

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

The mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:1-4, 6-12) where after Christ has taken the Bride, that is the Church back home to heaven at the Rapture of His saints together with the active presence of the promised Holy Spirit, sin or evil referred to as iniquity or acts of lawlessness will reach the highest level on earth; this will be the time of the revealing or the world scene the most wicked human being referred to as the lawless one, the Anti-Christ, the son of Perdition, who comes after the working of Satan (2 Thess. 2:6-12 v. 8; Rev. 13:1-18 v. 4). In other words, the Lord will allow evil which now operates on earth originating from Satan through Adam's disobedience but working in the kingdoms of this world until the return of Christ (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-9, 15-22; Eph. 6:12; 1 Jn. 3:4-8; 5:18-21; Rev. 9:20-10:7; 11:15-19; 12:7-12) to run its full course on planet earth reaching the peak during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:21-31 vv. 21, 29; Mk. 13:19-27 v. 24). The Bible also calls that time of God's wrath on evil during the Great Tribulation the great and awesome day of the Lord (Acts 2:16-21 v. 20; cf. Joel 2:28-32 v. 31).

So evil is an intruder on earth but allowed by the great and good God of the Universe to operate here having been spiritually defeated in Christ's First Advent on operation footstool (Matt. 22:44; Acts 2:35; Heb. 1:13; 10:13) until it is judged and finally overthrown from the earth by the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Advent (Matt. 6:9-13; 2 Thess. 2:7, 8; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; Rev. 19:11-21). From kingdom of God perspectives in reference to the world and Church (Matt. 6:9-13; 16:16-19; 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-8), the Lord Jesus using the parable of wheat and tares in reference to the mysteries of the kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) has uniquely explained the underlying principles of the mystery of iniquity (Matt. 13:10-17, 34, 35; 2 Thess. 2:7-12).

While God sows and desires fruit from only good seed as wheat in the world through the Church, the Devil or Satan as God's enemy and his agents sow evil seed for tares in our midst until the end of the Age (Matt. 13:29-30, 39-40). The mystery of iniquity is critical when we consider the Church and the fact that antichrist spirits (1 Jn. 2:18-22; 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 1:7-11) and seducing spirits together with doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1-5) are at work already (2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15; 2 Thess. 2:1-12 v. 7). Moreover, after the early Spirit-filled gospel preachers, teachers and apostles like Paul and John (1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:8-11; Rev. 1:1-20 vv. 2, 9-10), there was the possible invasion of grievous evil through false teaching, deception and persecution on and in the Church (Acts 20:28-32; Phil. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:1f; Jd. 1:3, 17-25). Indeed, Satan aims to always discredit the Word and to dilute the gospel as the central message of revealed mystery, the central saving truth saving truth

concerning the testimony of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:4-9 v. 6; 2:1-7; Rev. 1:1-2, 8-16, 18-20; 19:10). Satan always knows that his time is short for final overthrow of evil and him as the evil one who deceives the whole world (Rev. 12:9, 12).

The Lord Jesus Christ after first appearing in the air to catch up the saints in Christ, the Bride and Body in the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:50-58 v. 51; 1 Thess. 4:13-18 v. 17; 2 Thess. 2:1; Rev. 1:7), will then follow through the final overthrow of evil by the wrath of God or the Tribulation judgment of sin and evil in their fullness on earth (Rom. 2:5-16; Rev. 9:20-10:7). Thereafter, Christ will finally appear and land on the earth at the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:3-7) to defeat the forces of evil in the final day of the great battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-18) and then to capture and cast the Anti-Christ and his false Prophet alive into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone (2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 19:19-21). This will also be the time to remove every curse from the earth in its regeneration in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom and Rule of Christ (Gen. 3:19; Matt. 19:28; Rom. 8:21-23).

So, the return of Christ, the appearing *parousia* will be in two phases (2 Thess. 2:1, 2). The first appearing of Christ, will be where *erchomai* meaning to come again to be visible in appearance *phanerosis* to the glorified saints and only spiritually visible to the after Rapture repentant elect saints, especially among the Jews (Jn. 14:3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Jn. 3:1-3; Rev. 1:7). This first appearing of Christ is to literally catch up *harpazo* or gather together *episunagoge* the saints in Christ, the Church in the clouds and into heaven (1 Thess. 4:17; 2 Thess. 2:1, 2). This will be before the final appearing, *parousia* meaning to come visibly with His glorified saints after the Tribulation (1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). The final appearing of Christ will also be in wrath to capture the Anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 19:11-21 see Matt. 24:21, 29; Mk. 13:24; 2 Thess. 2:1, 2, 8; Rev. 7:14; 19:14, 20, 21).

The Lord will destroy him and end the working of iniquity on this current earth at His final appearing when the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet are the first to be thrown into literal Hell Fire (2 Thess. 2:7-12; Rev. 19:11-21 vv. 20, 21). Subsequently or concurrently, Satan also the mastermind behind all sin in the Universe (Gen. 3:1-9; Job 1:6-12; Jn. 8:44; Eph. 6:12; 1 Jn. 3:4-8; Rev. 12:1-12) and often through deception on earth (Gen. 3:1; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 2:14; 3:13; 2 Tim. 2:26; 3:6; Rev. 18:23) would be bound with chains in the Bottomless Pit for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3).

Scripture teaches that the Devil, Satan will then be bound for a thousand years during the Millennial Reign of Christ but be loosed for a while to indicate his nature of evil but captured and through into the Lake of fire with his angelic followers (Rev. 20:1-10). The Great White Throne judgement, the last judgment will then assign death and hades and all the unbelieving dead since the days of Adam their place in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8; 22:15). After all these, when evil is no more, the great and good triune God of the

Universe will create the everlasting New Earth and New Heavens in which only righteousness dwells (Is. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:1-13 v. 13; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5). God will live with us, and be all in all, in the New Jerusalem (1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 21:9-23; 2:1-5); but Satan and his followers, death and hades and all the unbelieving with all evil will eternally live in the Hell Fire (Matt. 25:41; Rom. 2:5-; Rev. 21:8; 22:15).

