verse as follows:

**“Skies! from above drop dew,
You clouds rain Goodness down,
Earth open and yield Justice,
And Right grow up at once,
As I the LORD create!”**

(Read Isa. 45:9-13) It will be folly to resist the Creator. In effect, God says that if you want to resist someone, resist someone on your own level, not God the creator. One doesn’t question his parents as to what they have brought forth, so don’t question what God is doing. He has made the earth and created man upon it, He has created the heavens and all the host of stars, planets, etc. God says He has raised up Cyrus and through God’s direction, he will build His city (Jerusalem). (See Ezra and Nehemiah) He also says he (Cyrus) will release God’s captives not for price or reward. We know that Judah was released though not all went back to Jerusalem, but very often Israel is forgotten by most Bible students. We need to keep in mind that when Babylon conquered the Assyrians, the captives of the Assyrians became the captives of Babylon, thus Israel was then in captivity to Babylon. The same release that was given to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin by Cyrus would have likewise applied to Israel as well. Israel has remained pretty much together, but according to the book of Esther, Judah was scattered throughout the kingdom of Babylon. I would speculate that due to the animosity that there was between Judah and Israel, there would not have been very much intermixing of the people of the two kingdoms. To understand all of Scripture, we need to not make the error of assuming that Israel and Judah became one entity as they did not, for God had different destinies for the two peoples.

(Read Isa. 45:14-15) God looks toward to the end of the age we are now in, telling Israel that the nations will come to her because they will say that “God is in thee and there is no other God”. The reference to the labour of Egypt and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans may be intended to refer to all classes in an economy—farmers, manufacturers, traders, etc., i.e. all the people. Ferrar Fenton translates verse 15 as, **“A true God from the Unseen are You, -- The God Who has Israel saved!”** Though God is not visible, He is recognized as the true God.

(Read Isa. 45:16-17) In that day, all who worship their man-made gods will be ashamed, but Israel, whose God is the true God shall be saved with an age lasting salvation and will not be ashamed.

(Read Isa. 45:18-25) God is getting ready to make a very important announcement. He identifies Himself again as the creator of the heavens and the earth. He says He did not create the earth to be void of everything, but rather to be inhabited by man. This should give us comfort. The fear mongers today that are screaming that the earth is going to be destroyed by global warming, or a nuclear holocaust, or by overpopulation, or that we are going to run out of fuel, or any other of the various reasons that man comes up with, need to listen to what God is saying. He created the earth and He created it to be inhabited. In this we should take comfort and confidence. Then He points out that He has not spoken in secret, but has told from the beginning what is to happen on the earth and what He says is right.

He then calls those who have set up their man-made gods to assemble and take counsel. He asks who from ancient times has told what is going to happen in future times—It is only He, the true God. There is none other god except Him. Then in verse 22 He says, **“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”** Then He makes a proclamation in verse 23 that we need to understand if we are to understand the rest of Scripture. He says, **“I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee**

shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” This is unconditional—God has sworn it by Himself. Though God may use individuals and nations to bring this about, it not the responsibility of individuals or nations to see that it is done—it is God’s responsibility. Our responsibility as individuals and nations is to obey. In saying every knee and every tongue, this does not leave out anyone with the exception of the progeny of the “sons of God” that we have read that He has already dealt with. Understanding this will help us understand what the “lake of fire” is and understand that it does not mean destruction.

He goes on to say that it is in Him that we will have righteousness and those that are angry with God will be ashamed. Finally, He tells us that in Him shall the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. JRL

A Study of the Book of REVELATION

We finished our last article with verse 5 of chapter 1 and were discussing the fact that Christ had authority in the heavens, but had given authority over the earth to man. For Christ to take up that authority, He had to be born a man which He was. He will take up that authority over the earth when He comes as King of Kings. Having this authority, John says in verse 6 that He hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. We will see later in chapter 20 that John is talking about those who have part in the first resurrection, the goal that we all want to strive for.

We have seen as we studied the New Testament that the New Testament writers very frequently quoted the Old Testament. This was their Bible, so we often find direct quotes, sometimes paraphrased quotes and sometimes just simply a reference to an Old Testament Scripture. Because the Old Testament Scriptures were read every week in the synagogues, the New Testament writers could quote the Old Testament writers and fully expect their audiences to know where they were coming from. Such is the case in a lot of

John’s writings.

(Read Rev. 1:7) In the book we just studied, Jude quotes Enoch, who was Noah’s great grandfather, in verse 14, saying he prophesied, “**Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.**” John is saying here in Rev. that Christ is coming with clouds and Enoch says He is coming with ten thousands of his saints. After giving a list of the great men of the Old Testament in Heb. 11, the author of Hebrews says in Heb. 12:1, “**Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.**” With this in mind, I believe that we could say that John and Enoch are speaking of the same thing.

