

THE TEN VIRGINS AND CHRIST'S RETURN

The Supremacy of the Father

In Matthew 24 Christ makes an insightful statement, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, no not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only*" (vs.36; NKJ referenced throughout, unless otherwise noted). This scripture has caused some to wonder, why is the timing of the return of Christ the prerogative of the Father? Why is it an unknown day, when the Father has total command of what ultimately occurs?

Upon further examination this statement reveals that Christ's return is not a fixed date, but the decision will come about by a particular trigger - the behavior of a special group who will affect the Father's decision to return Christ to this earth.

Many times the role of the Father is relegated to one of observer, rather than His active and dynamic presence in the happenings of this world, and more directly in the personal lives of those called of God. John 4:23 tells us; "*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.*"

Then in verse 34, "*Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work.'*" And in John 5:17; "*But Jesus answered them, My Father has been working until now, and I have been working. I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish – the very works that I do – bear witness of Me that the Father has sent Me.*" vs. 17, 30, 36.

The Father's control of what happens on this earth is so complete that we are not able to come to Christ of our own volition, but are literally dragged by the Holy Spirit of the Father. John 6:44. "*No one can come to Me unless the Father draws (drags) him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*"

Christ again states this in verse 65: "*And He said, 'Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.'*" In addition, Christ addressing His disciples before His crucifixion states in John 17:6, "*I have manifested Your name to the men whom you have given Me out of this world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*" This entire universe was brought into existence by the direction of the Father for the singular purpose of creating human beings who would develop His and Christ's

implicit character; those who will make righteous decisions in all circumstances of life, making right decisions that relate to our interactions with others and our creator. Matthew 5:48 tells us, *“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*

Paul relates this same instruction in Ephesians 4:12-13, *“For the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”*

It is the Father who is choosing us out of the world. That choice is not made casually, but with forethought that a potential lies within each of those elected to succeed. We are chosen because we have pliability (are teachable,) that He can use, but must be coupled with a firmness of purpose that we will not be turned from the truth which is His way of life. His life is our example.

Does the Father’s job end with choosing His called out ones? John 15:1-2 explains, *“I am the vine, and My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”* This places the Father in charge of our development. The vine dresser is the one responsible for the quality and quantity of the fruit produced by the vineyard.

Through circumstances in this life we are tested by Him – not tempted – to see what decisions we will make, and by this choosing process we become firm in our character. The basis for this choosing must be His righteous law. The more that we seek His way of life the more He grants the power of His Spirit to achieve that goal. Christ tells us this in James 1:12-14. *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life eternal which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (If we love Him we emulate His character.) *Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*”*

The emphasis here is on the individual who is tempted by his own desires, and enticed into committing sin, thus being drawn away from God. Clearly, we are the ones who place ourselves in tempting situations that require us to overcome the carnal (fleshly) desires of the human body. The most fundamental human drive is to retain one’s life in the here and now. When coupled with the constant salvos of a world under the control of Satan, we should recognize the all-important place the

Father has in developing the way we think (our character,) and the ultimate destiny of becoming His very sons and daughters. This is spotlighted in Romans 8:13-14. *“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”*

Herein lays the reason for His control of the return of Christ. Understand that His first concern is not with the fulfilling of prophetic events to comply with a fixed timetable, but rather the development of righteous character in the ones chosen out of this world as His most important achievement. **Each must be made ready** by the development of his own character to stand with Christ in teaching and directing those of this world during His millennial reign. *And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers... ”* (Isa. 30:20).

That character must be so fixed that not even death, or the threat of it, would cause one to relinquish his grip on righteousness. This is the Father’s ultimate goal.

The Father Separates His Called

If His people are not ready for that important job, then He needs to complete that work in them. The called of this world are His most pressing concern. Will each individual have the character to stand faithful to our creator even in the face of death? The answer can be grasped by what the bible teaches about the two distinct groups of the called of God at the beginning of the three and one half years of tribulation. They represent in total all of God’s people.