The entry of good and evil on earth

Evil we know entered the world when man rebelled against God, turning all God's good gifts, abilities and endowments from His image likeness into weapons against each other and in enmity against God (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:4-24 v. 16, 17; 3:9-22; Jn. 3:18-20; Rom. 8:7; Eph. 5:3-7; Js. 1:13-25; 4:1-4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Rev. 9:20, 21). Nature's evils, human engineered evils, Satanic evils from idols and devils or demons, etc still reveal corruption, curse, groaning, etc., showing the consequences of sin and death on earth (Rom. 8:20-23; Rev. 9:20, 21). Of-course evil originated from Satan's ambition as beautiful Lucifer per Ezek. 28:15-17 in the form of his pride to be equal with God (Is. 14:13-14). This was the wicked thing as iniquity, lawlessness, unrighteousness, ungodliness, and many more as sin that entered the Universe long before the creation of humanity in heaven (Rev. 12:1-9). And, thereby, before the creation of human beings to inhabit the earth (Gen. 1:1-3, 14-19, 26-28; 3:1-19; Rev. 12:9-12), Satan became the originator of all sin in the universe (1 Jn. 3:4-10 v. 8).

Evil is hence not a timeless principle, but works as a man exercises free will wrongly not to believe, obey and serve only the true and living God, whose Son is the holy One and righteous Judge (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:22-24; Eccl. 12:13, 14; Matt. 4:10; Acts 2:27; 3:14; 13:33-35; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 1 Jn. 2:1, 2, 20-27). God is good and great; so, when He allowed evil through Satan's deception and sin to enter the world (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-25; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:6-12), He rolled out the better plan of Salvation through the seed of the woman, in His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15; Matt. 1:16-25; 3:11-17; Lk. 1:31-35; 3:21-38; Jn. 1:1-5, 9-18; 3:13-16; Gal. 4:4-7).

Scripture teaches that, God had eternally out of love provided this unique solution to deal with all evil or sin through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15; Jn. 3:16; Rev. 13:8). When we put everything together, we come to the following conclusions about our good and great God and evil in the world:

- a) God is not evil and cannot be tempted;
- b) Nothing happens, good or evil, without God's knowledge and permission;
- c) God never wills to permit evil that He has not already determined to overcome;
- d) God still permits evil to allow grace and faith to intermarry.

Evil will, however, reach its highest peak in the Tribulation, with the revelation of the Anti-Christ until the Lord Jesus judges him at the battle of Armageddon (2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 19:11-21). According to the Scriptures, there is going to be the real historical appearance of the Anti-Christ in the world, to be "revealed in his time." (2 Thess. 2:5-8). The timing is after the "imminent Rapture of the saints in Christ, the Church" and "the falling away" from the true faith towards the formation of the Apostate Church (2 Thess. 2:3). Permit me to say that the Rapture of the Church is to be considered imminent always from the first Advent and Out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, since no time line is provided in the entire Bible for the Church Age (Matt. 16:16-19; 28:18-20; Acts 2:16-21). The end of Church Age in God's redemptive plan as an intercalation before resuming (the pending seven years remaining) on God's time-line for the nation Israel (Dan. 9:24-27).

Now this Church Age time-line which is only known to God could be short or long but unknown to any human being (Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:1-8 vv. 6-8). And thus, the gathering of the saints together, the Rapture of the Church saints, is imminent - to be at any time, suddenly, quickly, very unexpected and soon in *that* generation, the generation to witness the return of Christ (Matt. 13:28-36; Acts 1:9-11; 2:16-21 v.20; 3:19-26; Rom. 11:5-36 vv. 25, 26; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:10; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 1:7; 22:7, 12, 20).

The revelation of the Anti-Christ will, however, then just precede the seven years of special judgment on evil and sin on Earth called the Tribulation or "the day of the Lord" that includes the second half of three and half ($3\frac{1}{2}$) literal years period of the Great Tribulation or "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:28-32 v. 31; Mal. 4:1-6 v. 5; Matt. 24:29; Acts 2:16-21 v. 20; 2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 6-19). We must clearly understand this teaching (2 Thess. 2:4, 5), and then also that two parts of three and half ($3\frac{1}{2}$) literal years each that make up this seven years Tribulation period (Dan. 9:26, 27; Rev. 11:3; 12:6). All the seven years of Tribulation (the day of the Lord) will be terrible times (Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Amos 5:18-20; Ob. 1:15; Zeph. 1:7-14; 2:2-3; Matt. 24:21-31; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). However, the second half of three and half ($3\frac{1}{2}$) years of the Great Tribulation or "the great and terrible day of the Lord" will be exceedingly dreadful with extreme demonic and natural upheavals (Joel 2:31; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:20).

Evil was present in the early Church and would increase with time from statements of the apostle Paul (Acts 20:29-30). In his own time, he says, there were things which, if not restrained, would expand and ripen or lead into apostasy; and such falling away would come first before the revelation of Anti-Christ and the Rapture (2 Thess. 2:1, 3). The mystery of iniquity is linked with Mystery or Religious Babylon which emerges as the False Church first and then Anti-Christ will use it to become the World Ruler (Rev. 17:1-13). Thus, even in the Apostolic Age there existed the elements of those corruptions which were afterward developed and embodied in Church life in the Papacy symbolized by

Mystery Babylon as a picture of gospel-deficient Church (Rev. 17:14-18). It is such attack on the true Church that has existed since Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21; Rev. 1:1-20 v. 19) and into the present generation (Rev. 2; 3).

Such things as: *strife and divisions* (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3), *adulterating and mishandling of the Word* (2 Cor. 2:7; 4:2), *stealing in the Church or covetousness which was termed idolatry* (1 Cor. 10:14; Col. 3:5), *a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels* (Col. 2:18), *a gain of godliness, teaching of things for filthy lucre's sake* (1 Tim. 6:5; Tit. 1:11), *a vain observation of festivals* (Gal. 4:10), *a vain distinction of meats* (1 Cor. 8:8), *a neglecting of the body* (Col. 2:23), *traditions, and commandments, and doctrines of men* (Col. 2:8, 22), *love of pre-eminence* (Rom. 12:3; Gal. 6:26 see 3 Jn. 3 Jn. 1:9), *love of the world* (1 Jn. 2:15-17) and many more crept into the Church.