“**Every eye shall see him**” is John’s next statement. We discussed this in our last lesson. Though every eye shall see Him, not everyone may see Him in the same way, or even possibly at the same time. The overcomers will see Him in all His glory while others may see him only in the physical sense or will see Him in His glory once they have been justified and sanctified.

The rest of verse 7 is paraphrased from Zechariah 12:10-14. (Read) Zechariah was one of two prophets that God sent to Jerusalem at the time that the Jews were supposed to be rebuilding the temple and the city after being released from 70 years of Babylonian captivity by King Darius, the Mede. Because of some trouble that was stirred up by some adversaries of the Jews, the Jews had left off with their building. God sent Zechariah and Haggai to tell the Jews to get back to work. Both prophets, in addition to telling the people to get back to work, prophesied, at least what was thought at the time to be, prophesies concerning Jerusalem and the temple.

To fully understand Zechariah’s prophecy, one needs to understand that there are two cities named Jerusalem. There is the old city which has, throughout history, been located in the old land of Palestine. But there is also another Jerusalem which in the New Testament is called the New Jerusalem. This has caused a lot of confusion among Christians who are trying to understand the divine plan. In the Old Testament, the writers do not distinguish between the two except by their descriptions of the city they are writing about. To

understand some of the confusion, compare these two verses: (Isa. 62:7) **“And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”**; (Jer. 26:6) **“Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city (Jerusalem) a curse to all the nations of the earth.”**

The writers of the New Testament distinguish between the Old Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem (or “heavenly Jerusalem”, as it says in Hebrews 12:22). John speaks often of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation, quoting frequently from Isaiah and Zechariah. Often where Isaiah speaks of “Jerusalem”, John interprets it to mean the New Jerusalem, not the old city.

In the Old Testament, the old city of Jerusalem was the City of God. Solomon’s temple was the dwelling place of God. Mount Zion was the place of David’s throne. Because of the sin of the old city, and its refusal to repent, God forsook the temple and the old city just as he did with Shiloh centuries before. (Read Jer. 7:12-15) The glory of the Lord departed from Jerusalem. Because the Word in verse 14 cannot be broken, it is not possible for the glory of God to return to the old city of Jerusalem, as many Christians who subscribe to the futurist thinking expect.

This then made it necessary for God to build a new city in which to dwell. In order for the prophecies of “Jerusalem” to be fulfilled without breaking the Scriptures, He had to build a second Jerusalem, a New Jerusalem. This New Jerusalem is quite unlike the old city. In I Cor. 3:16, Paul asks, **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”** and in I Cor. 6:19, **“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”** Rev. 3:12 says, **“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.”**

These new individual “temples” are mi-

crocosms of a larger, corporate Temple, whose chief Corner Stone is Jesus Christ. (Read Eph. 2:20-22) There are people who are literally looking for God to lower a cube containing a city made of gold out of heaven because of their interpretation of Rev. 21. This is not the New Jerusalem that the Bible discusses, but rather the city and the temple are spiritual whose building blocks are people. Peter calls them “living stones” in I Peter 2:5 (**“Ye also, as lively [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”**) as opposed to dead stones used in earthly construction projects.

To understand more fully that often when the Old Testament writers speak of “Jerusalem”, they are talking of the New Jerusalem several comparisons can be made of what they say and what John says of the New Jerusalem. For example, compare Isa. 62:4,5 with Rev. 21:2, 9, 10; Isa. 60:19, 20 with Rev. 21:12, 21; and Isa. 52:1 with Rev. 21:27. Since the New Jerusalem is made of living stones, i.e. believers, one does not enter this city by walking or driving through a physical gate or by climbing a wall. Isa. 60:18 says, **“Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shall call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.”** One must be “saved” in order to enter this city—unlike the old city.

One more thing. There are two very different destinies assigned to the old and the New Jerusalem. If one does not know the difference, it can add to one’s confusion. In Jer. 19:10, 11, God is telling Jeremiah, who was to take a potter’s earthen bottle with him before the elders of the city and the priests to the valley of Hinnom, what he is to say concerning the old city of Jerusalem: **“Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, and shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.”** But the indestructible position of the New Jerusalem is self-evident.

This is a long way around to say that when John quotes the prophet Zechariah, they are both talking about the same event, even though Zechariah's vision appears to be limited to the "house of David" and the inhabitants of Jerusalem mourning and John includes "**all the tribes of the earth.**" This doesn't make Zechariah wrong, he just saw less than John saw. Zechariah saw the promise in terms of its Old Testament patterns, while John recognized that the limited patterns of the Old Testament were designed to teach us the divine plan for the whole world.

(Read Rev. 1:8) Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last letter. He is saying the God knows the end from the beginning. He IS the beginning and the end. This refers to the timeless nature of the spiritual realm. We on earth are bound by time and space. God is not bound in the same way. I don't know that any of us can comprehend this because we see events of history occurring on a linear time line. God see history from a higher perspective. All history is to Him a momentary event.

