

GROW IN GRACE NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.52, December 30, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter**— a weekly Bible Study, plus news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church... sent forth to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide who receive the Newsletter), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

STARTING 2014 GROUNDED AND SECURE!

There are many situations in our world that serve as **breeding grounds for GIANT FEAR**. How shall we face them? What should be the focus of our strategy?

1. **Writing on these matters, a pastor asks— what if** terrorists nuked American cities; **what if** a hurricane Katrina-style hit your town; **what if** there was uncontrolled inflation or disruption of Welfare and Social Security checks, or disruption of food supply, or long standing electrical disruption, etc.? [**Response:** There is an almost endless list of possible 'what ifs' — focus on them and you will likely be paralyzed with fear and depression!]

2. **He then goes into great detail** with suggestions that range from moving to a rural location, to gathering up supplies of food, water, medicine, extra gasoline, and self-defense supplies. Stock up! Get a generator. He states that it is lunacy not to do so. He has a couple of pages of details on these sorts of things. In addition, he has info on the need to have guns, plenty of ammunition, and the ability to use such for food and self-defense. He concludes his article with five short lines of stating that in such conditions, one will also need spiritual power through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

REALITY: IF WE LIVED at an earlier time in America, preparedness would be a given. Many of our ancestors lived on the land and lived off the land. Daily, they lived in 'survival mode' in the midst of the harsh elements of weather, enemies, etc. If they were blessed, they would have had a few friendly neighbors. Regardless, they were self-sufficient. **In contrast, most of us are totally dependent upon an uninterrupted supply of food, fuels, and electricity from a nation-wide and/or world-wide interdependent system, over which we have zero control.**

In addition, most of us not only do not have the survival skills of our ancestors; neither do we have the financial means to make the preparation the pastor and others set forth. **Be that as it may, on a much smaller scale,** most of us understand that there is wisdom in and we commonly seek to do what we can to be prepared for a winter storm or some other severe weather warning or for whatever!

With the growing instabilities of our world, the comforts and securities we have grown accustomed to in America are now more and more in question! By and large we still possess the comforts— but confidence that they will be here 'tomorrow' is getting shaky!

In the midst of it all we tend to live in secret with GIANT FEAR gaining ground in our hearts! Many deal with these fears by denial. **BUT WHAT LIES AHEAD? What should be our focus** as to living in a world of growing UNCERTAINTY? (All questions/issues cannot be addressed in one article— the issue here is that of foundational FOCUS!)

1. **There is definitely a place for practical preparations.** However, if they are the focus they will be all consuming. The passion of our lives can easily become the mere saving of our physical lives at any cost. Let this focus master you and GIANT FEAR will grow!

2. **Let us remember that we are not the first generation to live in fearful times!** Moreover, for Christians our passion must not be mere survival— for we are soldiers of the Cross. We are in spiritual battle. We VALUE THE SOUL over the body. Thus the ultimate value of our bodies is that they function as the 'temple of the Holy Spirit' through which the GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS ADVANCED. Therefore, the body, (the physical matters of this life), are IMPORTANT— for the gospel's sake.

THEREFORE, To understand the times, **to be** spiritually prepared, to have a foundation upon which to have godly wisdom for physical choices/preparations, **to be** encouraged, and to be filled with hope and excitement about the future— **I ENCOURAGE MYSELF AND ONE AND ALL TO,**

START THE NEW YEAR OF 2014 BY SETTING ASIDE A BLOCK OF TIME

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY TO CAREFULLY/PRAYERFULLY READ THROUGH THE LAST BOOK OF THE BIBLE! WHY?

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein:..." (Rev. 1:3)

THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST!

Maybe you have heard the account of the undaunted lad on board a ship that was in the midst of a deadly storm. All hearts were full of fear, except for the lad. When asked how he could be so calm, he replied, "**My father is the captain and he is at the helm!**" The lad did not know the details of the storm nor did he know how to guide a ship in such times. He just had confidence in his earthly father. Of course, in addition to needing to have, develop, and maintain a great trust in JESUS CHRIST— as Christians we must also be fully engaged in proclaiming the gospel of Christ to a watching world! **Our great need is a growing TRUST in our Lord Jesus Christ and a loving OBEDIENCE to Christ— while ever being on guard against many enemies without and within!**