These things constituted the elements of corruptions of doctrinal purity contrary to the chaste nature of New Testament sound doctrine and practice from unconverted and carnal members through the flesh, the world, antichrist spirits, the Gnostics, Legalists, Religionists and other false teachers (2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15). As the menace of false teachers and prophets, all self-effort or man initiated religious worldviews are forms of idolatry rooted in the age-old lie or deception of Satan in Genesis; "... and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil." (v. 5 LITV) (Gen. 3:1-9, 22; 1 Jn. 5:20, 21). This is the Devil's tool of deception stated finally during the revelation of the Anti-Christ as the **mystery of iniquity** (2 Thess. 2:7-9). The **mystery of iniquity** is the mystery which is at work against the **mystery of God** where God is known and believed as the only One who deserves worship and service in total obedience to the law of God (Eccl. 12:13, 14 see Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-9 vv. 3, 5; Col. 2:2, 3; Rev. 10:5-7).

The mystery is permitted by God to test loyalty

The underlying factor of evil from the Satan's deception in the world is not because the living and true God willed it; but that He permitted it in His Sovereignty. This is referred to as the "mystery of lawlessness or iniquity" (2 Thess. 2:1-12 v.7); and which rightly teaches us to trace sin and its consequences on Earth to Satan (1 Jn. 3:8; cf. Gen. 3:1-24; Matt. 4:4-10; Jn. 8:44; 10:10; Rom. 8:9-25; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10). Evil is, hence, not a timeless principle like good which is part of the character of God (Js. 1:17)! From the time of Satan's rebellion in heaven, he has always been seeking to pervert the goodness of God, corrupt humanity and usurp true worship starting from Adam (Rev. 12:7-17; cf. Gen. 3:1-9; Matt. 4:4-10; Rev. 9:20, 21). We see this repeated through the ungodly line of Cain by his progeny Lamech after the death of righteous Abel who chose not only to corrupt themselves (Gen. 4:1-24) but to seduce the godly line of Seth through another Lamech, the grandfather of Noah (Gen. 4:25, 26; 5:1-32; 6:1-8).

False doctrine and deception, the worst tools in the mystery of iniquity.

Humanity in general is now governed in doctrine and practice by the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17; 3:5, 7; 20-22); but such knowledge is outside the very life or glory of God on earth (Gen. 3:23-24; Acts 17:23-31; Rom. 3:19-23). With the advent of Christ and Christianity, there is a direct separation of the godly (righteous or just) from the ungodly (unrighteous or unjust) for either choosing or rejecting to believe and know Christ through the gospel (Rom. 1:16-18; Tit. 1:15-16; Rev. 22:6-12). The just or righteous or ungodly or people of faith are those who choose to fear and obey God and His commandments as the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13-14; Heb. 11:1-6). Such people are those who believe the gospel as the primary source of sound doctrine preached with the Holy Spirit sent from heaven (1 Pet. 1:12; see 1 Cor. 2:1-16; 15:1-11). The gospel as seed has power to both save and transform (Matt. 13:33; 1:16-17). Wherever the gospel is not the doctrine, sound doctrine gives way to false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10-11; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Tit. 1:1-9; 2:1-15). To go with false doctrine and practice without the gospel as power of God unto salvation is the way of iniquity which the godly must always depart from so as to keep out of the snares of Satan, sin and idolatry (Gen. 3:1-9; Rom. 1:16-18; 1 Tim. 1:11-20; 6:11-21; 2 Tim. 2:15-26 v. 19; 1 Jn. 5:16-21; Rev. 9:20-21).

As a biblical principle of life on earth, ungodliness or unrighteousness does not bond with godliness or righteousness. The Scriptures say; *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor. 6:14-18). ... “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”(Rev. 22:11).*

Thus, as was in Noah’s days, anytime a godly person marries an ungodly person through **demonism** (ungodliness) and **humanism** (unrighteousness) by deception and false doctrine, the resultant seed or outcome is wickedness of imaginations of the hearts of humanity, corruption of all kinds and rebellion against God (Gen. 6:1-8; Rom. 1:16-32; 1 Cor. 15:33-34; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). Or else and equally, anytime the righteous chose to partner and live in sin with the unrighteous through **demonism** (ungodliness) and **humanism** (unrighteousness) in false doctrine or deception, the resultant outcome is wickedness and corruption of all kinds contrary to God ways (Prov. 1:6-10; Rom. 1:16-32; 1 Cor. 15:33-34; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

In the mystery of iniquity working in the descendants of Noah just after the flood, Satan engineered Nimrod, the first tyrant and dictator to set up a city Babylon to rule over people (Gen. 10:8-12). Eventually as they moved to settle in the plain of Shinar the rebellious idea of the Tower of Babel for City secular life and false idolatrous worship came up; which God defeated as usual (Gen. 11:1-9).

We are aware that historically Babylon began in Genesis under Nimrod the fierce hunter and rebel against God with his shrew wife, Semiramis, who developed the religion of the ancient Babylonians (Gen. 10; 11; Jer. 7:18; 44:17-25). Being caught in age-old lie or deception of Satan in Genesis; “... *and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.*” (Gen. 3:5 LITV) coupled with the promised seed of the woman by God to humanity; “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*” (Gen. 3:15 LITV), Semiramis developed the religion with her as the **queen of heaven**, and his son Tammuz as **the saviour of men** requiring weeping in the festival of Ishtar that was later adopted in ancient Babylon (Jer. 7:18; 13:10; 25:6; 26:2; 44:19; Ezek. 8:14).

This same religion of Ancient Babylon is down through history into Egypt (Africa), Assyria, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. It is said in Egypt the mother as queen of heaven was Isis and the son was Horos; while Greece the mother was Aphrodite, the son Cupid. In Africa today, especially Ghana my country of origin, it is even more critical to see such ancient Babylonian cult in action. There is the queen mother which is a type of queen of heaven, then there is tribal or clan head of the type of Nimrod who serves to pass information as generational link between the living and the dead and then the son who is the chief of the tribe. This is critical for African Christians; for in Christianity through the mystery of God, of the Father and of Christ revealed is to show that the Son is God and the embodiment of salvation (Col. 2:2, 3).