*“But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her **offspring**, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* Rev. 12:14-17

The first group faces imminent death as Satan sends a flood (a military force) to destroy them. This is a parallel to Pharaoh’s army of the exodus, and should not be missed. Just as Moses admonished the Israelites to *“stand still and see the*

salvation of the Eternal, which he will accomplish for you today,” we are given a picture of God opening the earth to swallow Satan’s army. Verse 17 tells us there is a second group who are called of God who Satan now goes after, using all his might to destroy them.

Does God, through the Old Testament prophecies, open to us a more revealing picture of what is found in Revelation 12:14-17? Chapter 5 of Ezekiel is such a prophecy. Verse 4 tells us that the fire is to go out through all of Israel. In the historical context Israel no longer existed as a nation at the onset of the prophecy. This places a duality on this prophecy that makes it applicable to the end time, and helps us to understand what we must face.

Ezekiel 5:1-4. “And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take balances to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire 1/3 in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take 1/3 and strike around it with the sword, and 1/3 you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment.”

Note that these are the two groups of Revelation 12 combined, *“Then take some of them [group two] again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for from there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel.”* In this prophecy it is found that in type God reveals more detail about the end-time tribulation about to engulf this world.

It should be noted that Ezekiel is told to remove his hair and beard, not with a barber’s razor, but with a sharp sword. The sword represents war; what happens in war? People are displaced from their normal way of life. The hair and beard is removed from its source of sustenance, even the hair that is protected in the hem of his garment will go through this war; displacing them from their accustomed way of life. They will both survive the devastation that modern war brings.

The hair of the head and beard of Ezekiel that is **divided into thirds** represents a specific group of people, and this group is made up of those who should have known better than to tempt God. They are the ones in possession of a great deal of biblical knowledge. They know what type of conduct is expected of them, but choose to ignore it, following the lust of the body, thumbing their noses at God and His laws, saying, “We are free to sin; there are no consequences for what we do.” These are the nations that **feign** a Christian belief along with their organized churches, but in fact practice lying, stealing, murder; not recognizing the Creator

God, but substituting a materialistic belief to satisfy their fleshly desires. They are represented by the bulk of the hair of the thirds that Ezekiel is instructed to set aside for destruction and tribulation. But what about the hairs **protected** in the hem of Ezekiel's garment? Who are they?

Who would God give this initial protection to? In total they represent the two groups of people who understand God's Word and do what is expected of them. They are those who keep the commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Initially they receive this protection, but then Ezekiel is told by God to remove a number of them and put them through the trial, and they are thrown into the fire and burned up, as hair has no resistance to fire, burning quickly and completely. It should be clear that this second group is going to be martyred - no survivors!

But there remains a group of hair safely protected in the hem of Ezekiel's garment. Why are they protected while the others perished? And, who are those from the protected group sent into the fire? Who would God give this initial protection to and then send them to their death? In total they represent a group of people who think they understand God's word and what is expected of them.

These are those who keep the commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. They receive this initial protection, but then Ezekiel is told to remove them and put them into the fire, meaning martyrdom. They are then thrown into the fire and burned up. It is clear that this group is going to perish, none are going to survive. As stated, hair has no resistance to fire and burns quickly and completely. The reason God puts them through this final test is because they have a missing element in their character.

By looking at the protected group that remains safely in the hem of Ezekiel's garment, the question of why they are protected when the others perished is answered. Who is in this protected group? Obviously God has a special feeling toward these people He is completely protecting. What would give Him that feeling to protect them from physical death?

There is the sterling example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who in the face of sure death by fire, refused to bow to the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar. When God saw their faith He preserved their lives. Notice, "*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*" (Heb. 11:6).

In this proclamation Paul, in one sentence, gives us a penetrating insight into how the Father looks at us and deals with us. Faith is the linch-pin that keeps us connected to both the Father and Christ.

It is now clear that there are two groups of those called of God. There is a defining circumstance that places one group in a physical location that allows Satan to attack them as Revelation 12:15 clearly depicts. How they are to be gathered is not explained, but pictures them as being carried to this place on the wings of an eagle. This is a reference to the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Exodus 19:4 states, “*You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle’s wings, and brought you to Myself.*” In their escape, like the Israelites, they are protected. This is a physical escape; one in which the individual will be required to move on his own volition; just as the original Israelites had to do.