The word "Almighty" is from the Greek *pantokrotor*. This is a compound Greek word that means "all-ruling or all-powerful." The Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament used this word as the translation of the Hebrew term, "Lord of Hosts." The "hosts" are the hosts of both heaven and earth. Ex. 12:41 refers to the children of Israel as "**all the hosts of the LORD.**"

Psalms 24, speaking of the coming of Christ, says in verses 7, 8, 10, "**Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle...Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.**" This identifies Jesus Christ as the God of the Old Testament, the Creator (John 1:1-3) and the One who gave the law to Moses.

So when Jesus identifies Himself as the Alpha and the Omega and "the Almighty," He is referring to Himself as the Lord of hosts in the Old Testament. It means that He is Lord not only of the hosts of heaven, but also of the earth. This

foreshadows one of the primary purposes of the book of Revelation, which presents Jesus Christ as "the Almighty" and as "King of kings and Lord of lords. It presents Christ as ruling His creation—the earth and all that is in it. The future is good. Jesus Christ wins in the end. His dominion will be from sea to sea. His Kingdom will be unending and will never be destroyed.

How this goal is achieved is the subject of most of the book of Revelation.

(Read Rev. 1:9-11) The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation no later than 96 A.D. He had been banished to the Isle of Patmos by Emperor Domitian sometime after 81 A.D. when Domitian came to power. He like Nero persecuted the Christian church and John was a victim of this persecution. Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century, wrote in his Ecclesiastical History, I, ii, 20,

"After fifteen years of Domitian's rule, Nerva succeeded to the throne. By vote of the Roman senate Domitian's honours were removed, and those unjustly banished returned to their homes and had their property restored to them. This is noted by the chroniclers of the period. At that time too the apostle John, after his exile on the island, resumed residence at Ephesus, as early Christian tradition records."

Patmos is a small island about 8 miles long and 4 miles wide off the southwest coast of Asia Minor about 35 miles.

John tells us he was a "**companion in tribulation.**" This is the first of five mentions of "tribulation" in the book of Revelation. In addition to this listing, we find the other four in Rev. 2:9, 10, 22 and in 7:14. In 1:9 here, John claims to be in tribulation already. In 2:9, 10 the church at Smyrna is in tribulation. In 2:22 God casts the church at Thyatira into "great tribulation" because of her "adultery." As we will see as we study these churches, they represent ages within the overall Church Age, i.e. from the day of Pentecost through our time now. Whether we view the

churches at Smyrna and Thyatira in the literal sense of John's day, or see them representing church ages, neither view fits well with the modern futurist idea of "the great tribulation."

In Rev. 7:14 John glimpses a future time when there are those who come forth from great tribulation, and he sees those who came forth perfected by it. There is no mention of timing as to when or how long this tribulation lasted. This is the reason that those who use this verse to promote a future tribulation cannot agree among themselves as to when this supposed great tribulation takes place or the length of it. We'll discuss this more later. For now, we need to understand that God's purpose for tribulation is to test the Church (Christian congregation) to find out who truly has faith, and who has merely been persuaded by man to follow Christ.

John tells us he was on the Isle of Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, i.e. because of his preaching and teaching.

John says he was "in the spirit" on the "Lord's day." We might say today that he was in deep meditation, i.e. concentrating on his relationship with our Lord, whether in prayer or contemplation, so hard as to be unaware of his physical surroundings. This is said so that we understand that what John sees from here is a vision, it is not something that literally happened. He heard a great voice like the sound of a trumpet behind him. This voice was obviously the voice of God as it tells him again that He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

John is instructed by this voice to write down what he is about to be shown, which we now have in the book of Revelation. He is to send what he writes down to the seven churches which are in Asia, churches or congregations which were at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis,

Philadelphia and Laodicea. As we have said before, these were probably actual churches, or congregations. (The word church as used in the New Testament is from the Greek *ekklesia* which literally means "that which is called out" or "congregation." It does not mean organized churches or church buildings as we use the term today.) As we get into the next chapter, we will be looking at these churches as church ages which we will explain more fully then.

(Read Rev. 1:12-16) When John turned to see who was speaking, we're told he saw seven golden candlesticks. Recall the discussion we had last lesson about the candlestick that was in the tabernacle. It had seven lamps which we correlated with the seven spirits of God. Its purpose was to shed light. John sees seven instead of just one. Solomon, when he built the temple in Jerusalem had ten such candlesticks. We'll discuss the candlesticks further in a moment. The voice John heard came from "**one like unto the Son of man**" who was in the midst of the seven candlesticks. This, of course, is Christ in His capacity as a resurrected and glorified man on earth. Because He is referred to as the Son of man here, this tells us that this qualifies Him legally to have dominion over the earth, for we read in Genesis 1:26-28 when God created man, he was given the authority to rule and subdue the earth. It is important to pay attention to details of Scripture as we read.

We'll discuss the description of the Son of man that John saw in our next issue. JRL

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