Thus, it is only in Christ that we gain understanding that salvation from God is on the basis of faith from the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; Col. 1:3-8; 2:1-7). Christ the Son of God must become both our clan head who died and rose again as the only true and living God we believe and serve (1 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 1:1-6). God is the One who reaches out to all repentant people and reconciles them unto Himself; for “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:18-21 v. 18).

The spirit of falsehood or lying

Every modern society can be divided into seven spheres of influence: - *Spiritual/Religion, Government/Politics [including Traditional Rule], Business/Economy, Education, Media, Culture/ Arts, and Sports/Entertainment*. Nations with unrighteous or humanistic and ungodly or demonic kingdom lifestyles as shades of dominant idolatry are thus under the

oppressive grip of these Seven Spheres as Mountains of Influence. We must not gloss over that fact that without the gospel and the active presence of the Holy Spirit all humanity in the last days are predominantly liars who act either from being lovers of self rather than God (2 Tim. 3:1-13) or serve Satan and idols to generate all moral degeneracy (Rev. 9:20-21). With regard to truth it is only God who is truth and cannot lie (Ps. 31:5; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18); thus, the Father is truth (Jn. 3:33; 7:28; 17:3), Christ the Son is truth (Jn. 8:55; 14:6; 1 Jn. 2:20-21) and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17; 1 Jn. 2:27; 5:6); while all humanity is generally prone to lying (Num. 23:19; Ps. 31:6; 59:12; 62:9; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 3:4, 7; 1 Jn. 1:6; 5:10; Rev. 3:9; 21:27; 22:15). Even among Christians and in the Church there is the tendency to continue holding on to lying (Acts 5:3; Rom. 3:4; Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9; 1 Jn. 1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10; Rev. 2:2).

This is why for instance the Psalmist concluded that “all men are liars” (Ps. 116:11). Lying has become a way of life of all humanity; this is because all humanity follows after Satan who is the father of liars or lying (Gen. 3:1-9; Jn. 8:41, 44). Culturally or by ethnicity, most people of dominant African descent like Cretans in the Bible are trained to be liars and to live on lying from birth through folklore and habits of denial of truth (Tit. 1:12). On the other, most Jews, Arabs, Europeans and Asians from Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Roman descent are trained to be liars and to live on lying from birth through either supremacy of human learning or education and technology or the strong monetary mentality and pomp or the myth and fallacy of survival of the fittest which is also a denial of truth as Cain the murderer (Gen. 4:1-10; 1 Jn. 3:11-15 v. 12; Jd. 1:5-13 v. 11).

All humanity follows after Satan’s nature as the father of liars or lying (Gen. 3:1-9; Jn. 8:41, 44), are easily deceived or seduced as a way of lying or seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (Mk. 13:22; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 2:26). Seduction will cause people who are like sheep including believers to wander, that is go astray (Gen. 37:14; Ex. 23:4; Matt. 18:12-13; Tit. 3:3; Heb. 5:2; 11:38; Js. 5:19; 1 Pet. 2:25). This involves deception that causes us to err or form a wrong judgment outside the truth of the gospel or the Word (Prov. 12:27; Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; Mk. 13:5-6; 1 Jn. 1:8; 3:7; Rev. 13:14) and thereby to be totally deceived, misled (Matt. 22:29; Mk. 12:24, 27; Lk. 21:8; Jn. 7:47; 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; Heb. 3:10; Js. 1:16). Seduced people readily enter into rebellion (Jn. 7:12; Rev. 20:8, 10) and wander from the truth (2 Tim. 3:13; 1 Jn. 2:26). The main aim of Satan and his agents is to seduce humanity into to idolatry (2 Kgs. 21:9; Ezek. 44:10, 15; Rev. 2:20; 12:9; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3); so as to blind them in order to be devoid of eternal life in Christ and enter eternal death (Mk. 13:22; 1 Jn. 2:26-29; 5:9-13, 16-21; Rev. 2:20; 9:20-21).

There is no room for idols and idolatrous African, Asian, African or Latin American and other Christians in respect of the promise of eternal life (Tit. 1:1-4; 1 Jn. 5:20, 21). All

idolatry comes to destroy eternal life through religious sects, fetish omens, ancestral worship, pouring of libation, power of ancestral stools and names, sacrifices to gods and invocations, astral projections, telepathy, Ouija boards, palmistry, astrology, Satanism, Religious Cults and Occult, Secular Humanism, Humanistic or Scientific Artificial Intelligence and looking for power outside Christ (1 Cor. 1:18-24). Everything about salvation is vested in our faith in Christ, the Son of God (Col. 2:2, 3; see Eph. 1:3-23; 3:4-6, 14-19; 1 Thess. 1:3-10; 1 Jn. 2:20-27; 3:1-10, 18-24; 4:12-16; 5:1-13, 18-21).

It is equally critical for Jewish, European, American and Australasian Christians to keep from idols; for in Christianity through the mystery of God, of the Father and of Christ all knowledge about God and salvation is revealed (Col. 2: 2, 3). Yet, many have left serving God in the gospel and now serving Mammon, the god of money (wealth) (Matt. 6:24). Sadly, undetected Mammon is the god of affluence in materialism, trade and science or the god of secret societies and Satanism like illuminati, blood-covenant groups and other lodge fraternities (Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:6-21; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Rev. 9:20, 21).

This is the reason why Abraham was called by the faith of the gospel to leave his kindred, father's house and nation of idol worship to serve the God of glory (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; Acts 7:2-4; Rom. 4:16-18; Gal. 3:6-17, 20-29). All believers known to the Sovereign Lord God as His own must willingly as their human responsibility depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:15-26 v. 19) through the gospel or the word and the active presence of the Holy Spirit to avoid the wrath of God (Rom. 1:16-18; 2:5-16; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 2:12-16; Col. 3:5-17; 1 Thess. 1:3-10; 1 Pet. 1:10-16).