Remember that Ezekiel was instructed to take a sharp sword that represented war, and use it as a barber’s razor to cut off the hair of his head and beard, meaning that these nations are being forcibly removed through the crucible of war, including God’s called out ones. Yet it clearly shows that by placing the hair in the hem of the garment God is providing protection from this initial onslaught. Ezekiel is then told to separate out some that must go into the fire later.

Those remaining in the hem under God’s protection are in the first group of Revelation 12:14-16 against whom Satan directs his initial attack. This group faces death, just as Daniel’s friends did, and they are saved alive. They have the faith talked of in Hebrews 11.

Which Life Is More Important?

Our interest now turns to the second group. They must face fire, which is death. This is seen by the instruction to Ezekiel to subsequently remove from the protection of his garment a part of the hair, and cast it into the fire. This is the second group mentioned in Revelation 12:17, “*And the dragon was wroth and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*”

It is obvious that this second group represents a challenge for the Father. Do they have the faith to stand for the truth of God, His way of life which will result in death by Satan? They must not only face death as the first group did, but also experience it. We see this same group being pointed out in Revelation 6:9-11, “*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those that had*

been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long oh Lord, Holy and True, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And a white robe was given each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest [sleep in death] a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who would be killed as they were, was completed."

Ezekiel tells us that this group must go into the fire, which will plainly result in their death. They must overcome that overwhelming carnal desire to maintain one's physical life at all costs. This is no simple task. It is telling us that those following the already dead saints are, in fact, the last to lose their lives for their faith, thus bringing about the triumphant return of Christ.

What is the most important thing the Father is doing? Notice John 15:1-2, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*"

He alone has the responsibility for the development of our character which must have an **unwavering faith**, one that will carry us through death. Until the Father makes this determination of those He calls Christ will not be allowed to return. When the Father reaches the conclusion that there is a group whose faith can only be determined by this ultimate test, He then puts into motion the events that lead to Christ's return; the war that will initiate the tribulation.

Think about what Christ tells the final church era, Laodicea! Revelation 3:18 states, "*I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see.*"

Note that those in this group must go through the purging of fire to receive their reward, the white garment and eternal life. Revelation 6:11 makes this plain. Their ultimate destiny will be physical death. It now shows plainly why the Father alone carries the responsibility for the return of Christ. He has two groups of those that He called out of this society; the first having total confidence in their faith to stand in the face of sure death, not wavering, knowing that God will either save them alive now, or they will come up in the first resurrection. For them there is no difference, **their faith is complete and unshakable.**

Satan now turns his fury on those in the second group. But what is their fate? In the parable of the ten virgins Christ gives us the story of what they must face going

through the tribulation. Shortly after the start of the tribulation Satan goes to make war with those not experiencing God's protection in the place of safety.

In a deeper understanding of the narrative of the ten virgins Christ lays out the reason for this group and their destiny. In Matthew 25:1-13 He explains that all ten in this group go out to meet the bridegroom -- Christ's second coming. Their initial intentions are filled with hope and joy, but something happens that they lose sight of why they were called by the Father, and their individual responsibility of putting on the character of Christ as explained in Ephesians 4. (They all sleep).

Why is the second group lacking this faith? In looking more closely at the beliefs of the last era of God's called, Laodicea, it is found that they are very confident in their belief, that they will receive the ultimate physical protection and live to witness the resurrection of the dead in Christ, along with their own change to Spirit Beings. Paul describes this. *"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep."* (I Thes.4:15).

If they have this firm belief and faith, where is the problem? The problem lies in **whom** they have placed their faith. Their faith is first in men of reputation, and then in the organizations led by these men. They have been promised that being part of one of these organizations will put them into the place of safety; the leader saying, "Supporting this work and my organization is **your ticket to the place of safety**." Or, "I am here to gather all the Philadelphians to take them to a place of safety." Or, "I am leading the one true Church of God." Their faith in the Living God is secondary to their faith in the men who lead them.