Through the exiled and imprisoned Apostle John the Holy Spirit gave the REVELATION, the UNVEILING OF JESUS as He is today! Here [IN ONLY 4 WORDS!] is the 'open secret' of understanding the last book of the Bible— **JUST LOOK FOR JESUS!**

MOREOVER, in this grand unveiling of JESUS— (1) **We are given** much to HEED and OBEY! (2) **We are clearly shown** that no matter how bad the storms get on planet earth— JESUS IS STILL THE GREAT CAPTAIN of the good 'ship' earth! The risen, ascended, ruling from heaven King of Kings and LORD of Lords will accomplish all of the Great Triune God's good purposes! (3) **When we are serious about** reading and heeding the UNVEILING of Jesus, we are opening the door to genuine revival in our lives. (4) **We will be equipping ourselves with wisdom and power** to STAND FIRM and at PEACE and with WISDOM in the midst of present and coming storms, whatever they may be!

IMPORTANT: Please do not EVER AGAIN slander the Holy Spirit by claiming that The Unveiling of Jesus (The Revelation) is HARD to understand and SCARY!

1. The truth is that the primary messages of the Revelation are exceedingly PLAIN to see; and the primary truth of the book is MOST COMFORTING!
2. **The Revelation is scary** to satan, demons, and all other haters of God! **Doubtless**, Satan does not want saints to enter into the profound comfort and instruction that God has in the *Unveiling of Jesus!*
3. **In addition, let all saints BEWARE** of heeding our deceitful flesh which hates the corrections and the commands found in the Revelation!
4. **Tragic:** It seems that MOST have read/studied the REVELATION primarily out of curiosity or to establish their 'prophesy views'— rather than to SEE JESUS and to heed the many instructions, encouragements, and commands which He sets for the REDEEMED!

FOUNDATIONAL KEYS to Great Profit from the Revelation:

1. **The first recipients** of the Revelation were TRIBULATION saints! God used John, a saint in great tribulation and persecution, to pen the Revelation! (Revelation 1:9) These were **persecuted Christians who needed** encouragement,

who needed to know that JESUS and not Rome was in command, and **who needed** commendations, commands, and corrections. Throughout the centuries, these remain the great needs of most Christians. The Revelation is Holy Spirit inspired to meet these real needs.

2. **Thus**, the Revelation has been and is a great source of comfort to persecuted saints. And since, "*all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*"— then, if I am living godly I am an especially good candidate for great blessings from the Revelation!

3. **When you set aside a block of time to read through the Revelation, it may be helpful to 'picture yourself' as one of the FIRST CHRISTIANS** to receive it! **CONSIDER:** Family members and fellow saints were **MISSING**. They were not **AWOL**. No, they had been fed to the lions or maybe banished like the Apostle John to slave labor on the isle of Patmos. Rome was **MIGHTY!** She seemed Almighty! The saints were becoming fearful. Some were no doubt wondering if they were but fools. Some were already tolerating sin and apostasy. (Rev. 2-3)

4. **HOWEVER**, at just the right moment— **ALMIGHTY GOD** invaded the isle of Patmos by the Holy Spirit and began to move John's pen! Then when the Revelation was completed, God somehow got the letter to the churches. **Can't you just imagine the persecuted saints at Ephesus, meeting in secret and suddenly a 'runner' comes in— they are startled and wonder, "Is he a spy?"** No, he proves his credentials. He has just left the aged pastor and Apostle John and reports, "***I have in my hand a scroll that God has given to John to give to the churches!***" Amazed and excited, they listened intently as the entire Unveiling of JESUS was read!

5. **DON'T MISS THIS!** — **Read the entire Revelation STRAIGHT THROUGH IN ONE SETTING** and with the **MIND-SET** of those who first heard it read! I promise you, that by the time the last '**AMEN**' of the Revelation was read by the 'runner' from John— well, words cannot capture the joy, the excitement, the hope, the repenting, and the **REVIVAL** that took place! **AND GOD WILL DO SOME OF THE SAME FOR US!!**

6. **URGENT PLEA:** Let us prayerfully **READ**, seek to **HEAR**, and commit to **OBEY** the things written in the Revelation— so that we will also enter into a new day of joy, excitement, hope, repenting and usefulness in Kingdom work— in other words, **GOD SENT REVIVAL!**

HERE IS A BIG SURPRISE!