Finally, the original religion at the time of Nimrod will be what the Bible calls Religious or Mystery Babylon in the book of Revelation used by Anti-Christ to gain rulership over the world before styling himself as "God" in the re-built Temple in Jerusalem (Rev. 13; 17:1-6 v. 5; 18:2-5). Now mystery Babylon falls in the middle of the Tribulation (Rev. 17:5), but political Babylon continues under Anti-Christ for another three-and-half years of the wrath of God, Great Tribulation in the final phase of the mystery of iniquity on earth (Rev. 14:8; 16:9; 18:10-21).

God will eventually defeat the forces evil that through Satan and overthrow the Anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 10:5-7; 11:15-19; 12:1-17; 13:1-18; 14:6-12). Hence, as a fact of life, we can always overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:9, 21; 1 Jn. 5:18-21) because God who is good always overcomes Satan, the usurper and arch enemy for us (1 Pet. 5:8-10; 1 Jn. 3:4-8; Rev. 12:1-17). Jesus Christ has overcome the Devil and the world for us (Jn. 12:31, 32; 14:30; 16:33; 1 Jn. 3:8). Nonetheless the Devil has a little time as a defeated foe to work of planet earth as an enemy but the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:3; 1 Jn. 5:8; Rev. 12:12).

We must never forget that “good” in the world is timeless entity that can only come from God who is good (Matt. 19:17) to us in the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16). On the other hand, Satan who is become evil and the devil or evil one is the originator of evil as iniquity or lawlessness on earth (Is. 14:12-19 v. 12 Ezek. 28:11-19 vv. 12, 14; Matt. 6:13; 2 Thess. 2:7-9; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 12:1-12). But though troublesome on earth Satan knows that His time is short since evil has a beginning it is also time-bound (Gen. 3:1-24; 6:1, 2; Rom. 5:12; 7:14-25; Eph. 2:1-3; Rev. 9:20, 21; 10:5-7; 12:12).

It is only as humanity rejects the gospel and Christ and opens the door to falsehood that the devil is able to lead them into delusion as in the days of Anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2:7-12). Otherwise we who are in Christ are called to salvation through the gospel unto glory in Christ (2 Thess. 2:13-17). Since God knows His own people to preserve them, it required that everyone who calls the Lord’s name must take the responsibility to study the word of truth and depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:15-26 v. 19).

Note also that as an eternal law, the good or light which originate from God though may sometimes only be distorted or deformed but cannot be overcome by evil or darkness (Jn. 1:1, 4-5; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 6:13)! So, since the great and good Creator God, the righteous Judge will always do right (Gen. 18:25; Acts 10:42), we must understand that God exercises Sovereignty over the created Universe (Is. 45:7). He, therefore, will continue to use the Evil One with his devils as channel of evil but all for His eternal purposes of victory in Christ (Jn. 3:14-18; 36; Acts 2:23, 24; Rom. 8:28-32; 1 Cor. 2:6-12; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:9-11; Col. 2:13-15; Rev. 12:11). Before the final overthrow of Satan from the cursed planet earth, the Sovereign Lord will use the agents of Satan and of destruction in the use of the coming Anti-Christ to show wrath on wicked people and evil on earth in what is called the “mystery of God” (Rev. 10:5-11 v. 7; 11:15-19).

Concerning the “mystery of God” as wrath against “mystery of iniquity” Paul writes; “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (Gk: asebeia) and unrighteousness (Gk: adikia) of men, who hold the truth (Gk: alethia) in unrighteousness (Gk: adikia)*” (Rom. 1:18). In general terms all humanity without the influence of the gospel as means of salvation will live in sin through some form of **demonism** (ungodliness) and some form of **humanism** (unrighteousness) while holding the truth in unrighteous (Rom. 1:16-18).

Forms of **demonism** (ungodliness or impiety toward God, lack of reverence for God) among humanity exist as the resultant seed of godlessness or anti-God imaginations in the hearts of humanity, and outright rebellion against God will always breed of kinds of Satanic and idolatrous behaviour and worship on earth (Col. 2:16-23; see Gen. 3:1-9; 4:1-12; 6:1-8; 10:1-9; 12:1-10; 15:13-21; Deut. 18:10-18; Rom. 1:16-32; 2 Tim. 3:1-13). Form

of demonism would include including **Satanism, Secret Societies, Cults and the Occult Societies, False Religions including New Age Ideologies** and the like. Forms of **humanism** (unrighteousness or injustice and what is wrong) exist as the resultant seed or outcome is wickedness of imaginations of the hearts of humanity, corruption of all kinds and rebellion against God will always breed of kinds of humanistic philosophies including **secular humanism** (Col. 2:8-10; see Gen. 3:1-9; 4:1-12; 6:1-8; Prov. 1:6-10; Rom. 1:16-32; 1 Cor. 15:33, 34).

When any form of **demonism** (ungodliness) and any form of **humanism** (unrighteousness) from those who out of iniquity impede the worship of the true God by their obstinate adherence to worldliness or to idolatry come together there is falsehood and deception (Rom. 1:18; 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:10, 12; 2 Pet. 2:15). This is often in the absence of the gospel or the word and the active presence of the Holy Spirit, where our spiritual defences are weakened and our conscience makes room for truth to be held in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:16-32 v. 18).

The Church and true Christians must understand that in the last days as we move closer to the Rapture and thence into the Great Tribulation, Revelation 9:20, 21 clearly suggest that there will be five strands of sinfulness on earth. We read; *"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."* (Rev. 9:20-21). The last four of the five strands of deviancy or sinfulness, that is, **murders** (*phonos*), **sorcery** (*pharmakeia*), **sexual immorality** (*porneia*) and **thefts** (*klemma*) will be propelled by Satan rather through the first of the five strands of sinfulness, that is, worship of **devils** (*diamonion*) **and idols** (*eidolon*).

We need to set our doctrine right that behind all unrighteousness of men is the age old Devil, who is a thief, murderer, destroyer, devoid of truth and the father of liars. The Lord Jesus Himself spoke about him saying; *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it"* (Jn. 8:44). ... *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* (Jn. 10:10). Just as sound doctrine from the gospel is positively compared to yeast that transforms (Matt. 13:33), even so does false doctrine secretly corrupt as yeast as it grows and but badly or negatively permeates everything (Matt. 16:5-12; Gal. 5:9). The only remedy is to remove false doctrine as yeast (1 Cor. 5:6-7) and replace it with the gospel or the word as sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3-19; 2 Tim. 1:3-14 vv. 10-11).