Revelation 3:17 says, *"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked..."* They are really saying, "I am secure in what these leaders have promised me," placing their salvation in the hands of another, rather than in the Living God. Notice Revelation 3:20, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him and dine with him, and he with me."* The reason Christ must knock on their door is because He has been put out by those who place their faith in men, not in the Living God.

In Matthew 25, Christ lays out the fate that they must face to achieve eternal life. Remember! Shortly after the beginning of the tribulation Satan goes to make war with those who are not in the place of safety, as Christ pictures in the parable of the ten virgins.

Satan's wrath is first and foremost directed at the called of God; they either break God's law and bow to the image or are killed. It is that simple. John 12:25 states, *"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."* Matthew 16:25 further explains, *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."*

Who Are The Ten Virgins?

There has been a great deal of puzzlement, speculation, and mis-identification as to who are the ten virgins, and what is their destiny. Why do they choose different paths? Matthew 25:1 states, *"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom."* This is to meet Christ at His second coming; and is an active decision on their part. They are looking forward with great anticipation of meeting Christ and being part of His millennial reign.

Next we find a division of mental strength: five were wise, meaning sensible, prudent, practical, and wise in relationships with others: five were foolish, depicted as stupid or moronic concerning heart and character. The foolish took no oil and were not prepared for the long haul; looking superficially for an immediate reward, placing their salvation in the hands of another. This is why they request oil (the strong belief in the way of life that Christ set for us,) from those who were wise. The sad part is that they all slept, waiting for their human leaders who had promised safety and deliverance only to awake at midnight, the darkest hour for this world. Now they realize that by not being taken to the place of safety they must go through martyrdom.

At first it seemed to be working as their human leaders told them it would because they all receive the initial protection of Ezekiel's skirt, and also being able to see Satan's attack on the first group, which gave them a short lived satisfaction in their choice. It is when Satan turns his attention to them that they wake up and realize that they will be going through the fire. That is when the Father allows them to be tested.

An erroneous impression may occur when reading the parable of the wedding supper found in Matthew 22; that anyone expressing a desire to come to the wedding would be accepted. *'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'* So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests" (vs. 9-10).

By looking at the following verses it can be seen that not all are allowed into the wedding. *“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And then he was speechless”* (vs.11-12).

The first thing to note is that the king addresses the individual as “friend,” a person who he is about to cast out of the wedding into eternal death. This word “friend” is Strong’s #2083, the Greek word “hetros.” The verb means to keep company with or establish and maintain, a meretricious, pretentious, ostentations, deceptive, and misleading friendship. This friendship is maintained solely for the advantages that can be gained from it; money, power, prestige. It is the same word that was used by Christ when He addressed Judas in the garden at His betrayal spoken of in Matthew 26:50. Also “friend” is used by the vineyard owner when addressing the ungrateful workers. (Matt. 20:13). And again it is used by Christ when addressing His generation, calling them children who call to their companions; their “friends” who are there for what they can gain (Matt. 11:16).

By the use of this word the king is telling the guest that he is at the wedding for the wrong reason, being there for his own personal gain and not for respect of the king (Father,) and His way of life. No one will be allowed to the wedding supper without a true love for righteousness.

What is the wedding garment that the king required? This garment is described in Revelation 19:8, *“And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints”*. The wedding garment is received by those who walk as Christ walked. He set the example for the faithful to follow. Those who do not follow His example do not receive the wedding garment, or the gift of eternal life!

The five wise came to their senses when they saw that the tribulation was upon them and they had not been taken to a place of safety as their leaders and organizations had promised. These five now realize that their character has to be refined by fire – the ultimate test of faith - just as Christ has admonished them to *“Buy of me gold refined in the fire.”* (Rev. 3:18).

They refuse to worship the image of the beast, thus relinquishing their physical lives, having the oil (faith) to make that ultimate sacrifice.

Notice *“And it was granted him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Rev.13:7-8).