The Revelation and the New Testament Epistles which have a focus on 'end times'— **none of them have any focus on stocking-up, survival, or self-defense strategies!** Instead, the high callings of love and holiness and sound doctrine and of being **FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH** as Ambassadors for Christ are set forth! **More Surprising Reality:** 1 Peter 4:12-19 contains

what we might consider 'radical' instruction to severely persecuted saints! **1. Don't be surprised at persecution. 2. Rejoice, be happy! 3. Don't be a murderer! Consider:** If the enemies of Christ are killing saints, MY natural tendency would be to want to kill them before they kill me or before they kill another saint. **However, the Holy Spirit instructs, "Don't be a murderer!" THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT THIS:** Be it in times of survival or advance, no one in the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ shed blood in order to build or protect the Church of Jesus Christ! In contrast, it has been the blood of Christian MARTYRS laying down their lives for Christ's sake, which God has used to build much of His church.

POINT OF CONCERN: IT SEEMS TO ME that modern conservative Christians are easily persuaded as to saving their lives, even to the point of bloodshed; but we are not so keen as to being faithful unto death! **Let us not forget our calling,** "For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to SUFFER for His sake!" (Phil 1:29)

Moreover, we dare not miss this: **1. Heaven will abound with martyrs—** those whose blood was spilt for the gospel's sake! (Rev. 7:9-17; Rev. 13-15) **2. Hell will be filled with** those who MURDERED saints in the name of religion! (Rev.14:9-10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2)

[NOTE: Yes, there are the valid and difficult issues of seeking to protect one's family from harm— that is not the subject in this article.]

BELOW IS AN OUTLINE OF THE REVELATION. Good men present different outlines. This one is simple and **FOCUSED** on Christ the **SOVEREIGN LAMB!**

I. THE PRESENT SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LAMB IN HEAVEN, Chapters 1-5

JESUS CHRIST is in Heaven working through His REDEEMED on earth:

- A. Christ risen, glorified and in the midst of His churches (chapter 1)
- B. Christ commanding, correcting, and instructing His church (chapters 2-3)
- C. The Throne of Deity; and the Occupation of Heaven is WORSHIP! (chapter 4)
- D. Christ is in the Midst of the Throne of the universe! (chapter 5)

Three ways in which we see the worthiness of the Lamb: (1) The Conqueror of Satan; (2) The Redeemer of Men; (3) The Incarnation of God!

II. THE COMING SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LAMB ON EARTH, Chapters 6-19

All is are moving toward Christ's enthronement on earth for His millennial reign: (11:15; 19:6) **He** reigns (10:6); **He** rules (19:15); **He** restrains (20:1-3); **He** rewards - and those of the first resurrection reign with Him (20:4-6).

A. REVELATION 6 - Seals 1-6

1. **Great Tribulation** - the restraints of God are released (Rom. 1: 24, 26, 28); **and the wrath** of satan and evil against the redeemed increases! (**Seals 1-5**)

Seal 1 - White Horse - **Imitator** (Revelation 6:2; Matthew 24:5)

Seal 2 - Red Horse - **War** (Revelation 6:3-4; Matthew 24:6-7)

Seal 3 - Black Horse - **Famine** (Revelation 6:5-6; Matthew 24:7)

Seal 4 - Pale Horse - **Pestilence** (Revelation 6:7-8; Matthew 24:7)

Seal 5 - Great Tribulation (Revelation 6:9-11; Matthew 24:9-28)

2. **Heavenly signs and wonders** - the wrath of the **LAMB**, God's first phase of direct intervention. **Seal 6** - Heavenly signs - (Revelation 6:12-17; Matthew 24:29)

B. REVELATION 7 - Preservation and Deliverance of the 144,000 and the numberless Multitude. God protected Israel when He poured out the plagues on ancient Egypt. Noah was affected by but not the target of but protected from the wrath of God in his day. **So God shall protect all of His REDEEMED children** from the plagues of wrath coming on the present evil world. GOD often does not protect His redeemed from satan's or Babylon's wrath. [Regardless of whatever else might be said of these two groups this much is sure—**they are all saved, servants and saints of God**, Revelation 7:3; 9-17. [Positions of Pre, Mid or Post Tribulation do not change the reality of the perseveration and deliverance of saints in any age.]