Thus, Governments, Secular Humanists and with Human Rights activists may even wrongly endorse or legalize these deviant behaviours as normal to indicate the wickedness of hearts comparable as was the state of society in the days of Noah and also Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 17:26-30). All these will be directly and indirectly masterminded by Satan, the Devil who specializes in inflaming all forms of **demonism** (ungodliness) and **humanism** (unrighteousness) through lusts and pride in humanity (1 Jn. 2:17-18; 4:1-6). Soon, such levels of iniquity from false teaching and deception will be directed into the Anti-Christ as the man of lawlessness; *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”* (2 Thess. 2:9-10).

Regardless of whatever the outcomes of governing law in nations, the gospel must be preached, believed and then obeyed for eternal life (2 Thess. 1:3-12 v. 8; 1 Pet. 4:1-19 v. 17). Otherwise, humanity faces the wrath of God; *“For the **wrath of God is revealed** from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness”* (Rom. 1:18). The eternal wrath of God demands that all unbelievers have chosen to live without eternal life. *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”* (Rev. 21:8). ... *“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”* (Rev. 22:15).

God’s restraining force in the Church Age

Presently and throughout the entire Church Age, however, there is *first* God’s retraining force or power which is referred to both as a *what* (v 6) and a *he* (v 7) in the text in Second Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:6-8). This restraint, very probably is the restraining work of the Spirit of God against sin through the presence of body of Christ, the Church which is indwelt by the promised Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2:6-8 see Gen. 6:3; Jn. 14:12-26; 16:7-27; Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20). Presently, the Holy Spirit works through the Church and believers to convict the world and to restrain evil and darkness on earth (Jn. 16:7-15; Acts 2:16-21; 1 Cor. 1:4-10; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:3-8, 12-14, 23-29; 1 Thess. 1:3-10; 1 Jn. 1:1-7; Rev. 1:4-6). At the “Rapture” when the Church is “taken away”, the Holy Spirit will not be entirely taken away from the earth but will only be “taken out of the way” as the Out-poured Holy Spirit with the Church being caught up to allow Satan to work unrestrained through the Anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

Secondly, the “mystery of iniquity” (that is, lawlessness or rebellion) is now at work in the world (1 Jn. 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 1:7); which began at the fall of man (Gen. 3:1-22 vv. 1-5, 13) and with the birth of Cain (Gen. 4:1-24 v. 7) into succeeding generations until the flood

(Gen. 5:1-24; 6:1-13; 7; 8; 2 Pet. 3:1-7) and down until today (Gen. 9:1-7, 18-29; 10:8-12; 11:1-10; Matt. 24:3-21; Acts 17:23-29 v. 26; 2 Tim. 3:1-9, 13). However, sooner very soon, in the great and terrible day of the Lord, the power that restrains evil is going to be removed; and evil is going to be cut loose upon the world (Rev. 9:20, 21). God is going to remove much of the restraint that He now puts upon evil. The Spirit of grace and the grace of God and Jesus the embodiment of grace itself will be gone with the Church (Acts 11:23; 15:6-11; 20:32; Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:1-10; Tit. 2:11-14; Heb. 10:29; 1 Pet. 5:10). When that happens, the word "mystery" about evil or lawlessness or iniquity which means something secret about iniquity that has been hidden but is openly now revealed to be valid, in the full strength and personified through the anti-Christ on earth.

There is, of course, so much that we humans, even the great apostles and prophets of the Church Age do not and would not know about lawlessness (its origin, ending, pervasiveness and deceitfulness) (Matt. 13:22; Mk. 4:19; Heb. 3:13). Such secret things are known only to God (Deut. 29:29; Eccl. 3:11; Acts 1:6, 7). Scripture teaches that Satan causes rebellion to make us like gods knowing good and evil. *"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* (Gen. 3:5). This is Satan's way of rebellion to make himself equal to the Almighty (Rev. 12:1-12 v. 7) before the creation of humanity until lawlessness is full on earth (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-9, 14-22; 2 Thess. 2:7-9). In Christ, believers always have victory over lawlessness and idols that oppose eternal life (1 Jn. 3:1-10, 18-24; 5:1-5, 10-13, 16-21).

With believers, therefore, Paul attempts to give us the reason for ongoing lawlessness as attributable to the two inevitable laws (the law of the Spirit of life in Christ to deal with the law of sin in the flesh) at work in us in the book of Romans (Rom. 7:14-8:16 vv. 1-4). There is, however, the conflict of the flesh with the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-16 v. 13; Gal. 5:16-26 vv.16; Eph. 4:17-32 vv. 22-24; Col. 3:1-17) which believers must know to live or walk in victory not after the flesh but by the Spirit or by the way of the cross in Christ (Rom. 8:12-14; Gal. 2:20; 5:17, 24-26; 6:14-17).

Nonetheless we still have endless questions to grapple with, even among strong believers:

- (1) Why do human beings continue to do things that we know are bad for us and others?
Why do even Christians find it difficult to do good always?
- (2) Why do we follow deceptions, falsehood and serve other gods, who do not have eternal life? Why do we lie, steal, cheat, kill, curse and go to war? Why do nations rise against nations; and use resources as means of war?
- (3) Why are we so selfish, self-centred, lustful and covetous that we allow barriers and feelings to build up toward husband, wife, child, parent, neighbor, friend, employer, and employee - barriers and feelings that end up destroying our lives and relationships and hurting all those around us?

- (4) Why do we indulge, hoard, bank, and build more and more, neglecting the reality of a world that reels under the weight of desperate needs?
- (5) What is there about us that causes us to sin and then to continue on sinning when it is so bad and does so much harm? And why is it that we cannot control sin and lawlessness within ourselves, much less within our world? Notice that outside Christ and the gospel, we cannot answer the question, not in and of ourselves. That is the mystery of iniquity. Sin is a mystery, an unknown but real factor of human life.
- (6) The questions could go on and on. We know better, yet we continue to do evil. Why? No human being has the answer! However, only God knows and understands and has revealed what it is and why we are enslaved by it. The mystery of iniquity has been revealed to men by God through Christ and His Holy Word. It is a matter of man listening to Christ and to the Word of God.