What is meant by the statement, *“the saints are overcome by the beast?”* The answer is made plain in verses 15-17: *“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed [through the fire of faith], And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name”*

On the other hand, the five foolish request that the five wise give them oil. They are looking for an easy fix, showing their attitude and lack of understanding that the oil is bought with a price - the price is overcoming Satan and their own human carnal nature, resisting that most emphatic drive to retain one's physical life. It is this that they ultimately cling to; their request for the oil not being compatible with their desire to save their fleshly lives.

Faith is not something that one can give to another like a worldly possession, but must be acquired by overcoming. This is something that is practiced and built just as Paul explained in Ephesians 4:13, *“Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”* This is a process that everyone called of God must go through. As John 15:1-2 clearly shows, the Father has an integral part in our lives. It is this factor of faith that He determines; a point where a final test of faith is required. He requires it as a proof of the genuine conversion of those He calls. It is the decision by the Father to commence the removal of the hair and beard of Ezekiel that puts into motion the commencement of all that must precede the immediate return of Christ. The only way to know the true mettle of the Laodiceans is to determine their faith with physical death. *“...And it is said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow saints and their brethren, who should be killed as they were, was completed”* (Rev.6:11).

This is why only the Father can make the determination to return Christ to His millennial rule. There is no single thing more important to the Father than our development of righteous character. The whole purpose of the creation is to

develop children to be brought into the family of God. The parable of the ten virgins pictures this test. Upon awakening to the fact that they are in the fire, and not in the place of safety, the wise recognize that they must be tried, which results in their physical death. When they tell the foolish to buy oil they are saying to them, “you need the faith to walk through this same door.”

Do the foolish virgins follow the advice of the wise? The parable makes it plain that they do not! When seeing the Father and the Lamb returning to this earth... (*“And said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.”* Rev.6:16) ...they now wake up to the disastrous mistake they have made, still wanting to enter the wedding – eternal life. But the door is shut!

They have come without either torches or oil. At the onset of Satan’s attack both the wise and foolish were **awakened**. Time was not a factor for any of them changing their attitude, and clearly the faith of the foolish was lacking. The answer lies in why the foolish were there to begin with. It was because of the promised physical protection that the men of reputation and their organizations had promised to them. Christ bluntly rejects them. *“Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But He answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you’”* (Matt. 25:11-12).

The reason for their rejection is made clear by Christ’s warning. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Matt. 7:21-23).

Remember, all ten were addressed as virgins, meaning they were called and chosen. But the one ingredient in question was their faith.

In order for the foolish to survive to the end of the tribulation they had to take the mark of the beast and bow to its image. If they had refused the mark death was a surety, and they would have been welcomed to the wedding by Christ. They took the mark to preserve their physical lives, which was the true basis of their desires all along, perhaps thinking that Christ would not want them to starve. The use of the mark is a daily thing needed to survive. They go along to get along.

Their foolishness is portrayed in thinking that they could preserve their physical lives and still be accepted into the kingdom. After all, hadn't they accepted Christ as their savior? Wouldn't He accept any kind of behavior? Wouldn't the blood of His sacrifice cover their sins? Remember, these are those who have the commandments of God, and should understand what their conduct should be. When they take the mark and bow to the image they reject God the Father and Christ, the savior, breaking something that can never be restored. Notice Hebrews 6:5-6, "*For it is impossible for those who are once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.*" Hebrews 10:26 further states, "*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins...*"

Is this contrary to the accepted belief of the organized churches of this world, that "Once you have accepted Christ as your savior you are locked into salvation?" As shown, the word of God emphatically says just the opposite. So, what is the fate of the foolish virgins? Revelation 14:9-10 explains, "*...if anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.*"

Revelation 19:20-21 adds, "*Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*"

Their reward for betrayal is eternal death.

By understanding what the dire consequences of these prophecies are, the Father and Christ are preparing us to know what must be done when finding ourselves faced with these life and death decisions. What appears to be death is actually life eternal, and what appears as a reprieve from death leads to eternal death. John 12:25. "*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*"

Let us be aware! Only by each one placing their faith entirely in the hands of the Father and the Son will salvation be obtained.

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