C. REVELATION 8-19 - The Seventh Seal consists of Seven Trumpets and Seven Last Plagues. The Great Day of the Lord includes all the trumpets. **Six blow prior to Christ's return.**

1. **REVELATION 8** - Trumpets 1-4

2. **REVELATION 9** - a. 5th trumpet, or **first woe** (9:1-11) b. 6th trumpet, or **second woe** (9:12 - 11:13) c. **before third woe:** Two Witnesses, last 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years, God's final warning before the last trumpet.

3. **REVELATION 11:15-18 - Seventh and last trumpet— the time of Christ's literal, bodily return to earth has come!** See also I Corinthians 15:52, I Thessalonians 4:16, Matthew 24:31. **NOTE:** The seventh trumpet also consummates the wrath of God against evil. The seventh trumpet is made up of seven last plagues completing the wrath of God, described in Revelation 15-16.

4. **REVELATION 12** - (inset chapter) The story thread is stopped and we go back prior to Christ's birth (12:4); through His resurrection and ascension (12:5); and on through the activity of satan against God's redeemed people to the present (12:12, 17).

5. **REVELATION 13** - An inset chapter about the activity of satan and the anti-Christ in the

last days and during the 5th and 6th trumpets. **Special note:** Many teach us not to worry about any of this, for the church will have already been raptured! **Well, regardless of that issue, this much is sure and beyond dispute:** For 2000 years and in this very day, MULTITUDES OF CHRISTIANS have faced and are facing no less torture and martyrdom even as pictured in Revelation 13! **Moreover, when the first Christians read this, they would not have breathed a sigh of relief that at least they would not experience 'Revelation 13' type suffering and persecution! NO! THEY WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF IT!** And by the time they heard the remainder of the Revelation read, they would have had fresh courage and hope, knowing that IN CHRIST they possessed ETERNAL VICTORY!

6. REVELATION 14 - An inset chapter where three angel messengers speak of the fall of Babylon through the time of the seven last plagues, plus a warning against taking the mark of the beast. **[In some future day or this very day, to go with (to team up with) the world is deadly in the long run!]**

7. REVELATION 15-16 - Description of the seven last plagues (vials or bowls) which are part of the seventh trumpet, **the third woe**— God's judgments against God-hating men.

8. REVELATION 17-18 - Inset chapters about the great governmental, economic, and religious system of Babylon and God's judgments against them, including the last seven plagues. [NOTE: **Sorceries**— 'pharmakeia'- Enchantment with drugs! Prescription or not!]

9. REVELATION 19 - **The second coming of Jesus Christ to earth described further:**

a. This happens at the seventh and last trumpet. (Revelation 11:15-18)

b. **On that day** all God's people - the saved of all ages - meet Christ in the air and come on with Him to Jerusalem. God's children, now in immortal spirit bodies are also now rewarded. (See Revelation 11:18, 22:12)

c. **On that day**, also, God's wrath as pictured with the seven last plagues begins to take place and is possibly administered in a 24-hour period. (Revelation 18:8; Zechariah 14:7; 14:1-9)

d. **On that day** (Revelation 11:15-18, 19:15-21, Zechariah 14:1-9), the evil nations (having probably spent months in preparation) will, under the anti-Christ's leadership (Revelation 16:13-15) gather at Armageddon to fight against Christ. The results - Revelation 19:14-21.

III. THE ETERNAL ENTHRONEMENT OF THE LAMB ON THE "NEW EARTH"

REVELATION 20-22. Jesus is LORD! Yet He remains the Lamb! His Calvary love will never, never be forgotten! 1. REVELATION 20 - satan bound, millennium and judgment! 2. REVELATION 21-22 - New heaven and New Earth!

1. Let us be found faithful!

2. Stay CLOSE to Jesus and close to fellow saints in the LOCAL ASSEMBLY! (Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:23-25; 12:1-4)

3. Knowing the terror of the LORD, PERSUADE MEN, endeavor to win others to Christ!
(2 Cor. 5:11); **BE A GOOD SOLDIER OF THE CROSS!** (2 Timothy 2:1-4)

4. Look unto Jesus for words of wisdom in the hour of trial! (Luke 21:14-15)

5. Many others have— we may also be given the high honor of persecution even to death;
but not a hair of your head will perish! (Luke 21:16-19)

COME LORD JESUS!

Grace to all in Christ! / James