The important point to note is this: in the last days when it is time for the anti-Christ to arise, God is going to remove much of His restraint upon lawlessness. Lawlessness will be allowed to run rampant over the earth, and the rampage will be part of the judgment falling upon the earth. Men will be allowed to do their own thing and live as they desire to live. The day is coming when men will get their wish and be left to themselves without God interfering, under the rule of the godless Anti-Christ, as the world ruler (Revelations chapters 6 -19).

- a) The anti-Christ will be revealed in person as the religious cum economic expert and political ruler. He will "appear unveiled in all reality as a genius of a human being but in his naked physical ability but ably aided by the Devil who would no longer be working secretly, but openly, and in an undisguised form; no longer the mystery, but the revelation of lawlessness".
- b) The spirit of sin and lawlessness will find its fulfillment in the anti-Christ and his government. He will vent the rage of men against God that has built up for centuries upon the world. He will arise upon the earth, and the terrible rage of lawlessness will be cut loose upon mankind.
- c) Men will suffer the results of their own sins and under the rule of the lawless one, anti-Christ. They will sin and sin and live lawless lives and burn in their lusts for more and more. But they will never be satisfied with what they have, nor with the good and the normal and the natural.
- d) They will have more than enough, like in the days of Noah and Lot, there will be normal swift businesses, but they will lust in their passions for more and more and they will bear the terrible inner cravings of more and more in unrestrained selfishness (2 Tim. 4:1-7).
- e) On the other side, these things may not look all that bad, but think about them for a moment: imagine the depth and intensity of each inner punishment when God is not present to help us through them. The horror and fear, despair and insecurity that

will be consuming the souls of men cannot be described, for men have never had to live without the complete absence of God upon the earth to help them. Not only that but sooner or later God will expose the Anti-Christ and punish the sinning world in judgment as the mystery of God on evil (Matt. 24:10-12; Acts 7:42; Rom. 1:24-32; 2:5; Gal 6:7; 1 Tim. 4:1, 2; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:3-4; Rev. 9:13-10:7 cf. Ps 81:12).

When God's purposes for the creation of man got marred by Satan, the great and good Lord God (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15-25) caused an eternal perfect plan of Salvation to work through His Son, Jesus Christ, the promised seed of the woman (Gen. 3:1-9, 15; Gal. 4:4-7; Heb. 2:9-18; Rev. 12:11-17; 13:8). This plan even has revealed mysteries plainly that the triune Godhead through the Incarnation made manifest Himself in a body of human flesh, the only God-man (Col. 2:2, 3; 4:3; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Tim. 3:16). It is this unique God-man whom we have come to know as the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour (1 Tim. 2:5, 6; 1 Jn. 5:1-13 vv. 6, 8). Having judged Satan in heaven in the angelic conflict, there remained the judgment on sin on earth for humanity (Rev. 12:1-12). The Lord Jesus had to pronounce judgment of Satan in His vicarious death on the cross as Sin-bearer for humanity and the world (Jn. 3:13-16; 12:31-36; 16:7-11; Rev. 12:9-12).

By His vicarious death, burial and resurrection Jesus has defeated forever the Devil, the world and sin; and death as total strategic victory in the "war" on evil's entrance into the world (Gen. 3:15-19; Jn. 19:30; 1 Cor. 15:45-55; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Heb. 2:9-14). By crying out "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30), He has thence become both the accredited Son, and the only Saviour of the world (Jn. 4:26, 41, 42; Acts 2:22-36; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5) to accomplished what God desired to do on earth (Jn. 4:34, 35; 9:4). Particularly, to accomplish His work of bearing the penalty and eternal consequences of sins of the world (Heb. 9:11-16, 25-28; 13:5-9, 20, 21) and to the author and finisher of our faith through the gospel (1 Cor. 2:2; 15:3, 4; Heb. 12:1, 2).

All that is left now is for the Church and believers in every generation and locality or nation to master the keys of the kingdom (as kingdom authority and power) for the "mob-up battles" of eternal life sealed to the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:16-19; 28:18-20; Jn. 6:26-29; 39, 40; Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 2:5-17 v. 11; 10:1-6; 1 Jn. 5:1-8). When He rose from the dead, Jesus also opened a way through Himself for us to taste of the glories which He had with the Father (Jn. 17:21-24). It is now the desire of Jesus that we get to know God, both the Father and Him (for this is eternal life) and, enabled by the Holy Spirit, to behold the glory of the Father through Jesus (Jn. 17:3, 24; 1 Jn. 2:21-25; 5:20; 2 Jn. 1:3, 9). Then we will be able to share in the kingdom and glory through the gospel (1 Thess. 2:8-14 v. 12; 2 Thess. 2:14). Having completed operation footstool by defeating the Devil in His death, burial and resurrection, and also now glorified in heaven, Jesus will eventually become the ruler of the Earth (Rev. 11:15).

Presently, however, Jesus Christ spiritually rules the earth through His body, the Church until the final redemption through the presence of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:18, 19; Rom. 8:17-23; Eph. 1:3-23 v. 7, 14; 3:4-10, 14-21; 6:10-20; Tit. 2:11-14; Heb. 1:1-13). Meanwhile, the Church exists as people who are more than conquerors because of Christ's victory over Satan, the World and the flesh or sin (Matt. 28:14-20; Jn. 3:13-16; 14:1-26; 16:7-15, 23, 24, 33; 17: 19-23; 20:19-23; Acts 1:1-11; 2:16-21, 32-39; 15:6-11; 22:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:1-28 v. 2, 3; Col. 2:1-15; Heb. 2:9-18; 4:14-16; 12:22-29; 1 Jn. 3:4-10; 5:1-5; Rev. 12:11) and ongoing divine advocacy at God's right hand side in heaven for the Church and to save those ordained for salvation (Acts 13:46-49; Rom. 8:31-39 v. 37; Heb. 3:1; 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1, 2).

After the Rapture of His saints, at the day of Christ sometime before the final Appearing, *parousia* (2 Thess. 2:1, 2), the great and terrible day of Christ will feature the rule of the Anti-Christ on earth (2 Thess. 2:3-12; see Acts 2:16-21 v. 20). In this way, the plan of Salvation from Creation to the period of Christ's Millennial Rule as prophesied towards our final redemption but with great judgment of sin and evil in God's final triumph over evil, **the mystery of iniquity** on earth (2 Thess. 2:7-12). God will deal with evil in the Tribulation using the evils around and Anti-Christ himself and natural disasters will be visibly validated in the triune God, as termed "**the mystery of God**" (Pro. 16:4; Rev. 10:1-15 vv. 7, 11).

Christ's victory will be enforced by His final victory to destroy or overpower the Devil and his human agents in the permitted mystery of lawlessness or iniquity at the final return (2 Thess. 2:1-12 vv.7, 8; Rev. 19:11-20:6). Victory over evil and the forces of evil is to give room for righteousness in the regeneration that is, in the Millennium (Matt. 19:28; Rom. 8:21-23; Rev. 20:1-6). He will rule finally in the consummation of all things in the eternal kingdom headquartered in the New Jerusalem, the glorious city and adorned Bride of the Lamb (1 Cor. 15:21-28; 2 Pet. 3:7-18; Rev. 21; 22). The New Jerusalem will be God's temple with the Father and the Lamb in the throne in the New Heavens and New Earth of the Universe in a perfect, glorious, sinless, incorruptible environment (Rev. 21:1-27 vv. 1-2, 21-22).

THE CHURCH AGE AND THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

The Church Age marks the power and revelation of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 2:1-16; 4:1-2; Eph. 3:1-12, 14-21). The mystery of the gospel after the bodily resurrection of Jesus leading to the Rapture of the saints in Christ with ensuing Tribulation and all mysteries are understood through the coming of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:16-21; 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-11; 2:1-4, 16-21 v. 20; Eph. 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Rev. 1:1-20). The salvific mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1-2) beginning with the mystery of the gospel and the mystery of Christ are

revealed to make meaning of the mysteries surrounding the Church in the midst of iniquity on earth (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:4-10; 6:18-20; Col. 1:23-29; 2:2-7; 4:2-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-13; 1 Tim. 3:9, 15-16).

Scripture teaches that “iniquity shall abound” getting to the close of the Church Age and unto the period before “the great and terrible day of the Lord” that comes possibly in mid-Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Acts 2:20; see Joel 2:31; Mal. 4:5). The mysteries surrounding iniquity on earth such as the **mystery of Iniquity** itself with the **mystery of the Apostate Church (Mystery Babylon)** and One World Order or Governance under the Anti-Christ will be fully grasped by the Church from the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:1-8; 2:16-21; 2 Thess. 2:1-13 vv. 7-9; Rev. 13; 17).

Strangely, as hinted in the parable of the Wheat and Tares by the Lord in the kingdom mysteries, the Church on earth will be duplicated by the Devil to form the Apostate Church alongside the true Church right from the day of Pentecost and especially after the death of the early Apostles until her Rapture (Matt. 13:24-30; Acts 1:1-11; 2:16-21 v. 20). The Apostate Church associated with the “falling away” will then fully emerge after the Rapture of the true Church to carry the Anti-Christ to power at the beginning of the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2: 7-9; Rev. 17:1-18 v. 5-13).

In this way and among believers in the true or glorious Church, the mystery of godliness using the gospel and the active presence of the Holy Spirit is revealed (1 Tim. 3:15-16) to deal with the **mystery of Iniquity** as sin and evil that must not be entertained in the Church (2 Thess. 2:1-13 vv. 7-9; 1 Jn. 3:1-24 vv. 4-10; 5:16-21). Hitherto, the **mystery of Christ** and the mystery of the Church using the gospel and the active presence of the Holy Spirit are revealed (Eph. 3:4-10, 14-21; 5:27-32; 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-5) to deal with the rise of **Mystery Babylon and Anti-Christ** (2 Thess. 2:1-13 vv. 7-9; Rev. 13; 17).

Now, Anti-Christ will and cannot not be revealed until after the “falling away” comes (2 Thess. 2:3) and the “restraining force” (2 Thess. 2:6, 7), is taken away according to Paul. The “restraining force” could be the divine work and active presence of out-poured Holy Spirit, since the day of Pentecost from within the Church (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 32-36, 38-42; 5:29-32; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Rev. 1:4-6). The Holy Spirit as the “another Comforter” will be taken away, with the Rapture or catching up of the Church before the Tribulation (Jn. 14:15-21; Acts 2: 16-21 v. 20; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:1-2, 5; Rev. 1:4-7). So, the Holy Spirit is the restrainer, but only in relation to His active work through and with the presence of the Bride, the Church on earth.

The falling away or great apostasy could be the formation of the One World Apostate Church on earth, which would emerge after the Rapture of the true Church. Never be

shaken by calamities, pandemics, fearful events and iniquity on earth. Iniquity has always been at work on earth since the days of Adam (Ps. 51:2, 5; Dan. 9:24; Rom. 5:12; 6:19). But because iniquity or lawlessness and godlessness will abound by the time of the Tribulation and the revelation of Anti-Christ (Matt. 24:8-15; 2 Tim. 3:1-13), worse things may occur as we get nearer the final return of Christ with His saints to remove the curse and groaning of this earth (Rom. 8:18-23).

Times and seasons set by God for the Church concerning the interval of the real occurrence of “the mystery of iniquity” and “the mystery of the Rapture of the saints in Christ” is not stated anywhere in the Bible (Acts 1:4-8, 11; 2 Thess. 2:1-2; Rev. 1:1-7). However, in respect of the kingdom of God on earth the mystery of the Rapture of the saints in Christ to the final return is just seven literal years of 360 days a year (2 Thess. 2:1-2; see Dan. 9:23-27; 12:8-11; Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:4-11; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 5:1-11).